The History and Emergence of grammarly

1 The Beginning

Founded in 2009 by Alex Shevchenko, Dima Lider, and Max Lytvyn, Grammarly began as an English writing assistance company.

2 The Idea

Their goal was to improve lives by improving communication while defining a new technological space.

They wanted to keep plagiarism out of students' writing (and asked the question "why was plagiarism happening?")

3 The Product

Grammarly focused on grammatical error correction (GEC) at first, and started out as a paid subscription service.

4 The Results

The product turned out to be a massive success, with everything from personal emails, to student work, to professional writing being edited using Grammarly.

5 The Growth

As Grammarly evolved, they created a free version, free extensions for commonly used web browsers, and supported editing even in sites/programs with in-house editing features such as Google Docs, LinkedIn, and Microsoft Office.

Today, it is offered as a keyboard on Apple and Android devices, and can be integrated editor on Ipads.

6 The Technology

Grammarly continued to evolve their software, relying on natural language processing and machine learning to help the AI edit correctness, clarity, engagement, delivery, politeness, and so on. They even managed to incorporate a tone detector to further analyze the context of the writing and provide further recommendations.
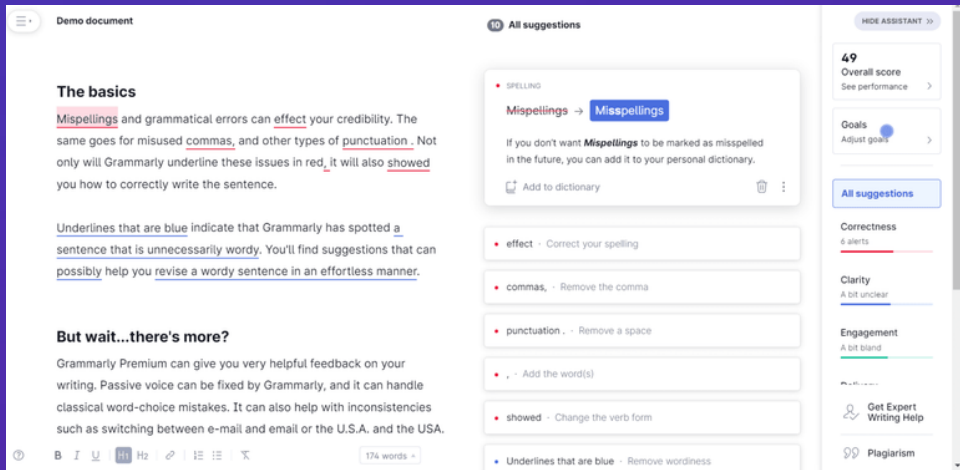
7 The Context

"Since the technology is rapidly developing, many programs have been built to support the language learner in achieving better language proficiency. As an example, Automated Writing Evaluation (henceforth, AWE), as one of the products of technology, brings an innovation in evaluating writing." (Nova, 2018, p.81)

A screenshot of the Grammarly web browser extension. From (McLeod, n.d.).

What do studies have to say about Grammarly in Education?

8 The Studies

8a The Good

ONeill & Russell (2019) shows that university students responded more positively to Grammarly support compared to traditional, non-automated grammar feedback. They also suggested that the optimal editing process includes a hybrid of AI proofreading with human explanation and exploration. They pointed out multiple studies which supported the positive effects of using Grammarly.

From Nova (2018), "the satisfaction of having a high rate of evaluation speed expressed by these students also showed the feature of this program in saving time in evaluating their academic writing and it can help them in revising their academic writing in a shorter time." (p.92)

8b The Bad

ONeill & Russell (2019) pointed out that students with low-level English comprehension may be unable to fully understand why Grammarly is suggesting corrections, thus placing a theoretical band-aid on the issue instead of addressing the root problem.

"A further disadvantage of automated feedback from the student perspective is the lack of human interaction" (p.44)

From Nova (2018), "some of the misleading feedbacks experienced by these students reflected how this program can give an inaccuracy result on its evaluation. The feedback was not in line with the user's intention and even changed the intended meaning and emphasis of the sentence they made." (p.89)*

*However, the integration of tone detection in 2019 may have been able to address this issue.

9 The Schools

There are many institutions that provide their students with Grammarly Premium and Grammarly for Education in order to help them with their writing! Here is a list from Tomar (2023):

National Louis University
Chapman University
Liberty University
University of Arizona Global Campus
University of Utah Graduate School
Walden University
Iowa State University
Lone Star College
Marshall University
Southern University of New Orleans

Even the institution I work at, UCW, provides Grammarly to students!

10 The Staff

"As a high school teacher and writer, I have found it to be much more thorough and detailed than what is included in popular word processing software used for writing, researching, and sharing documents." (McLeod, n.d.)

"At a university level, stylistic modifications, such as what is offered by Grammarly, are widely accepted and even suggested for use by Professors to help improve writing…Stylistic modifications are defined as spelling, grammar, punctuation, phrasing clarity, and plagiarism checks."

11 The Students

"A Grammarly survey study indicated that over 84% of students who use Grammarly believe that it helps improve their grades and allows them to recognize poor writing patterns to correct them in advance." (McLeod, n.d.)

However, some students like the one in Koltovskaia's (2020) study, did not necessarily utilize Grammarly correctly, over relying on the suggested corrections without trying to understand why the changes were suggested, and that low-level English learners will not benefit as much as higher level English learners.

12 The Conclusion

As technology advanced and became more prevalent in our society (from manually writing letters to typing up documents to sending emails, as well as editing software and the evolving of AI and machine learning), typing overtook writing as the main method of communication, and software/programs have been created to utilize technology and help automate/accelerate the process of proofreading and editing.

Grammarly is one of many programs out there that can, with appropriate usage, support users in making their communication more efficient and effective. It has been significant enough for educational and business institutions to employ it's features, and shows up perhaps one too many times on YouTube video advertisements.

As AI technology advances, and programs such as ChatGPT and Craiyon emerges, it will be interesting to see how Grammarly adapts and incorporates concepts from rival programs to survive in this digital-arms race.

References

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