

## Enhancing EFL Students' Writing Proficiency Through HelloTalk: A Qualitative Exploration of Technology-Assisted Language Learning

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### Abstract

*This study examines the use of the HelloTalk application in enhancing English writing skills among EFL students. Employing a qualitative descriptive research design, data were collected through direct observations of four undergraduate participants who had actively used HelloTalk for several months. The findings reveal that HelloTalk provides a dynamic and interactive platform for developing writing skills. Key features such as AI-assisted grammar corrections, vocabulary-building tools, and real-time feedback from native speakers significantly contribute to improving grammatical accuracy, enriching vocabulary, and fostering coherence in written communication. Additionally, the social networking aspects of HelloTalk encourage authentic language interactions, boosting students' confidence and engagement in writing practice. Despite some limitations, the study highlights HelloTalk's potential as a supplementary tool in EFL education. The app's ability to blend formal learning tools with social interaction features makes it an effective resource for creating an immersive and supportive language learning environment. The research underscores the importance of integrating technology, such as HelloTalk, into EFL curricula to optimize students' writing development. Recommendations include providing structured activities and training educators and learners to maximize the app's functionalities. This study contributes to the growing discourse on technology-enhanced language learning and offers valuable insights for educators and curriculum developers.*

**Keywords:** HelloTalk, EFL writing skills, language learning technology, AI grammar correction, social interaction in education

### INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the rapid advancements in technology and communication have profoundly transformed the landscape of education, including the way languages are taught and learned. Digital tools and applications have become integral to educational practices, offering dynamic and interactive learning environments. This evolution aligns with the increasing recognition of technology's role in facilitating student engagement, improving learning outcomes, and bridging gaps in traditional pedagogy (Reinhardt, 2018). Among the language skills critical for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, writing remains a particularly challenging area, requiring mastery of vocabulary, grammar, coherence, and stylistic precision. While

traditional approaches to teaching writing often rely on textbooks and in-class exercises, technological tools such as language learning apps provide novel opportunities for EFL learners to enhance their writing skills outside the classroom.

The integration of technology, particularly social media, into education has become a pivotal factor in enhancing students' learning experiences and skills development (Gunantar & Transinata, 2019). The presence of the internet facilitates access to diverse educational resources, enabling collaborative learning and knowledge sharing among peers and educators (Bukhari et al., 2020; Tuhuteru, 2023). One of the technological developments is social networking/social media. Social media platforms serve as effective tools for fostering engagement and motivation in students, as they provide interactive environments conducive to learning (Abbas et al., 2019). Moreover, the presence of the internet has a significant impact on people's lives, not only in getting information but also in the business world and education. There is an increase in the creation of technology at this time, and all parties in the world of education must be able to balance and keep abreast of existing technological advances. The environment around us is influenced by technology, which is greatly supported by the availability of the Internet network, which can affect other developments, especially in the world of education. In education, the Internet is used as a support in learning media. This has become a solution for the community related to information needs.

Language, as a medium of communication, encompasses a variety of skills that individuals must master to produce effective interactions. Among these, the four fundamental language skills—listening, reading, writing, and speaking—form the foundation of language proficiency. Writing, in particular, is a systematic skill requiring adherence to specific linguistic rules to convey ideas effectively through written media. Its target audience, the readers, necessitate clarity, coherence, and accuracy, making writing an indispensable competency for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Mastery of writing enables students to communicate their ideas, thoughts, feelings, and emotions effectively, thus playing a vital role in their academic and personal development.

Despite its importance, writing poses significant challenges for many EFL learners. Students often struggle with generating ideas, organizing thoughts, and receiving constructive feedback to refine their writing. Traditional classroom approaches, reliant on books, pens, whiteboards, and lectures, can further exacerbate these difficulties, leading to disengagement and boredom. However, technological advancements have introduced more dynamic and engaging methods of language learning. Among these is the HelloTalk application, a popular language-learning tool that transforms writing practice into a more interactive and enjoyable experience.

HelloTalk, available on Google Play, is a popular language-learning app on the market; the team is based in Hong Kong and Shenzhen, China. HelloTalk is an app that helps people practice the language they want to learn. It connects people who speak a language fluently, connects them with native speakers, or connects them with those who are trying to understand the same language. HelloTalk app sends messages, makes voice notes, gets a call, makes video calls, and makes status. In addition, the app has some features that facilitate the students, such as

reply, translation, favorites, copy, speak, transliteration, and more. The students can download it from the Google Play Store for Android and the App Store for iOS. However, the students will get new friends from around the world. It is attainable, does not cost much, and is easy to activate the HelloTalk app. Indeed, unconsciously, the students learn English and enhance their writing skills. Above all, the students use the app continually. Based on the explanation above, students' writing components using the HelloTalk app for learning English are important to explore.

The growing interest in integrating technology into language education is supported by research highlighting its potential to enhance learning outcomes. Studies by Dewi et al. (2022) and Safitri (2021) have explored the use of social media platforms in EFL contexts, emphasizing their role in fostering collaboration and engagement. Similarly, Solihin et al. (2023) demonstrated the effectiveness of HelloTalk in improving writing skills through project-based learning models. While these studies provide valuable insights, they often focus on general applications or oral communication, leaving a gap in understanding how specific features of HelloTalk contribute to developing critical writing skills.

Third, a study was titled about *An Analysis of EFL Writing Development of Undergraduate English Education Department Students*. It was carried out by Feliks et al. (2019). This study was analyzed the development of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing skills among students in the English Education Department. Results show variations in writing development, both positive and negative. This study provides an overview of key elements in EFL writing and reflects the diversity in students' writing abilities.

Fourth, a study was titled about *Students Perception on Social Media in Writing Class at STKIP Muhammadiyah Rappang, Indonesia*. It was carried out by Sakkir et al. (2016). The purpose study was investigated students' perceptions of using social media in English writing classes at STKIP Muhammadiyah Rappang, Indonesia. Most students show a positive attitude towards and a willingness to use social media in the writing classroom. However, factors such as large classes, lack of internet usage training, and insufficient facilities could be potential barriers. This study offers insights into students' views on using social media in English learning.

Fifth, a study was title about *Enhancing Writing Skills by Using The Project-Based Learning Model Through The Hello Talk Application* by Solihin et al. (2023). The study was described the implementation of a project-based learning model for learning to write English using the HelloTalk application and assess students' reactions. Using a qualitative descriptive method and involving 93 students from the second semester at AKPER YPIB Majalengka, the research indicates a high level of enthusiasm among students in implementing the project-based learning strategy with the HelloTalk program. The findings suggest that the project-based learning model using the HelloTalk application was successfully implemented, improving students' writing abilities with a positive response.

This research aims to address this gap by examining the application of HelloTalk in improving EFL students' writing abilities. By focusing on undergraduate learners, this study explores how the app's features—AI grammar tools, vocabulary enrichment, and real-time feedback—facilitate the development of writing competencies, including grammar accuracy,

vocabulary expansion, and textual coherence. Through this lens, the research offers a comprehensive analysis of HelloTalk's role as a supplementary tool in language instruction, contributing to the broader discourse on technology-enhanced language learning.

The findings of this study are expected to inform educators, learners, and curriculum developers about the practical benefits of integrating applications like HelloTalk into EFL teaching strategies. By addressing both the challenges and opportunities associated with technology in education, this research sheds light on the potential of digital tools to create engaging, personalized, and effective learning experiences for EFL students.

**METHOD**

***Research Design***

This study applied descriptive qualitative method. According to Airasian, Mills, and Gay (2012), descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the research. A descriptive research determines and reports the way things are. Descriptive research is scientific research that describes about event, phenomena or fact systematically dealing with certain area or population. Qualitative as a research related to the social and human problems which are used for exploring and understanding the meaning that be based on individuals or group experience through some process. According to Kunto (2016), descriptive research is research conducted to determine the value of independent variables, either one or more (independent) variables without making comparisons, or connecting with other variables. Qualitative descriptive research aims to describe, explain and answer in more detail the problems under research by examining as much as possible an individual, group or event.

***Participants of the Research***

Four students of Indonesian Moslem University were selected as participants of the study using purposive sampling technique. The requirement in choosing participants was students who have learnt English using Hello Talk App. Below is the table information about the participants of this research:

**Table 1.** Participants of the Study

NO	INISIAL NAME OF PARTICI PANTS	GENRE	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	AGE
1	AJ	Male	Undergraduate Degree	23 years
2	SS	Male	Undergraduate Degree	21 years
3	ANR	Female	Undergraduate Degree	22 years



4	AA	Female	Undergraduate Degree	21 years
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**Research Instrument**

The researcher used observation as the instrument of data collection. The aims were to make it easier to get information, effective, and smooth communication and to produce result clearly. In interview session, researcher used Indonesian to the participants. Thus, it could make the participants are easy to understand the questions.

**Data Analysis Technique**

This study adapted Miles, Huberman, and Saldana’s (2014) qualitative data analysis technique.

1. Data reduction

Data reduction refers to the processes of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstraction, and transforming the “raw data” that be found in written field records. In data reduction, the researcher made summary, code, create themes, create cluster, create divisions, and write memos.

2. Data Display

Data display refers to the designing the columns and rows of a matrix and determining the data, the form of data that should be entered in cell.

3. Withdrawal / verification of conclusions

The last step of analysis data is to take the withdrawal and find verification of conclusion.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**Findings**

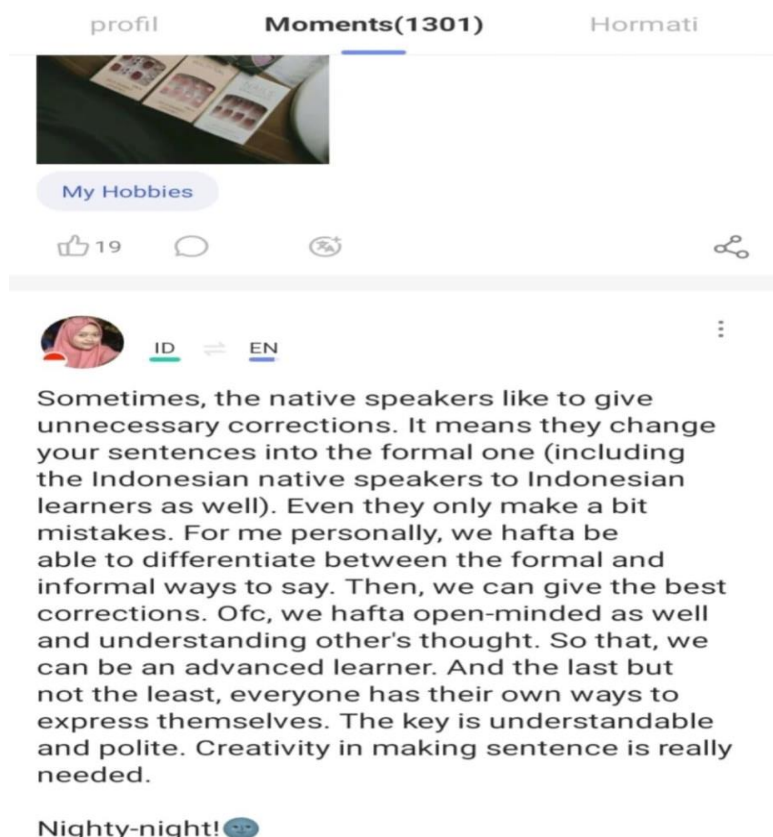
**1. HelloTalk app is used in developing EFL students’ writing skills**

The HelloTalk application provides a unique platform for students to interact directly with individuals from various countries, facilitating the development of foreign language skills, particularly in English. This study, utilizing a combination of screen capture data and direct observations, seeks to present a comprehensive analysis of HelloTalk’s role in enhancing the writing skills of EFL students. The findings reveal that four EFL students have actively engaged with the HelloTalk application over several months. Their use of the app to develop writing skills is examined in greater detail through the following extracts:

**Extract 1: Screenshot of Writing from AA**





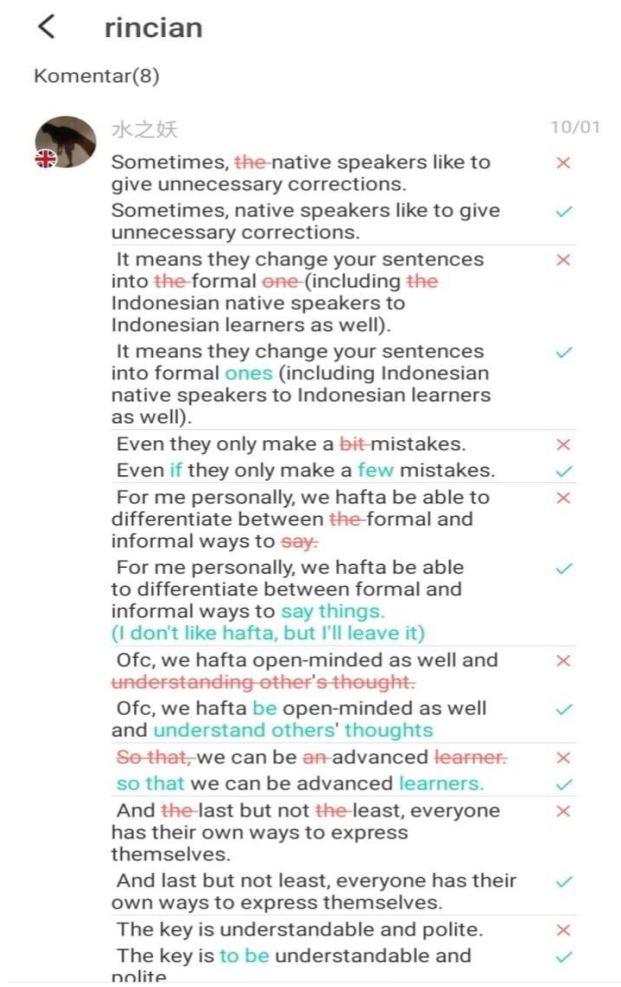


(AA Observation, October 2023)

Based on Extract 1, the observations of participant AA reveal her active engagement in sharing moments or stories, with a primary focus on developing her writing skills. This is evidenced by approximately 1,300 posts or written entries uploaded using the HelloTalk app's "Moments" feature. AA's consistent participation in sharing written content highlights her dedication to practicing and refining her writing abilities. The significant volume of posts further underscores her commitment to actively engaging with the HelloTalk community and leveraging the platform as a tool to enhance her writing proficiency.

Additionally, observations of corrections provided by native speakers and other learners offer valuable insights into areas where AA has demonstrated progress. While some corrections may appear unnecessary, they nonetheless reflect AA's continuous efforts to refine and enhance her language usage. AA's writing development is evident through her sustained activity in sharing written content, her consistent participation, and her receptiveness to corrections and feedback from other HelloTalk users. This is further supported by contributions from a native speaker, as illustrated in the following example:

**Extract 2: Correction From Native Speaker**

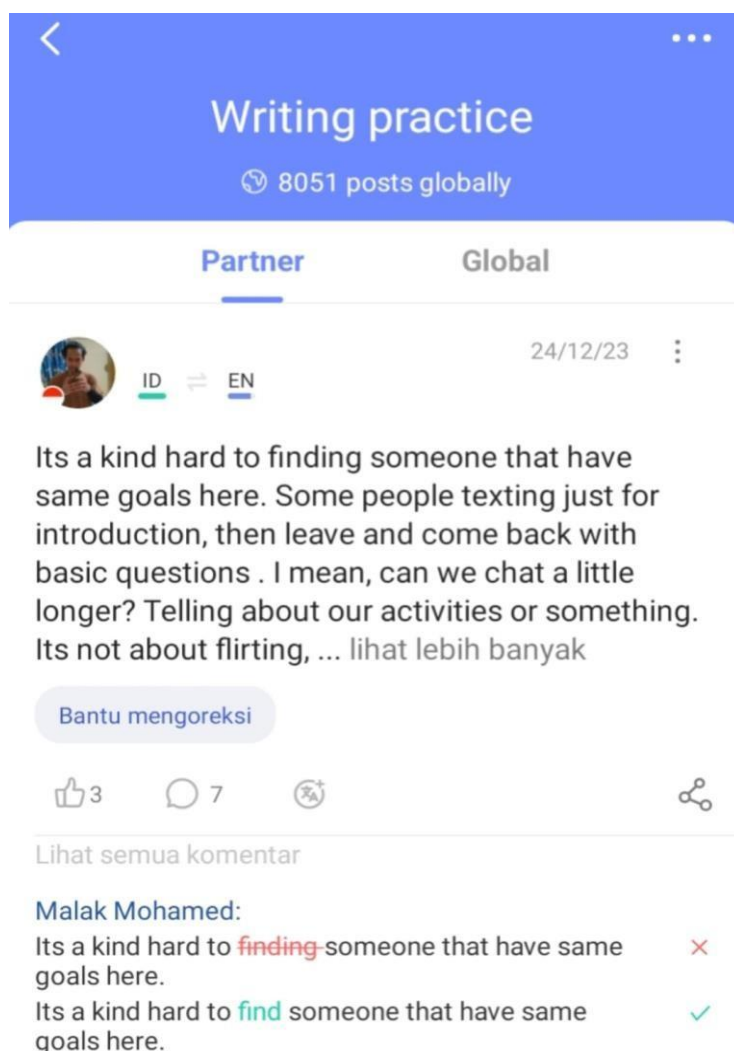


(AA Observation, October 2023)

Based on Extract 2, it can be concluded that the corrections provided by the native speaker focused on improving sentence structure and grammatical accuracy. These adjustments aim to enhance the clarity, accuracy, and fluency of expression in writing, reflecting efforts to foster better writing skills. The native speaker's corrections demonstrate a deliberate effort to provide precise feedback on grammar and formal language usage. Such interactions allow participants to identify and address errors, ultimately enhancing their English language proficiency.

In addition to AA, participant SS also utilizes the "Moments" feature for writing practice, as evidenced in the following example:

**Extract 3: Screenshot of Writing From SS**



(SS Observation, December 2023)

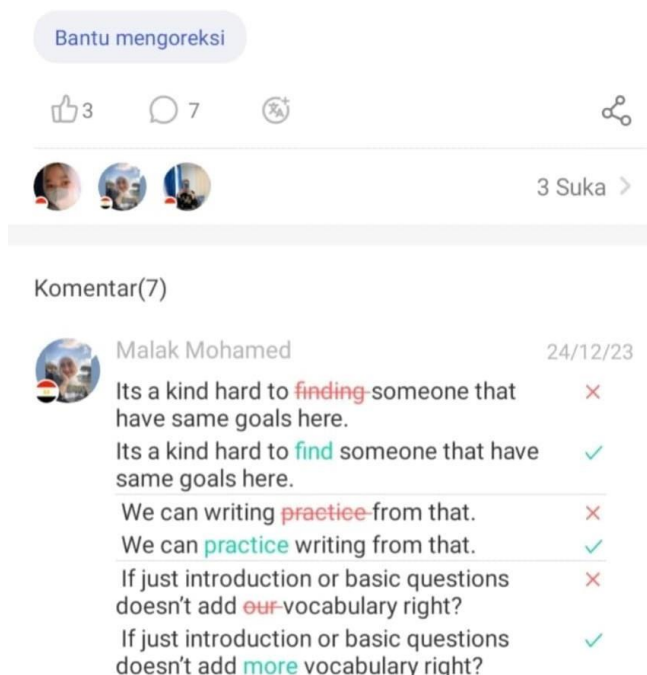
Based on Extract 3, observations indicate that participant SS actively engages in writing practice through the "Moments" feature on HelloTalk. In the shared text, SS articulates the challenge of finding individuals with similar learning goals on the platform. SS also expresses a desire for longer and more meaningful communication, emphasizing shared goals rather than casual or superficial interactions. This text reflects SS's recognition of the importance of writing practice within the broader context of language learning. Additionally, SS poses a reflective question about whether engaging in introductory or basic conversations can effectively contribute to vocabulary expansion, showcasing a thoughtful consideration of the language acquisition process.

Through this text, SS not only utilizes HelloTalk as a tool for writing practice but also shares insights and expectations regarding meaningful interactions on the platform. This



awareness of language learning dynamics highlights SS's proactive approach, which can serve as a positive factor in the development of writing skills.

**Extract 4: Correction from Native Speaker**



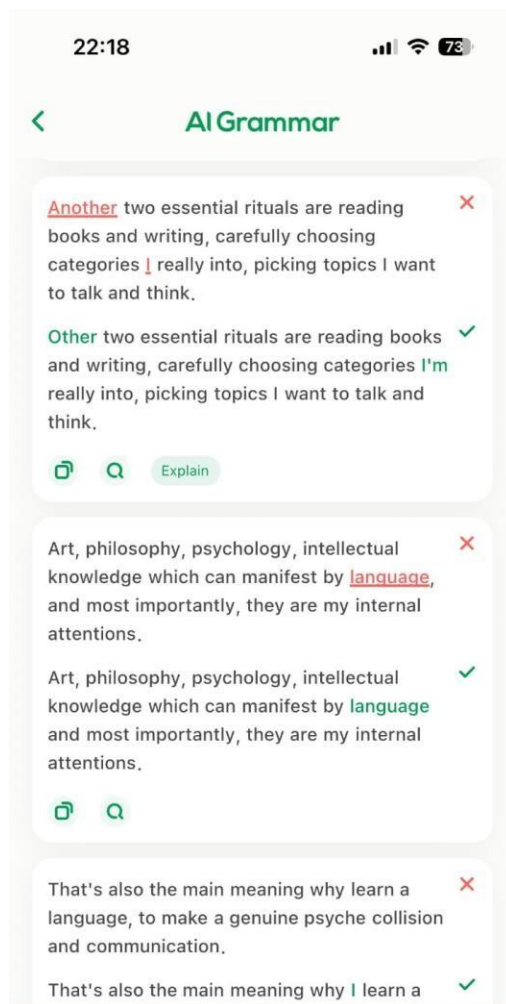
(SS Observation, December 2023)

In Extract 4, the corrections provided enable SS to refine and better understand the appropriate usage of words and sentence structures in a formal English context. This interaction highlights how engaging with native speakers can assist participants in correcting and enhancing their English language proficiency, particularly in writing.

The findings suggest that HelloTalk serves as an effective platform for EFL students, such as AA and SS, to improve their writing skills through consistent practice and interaction with native speakers. The corrections offered by native speakers play a critical role in guiding participants toward more accurate and formal language use. Both AA and SS demonstrate dedication, progress, and thoughtful reflections on their language learning journeys, underscoring the positive impact of HelloTalk on their writing development.

Unlike AA and SS, participant ANR utilizes the AI Grammar feature as an additional tool for improving her writing skills on HelloTalk. This decision reflects a comprehensive strategy to enrich vocabulary and deepen grammatical understanding, particularly in more formal language contexts. The AI Grammar feature provides instant corrections for grammatical errors and offers suggestions for more suitable word usage. This functionality allows ANR to immediately identify and understand her errors, facilitating more efficient and effective learning.

**Extract 5: ANR’s AI Grammar**



(ANR, Observation, December 2023)

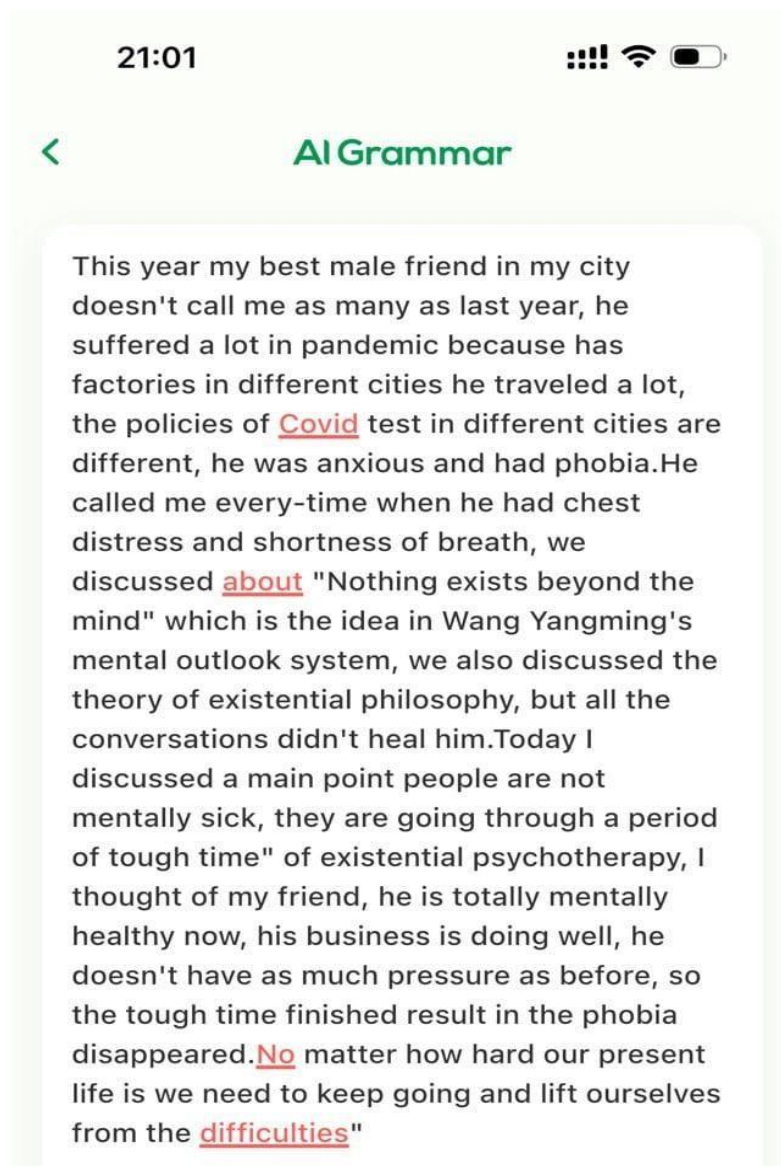
Furthermore, the AI Grammar feature functions as a supplementary, self-contained tool that can be accessed and utilized at any time. This flexibility allows ANR to structure her writing practice sessions according to her own schedule and needs, independent of the availability of native speakers. The consistent use of AI Grammar enables ANR to engage regularly in writing exercises, as the tool provides immediate feedback without requiring direct interaction. This feature allows ANR to optimize her time and focus her efforts on improving her writing skills effectively.

In this context, the integration of corrections from native speakers and the use of the AI Grammar feature creates a holistic strategy that facilitates ANR’s comprehensive development in

writing. This approach enables her to deepen her grammatical understanding, enrich her vocabulary, and refine her writing skills in a formal language setting.

Similarly, participant AJ also employs the AI Grammar feature as a tool for developing writing skills.

### Extract 6: AJ's Writing in AI Grammar



(AJ, Observation, December 2023)

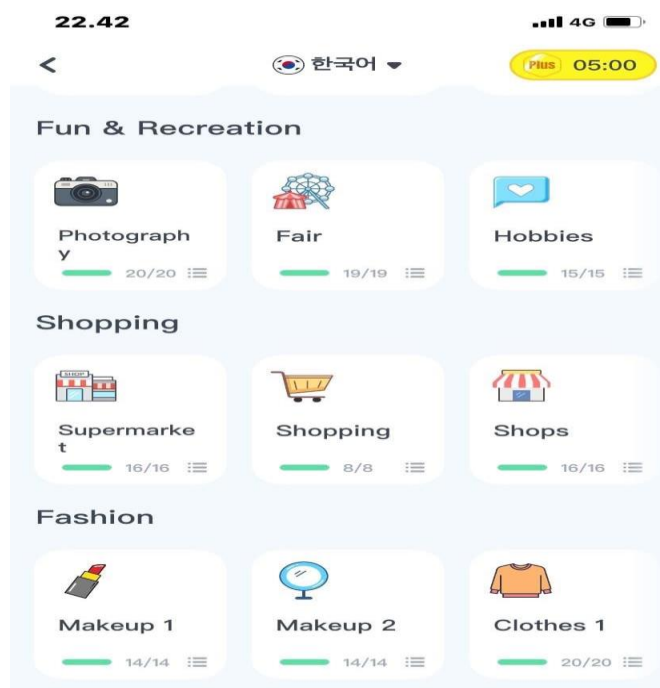
The color-coded text feature in HelloTalk allows AJ to easily monitor and comprehend the corrections provided in her writing. Red-colored text highlights errors in word choice or grammar, while green-colored text indicates that corrections have been made and the content now aligns with proper grammar rules.

This feature offers AJ a distinct visual advantage in identifying and addressing errors. The red color serves as a clear alert, drawing attention to areas requiring improvement, while the green color provides positive reinforcement, confirming that corrections have been successfully implemented. By consistently utilizing this feature, AJ can proactively address recurring issues in her writing. Beyond offering corrections, the color-coded system visually guides AJ through the changes, enhancing her learning process and reducing the likelihood of repeating similar mistakes in the future.

The significance of this feature lies not only in correcting errors but also in providing AJ with a deeper understanding of common mistakes. By comparing the initial red-colored text to the final green-colored corrections, AJ gains a constructive perspective on how to refine word usage and grammatical accuracy. This process supports a more effective and targeted approach to improving writing skills.

In essence, the color-coded feature functions as both a correction tool and a visual learning aid, enabling AJ to understand, correct, and enhance her writing skills through consistent interaction with HelloTalk. Additionally, the study also identified how HelloTalk aids in vocabulary development, as demonstrated by AJ's screenshots in the following examples:

**Extract 7: AJ’s Writing in learning Vocabulary**



(AJ, Observation, December 2023)

The feature utilized by AJ to expand her vocabulary is called "HelloWords." This tool includes curated vocabulary lists on topics such as music, sports, education, time, colors, and more. The feature is particularly well-suited for new users, offering an accessible and engaging way to build foundational vocabulary in various contexts.

## Discussion

HelloTalk distinguishes itself from traditional language learning applications by offering a social media-based platform that facilitates real-time interaction with native speakers. Such interactions are crucial for language acquisition, as they allow learners to engage in authentic conversations, thereby enhancing their linguistic skills through practical application (Hadiapurwa, 2023; Muftah, 2022). Features such as voice messaging, text chats, and text correction encourage immediate feedback, which is essential for effective language learning (Bilotserkovets et al., 2021; Dewi, 2022; Reinhardt, 2018). Additionally, the integration of translation and transliteration tools helps learners overcome language barriers, making the learning process more accessible and engaging (Uddin et al., 2022; Ludwig & Poel, 2015). The "Moments" feature further allows users to share experiences, foster a sense of community, and encourage cultural exchange, enriching the overall language learning experience (Reinhardt, 2018). In summary, the unique combination of social interaction and language learning tools positions HelloTalk as a valuable resource for learners seeking to enhance their language skills in a supportive and interactive environment.

The HelloTalk app transforms learning a foreign language into an enjoyable and intuitive experience. It enables users to connect with their language partners both synchronously and asynchronously, as messages can be sent even when a partner is offline. Once users establish a suitable language partner, they can communicate through various modalities, including text messages, voice recordings, voice calls, and video calls, fostering collaborative learning conditions.

HelloTalk supports the entire language learning process by providing built-in tools such as one-click translation services, pronunciation guides, transliteration, and text corrections, ensuring smooth and uninterrupted conversations. These features collectively facilitate continuous engagement and effective communication. The app organizes its functionalities into four main categories: "Talks," "Moments," "Search," and "Learn." Among these, posting on "Moments" is particularly popular, as it allows users to share public posts visible to native speakers of their target language. This feature provides users with additional exposure to the target language, creating an immersive environment conducive to language acquisition (Nushi & Makiabadi, 2018).

In this study, the students began accessing HelloTalk by creating an account using Google Mail and setting up a username and password. Subsequently, they completed their profiles by selecting their native language and indicating their proficiency level in the target language. These settings enabled the application to align with their learning needs, facilitating exploration of other users through the "Explore" and "Moments" interface features. Among the participants, three students selected the elementary level, while the remaining student chose the beginner level. After setting up their accounts, students could initiate conversations by greeting



native speakers they encountered on the platform. Common topics for conversation starters included hobbies, holiday trips, relationships, countries, and other general subjects.

The present study implies that social networking platforms like HelloTalk make language learning more engaging by positively influencing learners' behavioral intentions to use such tools and enhancing their commitment to learning. Moreover, the integration of social media in EFL classrooms has been shown to directly enhance learners' autonomous motivation, thereby making the language acquisition process more enjoyable and effective. Social media also fosters collaborative learning environments, contributing to high-quality outcomes such as increased motivation, positive attitudes, course satisfaction, and improved self-efficacy (Bui, Ulla, Tarrayo, & Pham, 2023).

## CONCLUSION

This study presents the significant role of the HelloTalk application in improving students' English writing skills by providing a dynamic and interactive platform for language practice. Through written conversations with native speakers from various countries, the respondents gained practical experience that contributed to their linguistic development. The findings reveal that HelloTalk offers an effective environment for enhancing writing competence, although challenges, such as incomplete interactions with native speakers, were noted.

The dual functionality of HelloTalk—as both a formal learning tool and a social interaction platform—presents unique opportunities and challenges for language learning. To maximize the potential benefits of this application, it is essential to adopt contextual strategies and provide additional support for users. These findings pave the way for recommendations on integrating HelloTalk and similar applications into English language learning contexts.

Educational institutions are encouraged to incorporate language exchange applications like HelloTalk into their curricula to enrich the learning experience. Structured activities that utilize the app's key features—such as real-time corrections, automatic translations, and voice messaging—can significantly enhance students' writing skills and overall language proficiency.

To further optimize the benefits of HelloTalk, it is imperative to equip educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively integrate the application into their teaching practices. Workshops or training sessions for both students and instructors can provide guidance on the app's functionalities and best practices for meaningful language exchange. This approach will empower users to navigate the platform confidently, fostering engagement and facilitating the development of essential language skills. The HelloTalk application demonstrates immense potential as a supplementary tool for English language learning, particularly in the development of writing skills. Future research could explore the long-term impact of using HelloTalk in different linguistic contexts, as well as its effectiveness when combined with other technological tools in language instruction.

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