The Implementation of *ProWritingAid* to Help Students Reduce Grammatical Errors in Writing Class

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ABSTRACT

Grammar and writing are two biggest challenges for EFL learners. Most of the time, students find English grammar difficult as the rules are different from Bahasa Indonesia. While they have only limited time to learn all the aspects of grammar in the class, the lecturer has his/ her own problem that there are a lot of writings to check every week. To overcome the situation, the help from online applications can be a handy solution for both parties. *Prowritingaid* is a free website which assists users to make better writing including in grammar. There, the users do not only get the correct form of grammar including tenses and parts of speech, but also some advice and explanation of how they can revise it. In this way, the users are not spoonfed by the tool but rather trained in a more comfortable way. On the other hand, the lecturer can also get benefits from the tool that he/she does not need thoroughly checking students' piles of writings. The lecturer can use the report from *Prowritingaid* as the basis to help students with their grammar problems in the classroom. The utilization of *Prowritingaid* is a great help both for students and lecturers thus they can make a good use of time either to improve their writings or check and observe the progress students make in writing class.

Keywords: *EFL learners, grammar, Prowritingaid, writing class*

INTRODUCTION

EFL learners have a lot of challenges to deal with when learning how to use English correctly. Besides the vocabulary and diction, students have to master English grammar as well thus the sentences they make are meaningful and understandable, both oral and written. However, it is very common to see that EFL learners find grammar difficult to learn. There are some reasons for that. First, English grammar is unique in the way that it is so dynamic (Komara and Tiarsiwi, 2021) as the rules may change over time. The dynamic characteristics here make students confused and questions which rules to apply when they use English. Second, according to (Baiz, 2020), eastern countries, including Indonesia, has different culture from the western which affect the rules of language applied. The differences are responsible for many difficulties EFL learners have to face, one of which is the grammar. Third, still based on (Baiz, 2020), English grammar is hard especially for Asians as Asian languages lack verb conjugations, prepositions, and past/present tenses. With these reasons, it is understandable that (Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam, 2011) even states that learning English grammar causes the student moments of discomfort and sometimes even terrors.

While EFL learners have not done yet with grammar problems, it is quite often that they are asked to practice writing as one of productive skills to master when learning English. This leads to another issue considering that writing is never easy. Richards & Renandya (2002: 303) say that writing is the most difficult skill for EFL learners to master and the difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable text. Moreover,

Fareed & Ashraf (2016) highlight the same idea that writing is an extremely difficult cognitive activity which requires the learner to have control over various factors. Interestingly, Chowdury (2015) points out grammatical errors hinder students' writing performance or skills more than any other factors. From here, it can be seen that grammar and writing is related. If students have problems with grammar then their writing does not improve.

Another issue is that in tertiary education, English is always included in the courses students have to take in which the final score affect their overall performance or GPA. In Electronics Engineering Study Programme of State Polytechnic of Malang itself, students are given 2 English courses. English 1 focuses on grammar, writing and reading while English 2 is more about four English skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Each course has 16 meetings in a semester in which one meeting is only for 2 hours that are equal to 100 minutes. With the limited amount of time students possess to learn grammar and writing in the class per week, they are still expected to get a good score which is actually hard to achieve unless the students have adequate prior knowledge about English and a satisfying ability to use the language.

Unfortunately, it does not happen that way. Based on the preliminary study the researcher conducted, it was found out that most students selected 2 or 3 out of 5 points when they are asked about their writing skill. Most of them also pointed out that grammar is the main obstacle which makes it hard for them to write in English. Meanwhile, according to their academic report recapitulation, in one class generally less than 5 students who got stellar score in English courses which mean that most of them have medium or even low ability in the course.

However, it does not mean that they do not want to improve as based on the preliminary study; it was found out that basically students like English and they want to learn about writing as well. The problem is that they only have limited time to learn it in class thus it is hard to master English grammar as well as developing their writing skill at the same time. Therefore, they need an aid or tool to help them both with grammar and writing that can be accessed anywhere and anytime. The use of online tool to help students with grammar and writing can be a great help for both students and lecturers (Selvarasu, et al, 2021; Handayani & Handayani, 2020; Ramamuthie & Aziz, 2022).

For students, online tool like this assists them to get direct feedback after they submit their writing. They do not have to wait until next week to get some advice on their writing so they can reduce grammatical errors they make as soon as possible. Also, they can learn the practical use of grammar in a more comfortable way as students obtain information about certain rules to apply based on their need in the writing (Ramamuthie & Aziz, 2022; Topacio, 2018). It means that students do not need to learn everything which can sometimes be burdensome. For lecturers, it helps them to use their time more effectively as they do not have to check all students' work thoroughly every week. Lecturers can use the report from the tool as the basis to review students' writing thus the discussion can be more focused.

Considering the benefits, it is necessary to find an online tool that can meet the needs. Among many online tools available, ProWritingAid is one of those that can be used easily by students. Although it is not as popular as others like Grammarly, ProWritingAid offers some advantages including free access anytime and anywhere that users do not have to pay to register or use the tool for the free version. If users want to subscribe, the subscription fee is cheaper than other platforms (Zalani, 2022).

ProWritingAid also offers some writing advice and explanation rather than directly giving the correct form of words and sentences thus users are encouraged to learn more to make better writing. Not only that, it has a writing report summary that presents the score of several aspects users can improve to make the readibility better (Handayani & Handayani, 2020).

The analysis given by the ProWritingAid can be used by the lecturers as the basis to help students reducing their grammatical problems. Later in the class, lecturers can focus on grammar

aspects most students have problem with thus the discussion becomes more to-the-point and effective considering the duration for English course is only 100 minutes per meeting. ProWritingAid can be accessed through www.prowritingaid.com.

METHOD

Research Design

This research applied case study as it is not aimed to compare two classes, but rather describing the implementation of ProWritingAid to help students reducing grammatical errors in their writing. Two variables were used here; they are the use of ProWritingAid and students' grammatical errors.

Participants

The participants of this research were 40 students from second grade of Diploma IV of Electronics Engineering Study Program who are taking English 2 that focuses on writing.

Research Stages

There were two stages that will be done in this research. The first stage was preparation in which the researcher selects some basic materials for grammar as the basis for students to produce simple writings. Then, the researcher also prepared Google Drive folders to keep students' writings as well as the reports they get from ProWritingAid. The last, the researcher asked the students to make an account in www.prowritingaid.com to be used during the writing class.

The second stage was the implementation. The researcher delivered the basic materials in grammar to the students, including Parts of Speech, Subject and Verb Agreement, and Active and Passive Voice which will take 3 meetings. After that, the researcher gave an assignment to make a simple writing with a certain topic that students can do at home. After doing the writing, they had to check it in ProWritingAid and screen-capture the report. The writing and screen capture of the report must be uploaded in Google Drive folder weekly.

Later in the next meeting, the researcher reviewed the report and conducted a discussion on the most common grammatical errors students make so that they can avoid that in the future and improve their writing. Repetition of this cycle was done until the end of the semester.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data was collected using some instruments such as students' writings and screen capture of the reports from ProWritingAid uploaded in Google Drive which had been prepared previously. Both instruments were used as the basis to make effective discussions in the class that focus more on the grammatical errors made by most students. They were also used to see how students reduce the grammatical errors and make progress.

Students' writings were observed to find out the most common and frequent grammatical errors appeared. The observation and analysis were performed manually by the researcher. To sharpen the analysis, the reseacher used the screen capture of the report from ProWritingAid. In this way, the researcher obtained more accurate information about grammatical errors most students make.

When the grammatical errors were revealed and mapped, the researcher can provide relevant and appropriate materials and exercises to help students enhance their knowledge about grammar. The materials and exercises were delivered during the course. After getting some materials and doing the exercises, the students were asked to make some more writings to see their progress, whether they repeated the same grammatical errors or not.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

How ProWritingAid Helps Students with Grammatical Errors

From the research, it is revealed that ProWritingAid provides assistance to students in some writing aspects. When using the website, students obtain some feedback instantly thus they can learn from it and make betterment in the next writing project. In general, there are 8 writing aspects students can observe in ProWritingAid website. They are Grammar Score, Sentence Length, Business Jargon, Readability Grade, Spelling Score, Style Score, Sentence Variety and Passive Voice, as seen in Figure 1 below.
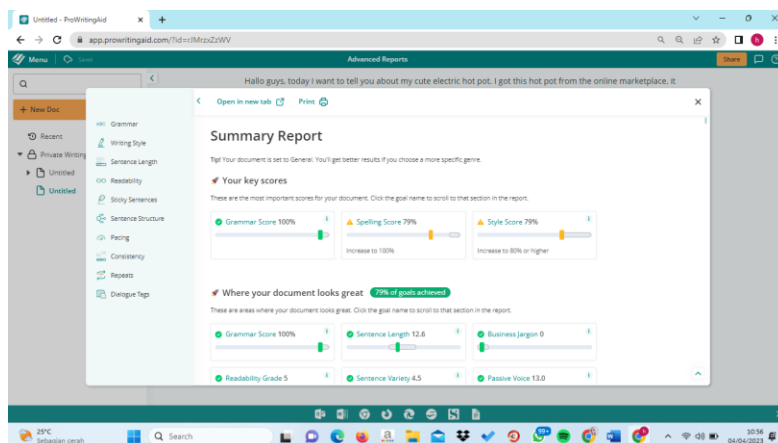

Figure 1 ProWritingAid Writing Assessment

However, as the focus of the research is in grammatical errors, students pay more attention to Grammar Score which is shown in percentage, and receive more detailed assessment on that. Through the assessment, it is expected that students can improve their writing and get 100% on the Grammar Score. ProWritingAid provides a menu where students can get thorough feedback on their grammar. The feedback covers several points, such as punctuation, capitalization, effective sentence, word formation, part of speech and so forth, based on the text that students input in the website. The grammar feedback is seen in Figure 2.
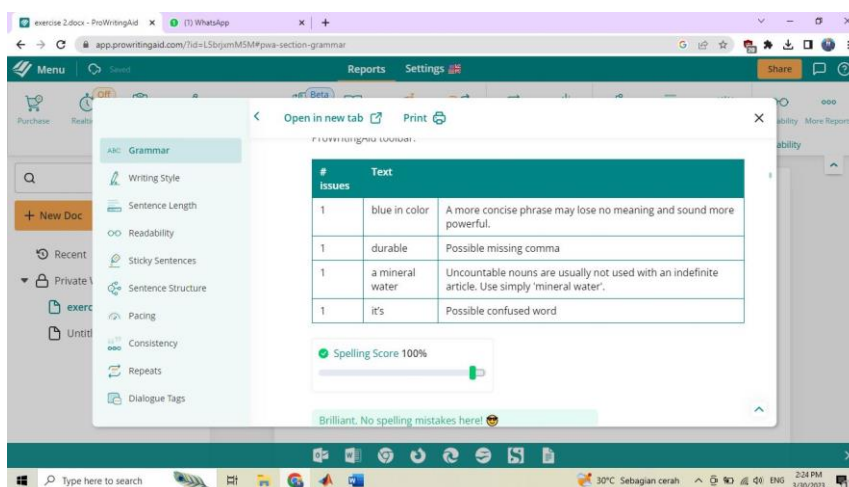

Figure 2 Grammar Feedback in ProWritingAid

With the feedback, it is easier for the students to find out what grammatical errors they make and where the errors take place without having to wait the lecturer checks their work that sometimes need a lot of time. The feedback also triggers students' creativity to improve their writing as ProWritingAid does not give correct forms of the problematic parts; instead, it just underlines the words or phrases that need revisions due to grammatical errors as seen in Figure 3. Students have to think themselves how to make their work better based on the assessment given.
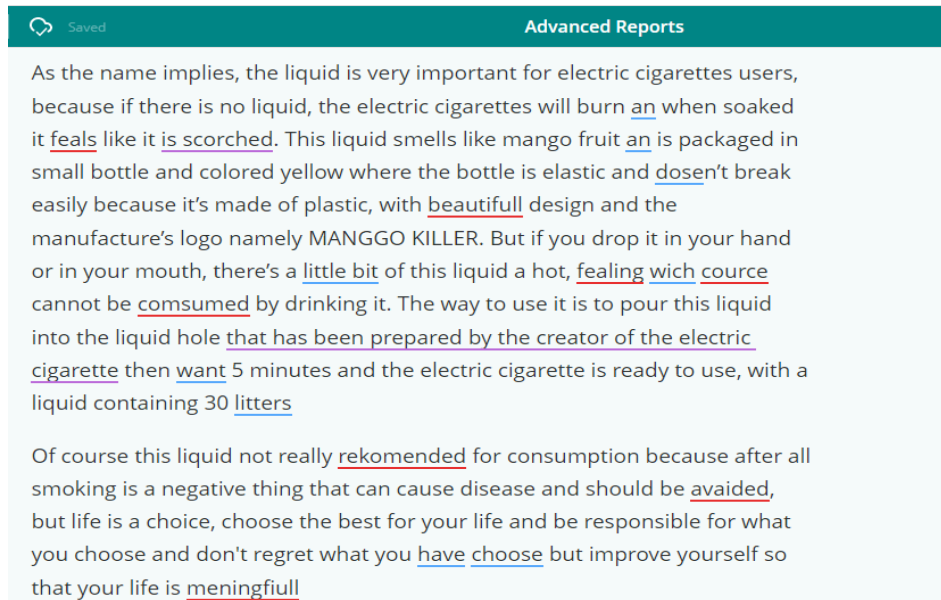
Figure 3 Underlined Words Containing Grammatical Errors

In order to show more clearly how ProWritingAid helps students with their grammatical errors in writing, below is the flowchart:
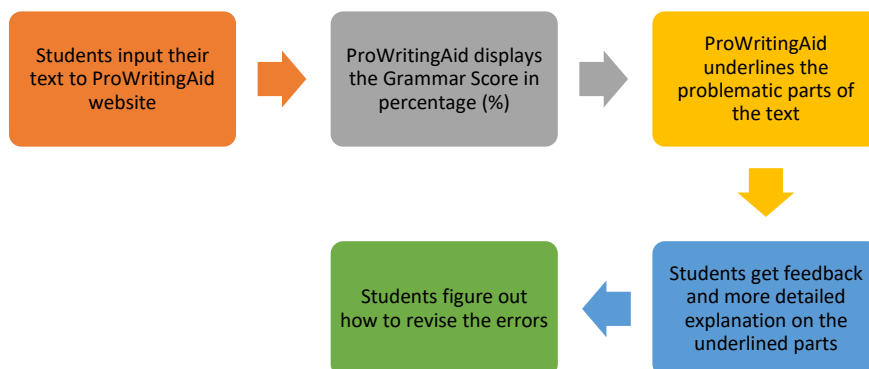
**Figure 4** How ProWritingAid Helps Students with Their Grammatical Errors in Writing

From the flowchart, it can be seen that ProWritingAid facilitates students' learning process as the website does not spoonfeed them with the correct answers. Instead, students are triggered by the feedback to learn from the errors. Here lies the chance for the lecturer to be their savior. While sometimes students have no idea of how to revise their work, by looking at the report from the

website, lecturer can provide some advice to help them deal with the mistakes and make it better. It means that the use of the website as a learning tool does not substitute the role of the lecturer as the facilitator in the classroom. There still must be a good cooperation between lecturers, students and also the website to make learning process works as expected.

***The Implementation of ProWritingAid to Help Students Reduce Grammatical Errors in Writing***

The implementation of ProWritingAid is done by following some steps as planned. First, students are asked to sign in to the website using their email account. Second, they start to use the website by writing down or copy-paste their text in the box provided. Then, the assessment of some writing aspects appears in the right side of the window. Third, students choose "Summary" menu at the top of the window, then click "Grammar Score". Then, they see the explanation of the errors they make. Here, students have to screen-capture the result and upload it to the Google Drive folder the lecturer has prepared.

From here, the lecturer takes the role. The lecturer analyses the report that students upload to find out the most common grammatical errors they make. The analysis can be used as the basis to construct teaching materials for the class. The purpose is to help the students understand the correct form of the problematic parts of their writing and avoid the same problems in the future. In this way, the learning session in the class is more effective both for the lecturer and students as they can be more focused on the aspects they really need to improve. The steps of the implementation are shown below:
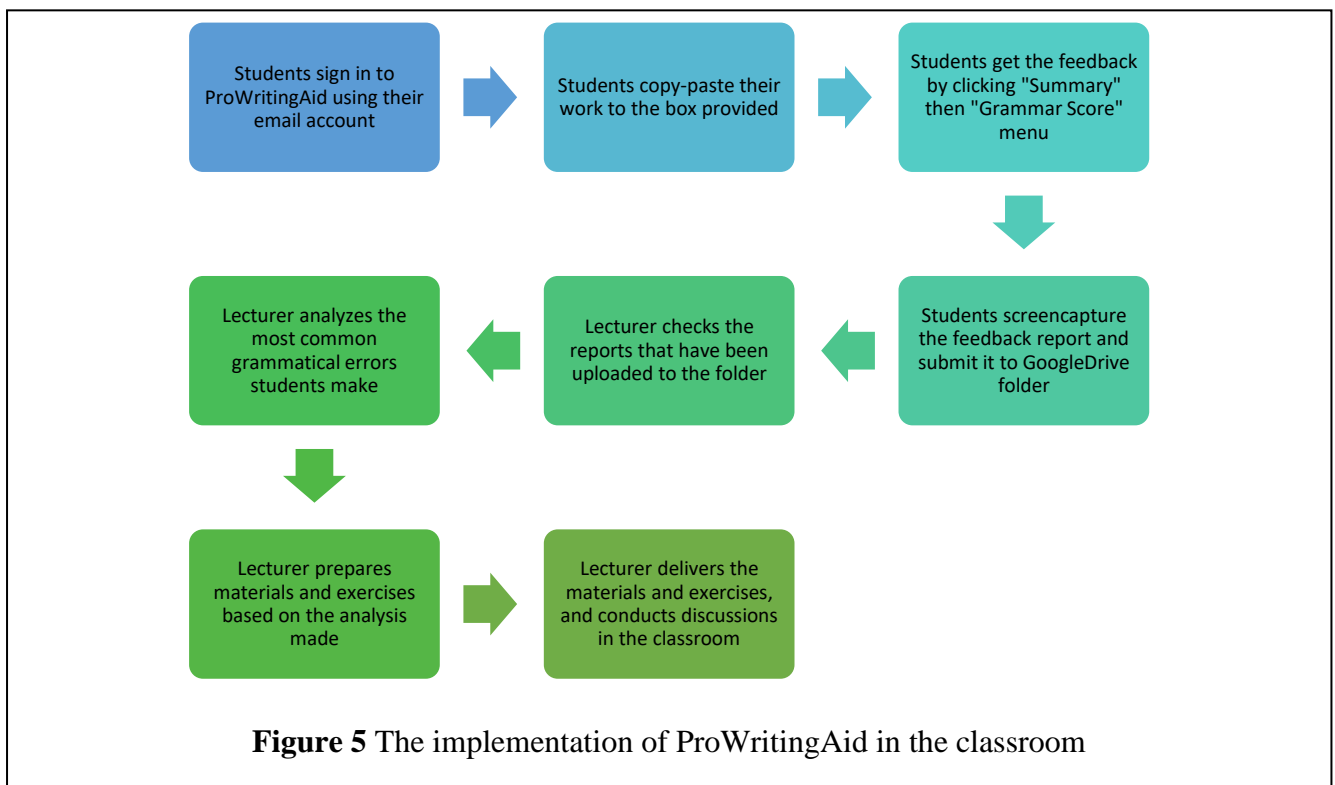
Figure 5 The implementation of ProWritingAid in the classroom

The steps above have been implemented in the classroom and it turns out that ProWritingAid website is quite a help both for the students and lecturer. Students do not need to wait until the next session to get feedback from the lecturer about their writing. At the same time, the lecturer does not need to spend a lot of time checking students' work manually; he/ she only needs to check and evaluate the report that will be the basis to develop teaching materials to deliver in the classroom. The report also helps the lecturer to map the most fundamental needs of the students in writing thus the materials and exercises can be more effective as well. Below is an example of students' report that the lecturer evaluated.
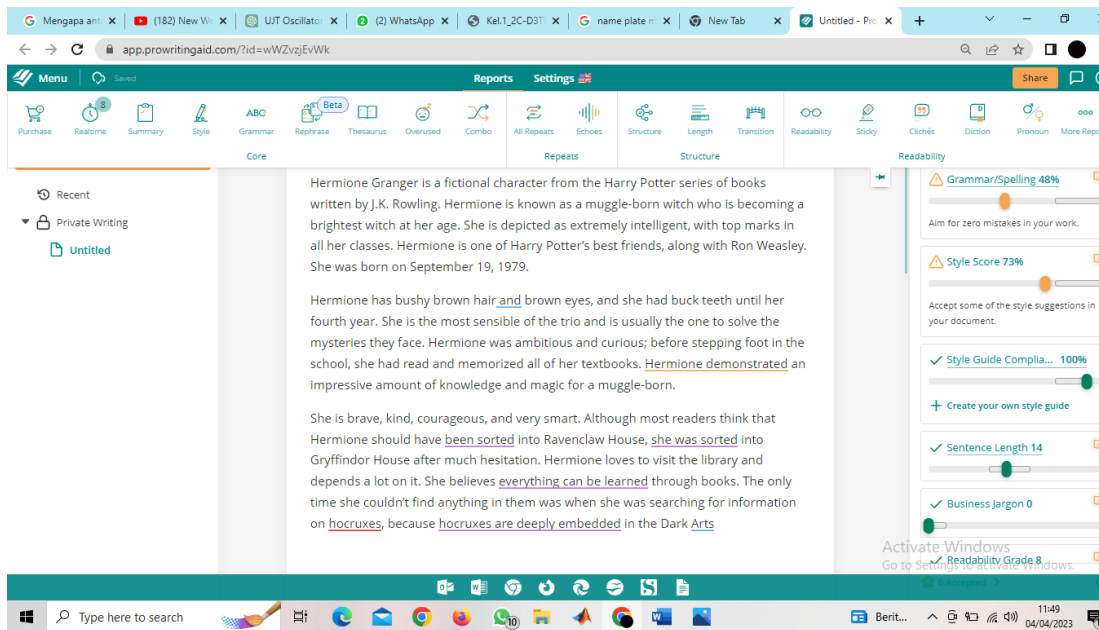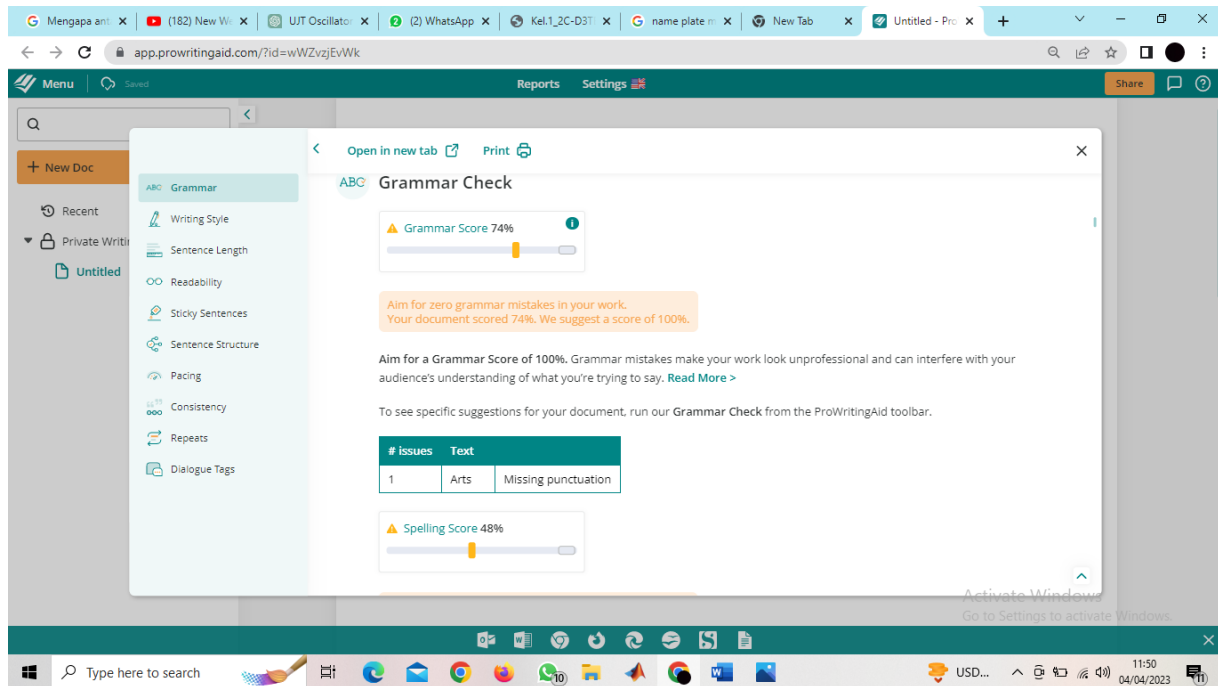
Figure 6 The examples of ProWritingAid Report

In the examples, the most common grammatical problems in students' writing is punctuation. Therefore, for the next meeting the lecturer can prepare materials and exercises on the topic thus the understanding about the aspect can be better and deeper. The expectation is that students do not repeat the same mistakes anymore in the next writing project as a sign of their progress. It is also expected that they do not make any other kinds of grammatical errors for they can also learn from the feedback provided by ProWritingAid website.

After implementing it to 40 students, the researchers find out that most of them get 41% to 60% in the Grammar Score. The grammar aspects they mostly have problems with are punctuation, capitalization and spelling which according to Brown (2007: 413), they are called as mechanics. Besides that, there are some other grammatical aspects that are found problematic such as determiner, nouns, word formation and parallel structure although the frequency is not high. The summary of the grammatical errors report is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Summary of Grammar Score and Grammatical Errors of the Participants

Grammar Score (%)	Frequency (students)	Grammatical Errors	Frequency (students)
10% – 20%	0	**Punctuation**	**30**
21% – 40%	1	**Spelling**	**21**
41% - 60%	18	Determiner	6
61% - 80%	14	Countable – Uncountable Noun	7
81% - 100%	7	**Capitalization**	**25**
		Word Formation	4
		Parallel Structure	14

Considering that the most common grammatical errors are punctuation, capitalization and spelling, the lecturer prepared more materials and exercises on them. Meanwhile, for the tenses and sentence structure, students do not have serious problems on that and therefore, the lecturer assumed that they can express their ideas well. They may need some improvement on effective sentences yet it is not the main focus, based on the report.

CONCLUSION

The researchers draw a conclusion that ProWritingAid is is useful to help students reduce grammatical errors in their writing. For students spesifically, they can get feedback on their work immediately and anytime, without waiting for the lecturer who only comes once or twice a week. They can also explore their knowledge independently in order to revise the errors they make. For the lecturer, ProWritingAid website is also beneficial in the way that the lecutrer does not need to check students' work manually every week which can be tiring sometimes. The report students upload is easier to evaluate and the lecturer can take it as the basis to prepare materials that are suitable with students' needs.

However, considering that in this research students use the free version of ProWritingAid, they can only input a 500-word text in every checking. Suppose they have longer texts to assess, it will be hard as they have to pay for the subscrption. This can be one consideration for the next researchers when they want to conduct similar study on the use of the website in the future.

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