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INDONESIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' GRAMMARLY INDEPENDENT APPROPRIATION: MOTIVATION AND PERCEPTION

Praditya Putri Utami¹, Evi Karlina Ambarwati², Indah Purnama Dewi³

Abstract: Corrective feedback is an important element in writing instruction. It brings benefits to students' domain-specific skills as well as students' overall writing development. Current technological advancements create affordances for technology-based feedback. Over the years, various Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) tools have been created by applying computational method to analyze texts then automatically generate assessment of grammar, mechanics and style, one of which is Grammarly. This study aims to explore the motivation and perspective of university students in appropriating Grammarly in instruction which does not promote AWE. Employing narrative inquiry, this study gathered the experience of 2 Indonesian university students using a variety of personal narrative. It was found that the participants' independent Grammarly appropriation is to be motivated by their belief in learning, feedback preference and English proficiency. Also, their proficiency shapes their appropriating behavior and perspective about the machine generated feedback. Regardless of the pros and cons, AWE seems to continue to gain significance in writing pedagogy in today's 21st century education environment as they promote students' learning as well as information, media and technology skills.

Keywords: *Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE); English as a Foreign Language; Grammarly; perspective; written corrective feedback*

INTRODUCTION

Corrective feedback is a necessary part of writing instruction. It usually informs the areas which students have achieved and need to improve. Therefore, corrective feedback improves students' writing skill. Moreover, corrective feedback may focus on lower-order writing skills, such as students' grammatical errors, spelling and sentence structure (Bitchener *et al.*, 2005) or the higher-order writing skill, i.e. the content (Valizadeh & Soltanpour, 2021). Nevertheless, a balanced form and content feedback is highly advised (Chugh *et al.*, 2022). As an instructional method, feedback is primarily provided by teachers in many classrooms. There are also varying types of feedback provided by teachers, such as direct, indirect, metalinguistic, focus, electronic and reformulation feedback (Ellis, 2009).

The current technological advances create affordances for technology-based feedback. Applying a computational method to analyze texts, Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE)

¹ Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang

² Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang

³ Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang

automatically generates assessment of grammar, mechanics and style. Due to its form-focus feedback, researchers suggest it should be utilized as an addition for teacher and peer feedback (Xu & Zhang, 2022). Both teachers and students in different writing classroom contexts generally expressed positive opinion about the integration of AWE (Hyland & Jiang, 2021; Jiang *et al.*, 2020).

Grammarly is one of the most easily accessible AWE available on the market. Students praise its accessibility and broad availability. It is accessible as an online application, a native desktop program, an extension for various web browsers, and Microsoft Word (Barrot, 2020). Numerous studies looked at different facets of integrating Grammarly into writing teaching. According to the studies, students who received automatic feedback from Grammarly made less mistakes than those who received indirect input from teachers (Wang *et al.*, 2013). Grammarly may also encourage pupils to learn on their own initiative. However, in other studies, students demonstrated mixed review of Grammarly that acknowledging some errors then eventually stop using it (Ambarwati, 2021).

Notwithstanding the pros and cons, AWE is becoming more and more important in writing pedagogy in the 21st-century learning environment since it helps students developing information, media, and technological skills. Today, AWE transforms as a self-assessment tool as technology affordance allows students to integrate the machine feedback even not being encouraged by teachers. Therefore, the current research aims to explore university students' motivation and perception in appropriating Grammarly in instruction which does not promote AWE. The following research questions are formulated to achieve the aim:

1. *What are the university students' motivation to appropriate Grammarly?*
2. *What are the university students' perceptions towards the advantages and disadvantages of appropriating Grammarly?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Corrective Feedback

Revision is a critical aspect of writing, essential for producing high-quality content. As an instructional method, feedback plays a pivotal role in assisting students in correcting errors and enhancing their drafts. Ellis (2009) delineated six types of corrective feedback commonly provided by teachers. Direct feedback involves teachers explicitly providing the correct form, while indirect feedback entails offering indications of errors without explicitly providing the correct answer. Metalinguistic feedback employs metalinguistic codes or brief grammatical explanations to address errors. Focus feedback involves teachers correcting most or all of the students' errors. Additionally, teachers may provide hyperlinks to concordances related to specific errors. Finally, reformulation feedback prompts students to rewrite sentences while retaining the original meaning. Table 1 summarizes the types of teacher-written corrective feedback.

Table 1. Types of teacher written corrective feedback (Ellis, 2009)

Type of CF	Description
1. Direct CF	The teacher provides the student with the correct form.
2. Indirect CF	The teacher indicates that an error exists but does not provide the correction.
a Indicating + locating the error	This takes the form of underlining and use of the cursors to show omissions in the student's text.
b Indication only	This takes the form of an indication in the margin that an error or errors have taken place in a line of text.
3. Metalinguistic CF	The teacher provides some kind of metalinguistic clue as to the nature of the error.
a Use of error code	Teacher writes codes in the margin (e.g. ww = wrong word; art = article)
b Brief grammatical descriptions	Teacher numbers errors in the text and writes a grammatical description for each numbered error at the bottom of the text.
4. The focus of the feedback	This concerns whether the teacher attempts to correct all (or most) of the students' errors or selects one or two specific types of errors to correct. This distinction can be applied to each of the above options.
a Unfocused CF	Unfocused CF is extensive.
b Focused CF	Focused CF is intensive.
5. Electronic feedback	The teacher indicates an error and provides a hyperlink to a concordance file that provides examples of correct usage.
6. Reformulation	This consists of a native speaker's reworking of the students' entire text to make the language seem as native-like as possible while keeping the content of the original intact.

Studies have been conducted in investigating the strategies teachers from various writing classrooms use in providing feedback. For example, 20 writing instructors in a Saudi university reported to prefer detailed and direct feedback that most students would likely to improve if the mistakes are indicated then corrected by the teachers (Hamouda, 2011). Another study, though, reported that teachers complained about time constraints in catering to students' various types of errors (Guadu & Boersma, 2018). In fact, researches were conducted to investigate the efficacy of different types of feedback. It was found that following direct feedback and explicit correction, upper intermediate L2 writers succeed to improve accuracy performance on use Simple Past Tense and articles (Bitchener *et al.*, 2005). Likewise, students prefer grammar feedback delivered directly (Zhan, 2016). The empirical evidence seems to suggest that direct feedback is advisable.

Unfortunately, an experiment shows that there were no statistically significant difference between groups of students who received direct corrective feedback and control group (Valizadeh & Soltanpour, 2021). Indeed, corrective feedback interacts with multiple factors. As postulated by Ellis (2010), in order to understand how corrective feedback determine learning outcomes, teachers and education institutions need to take into accounts interrelated factors, i.e. individual students factors, contextual factors and engagement with the feedback. Figure 1 shows the framework for investigating correcting feedback. Therefore, explaining the way corrective feedback might contribute to students' learning outcome is complicated and create opportunities for further investigation.

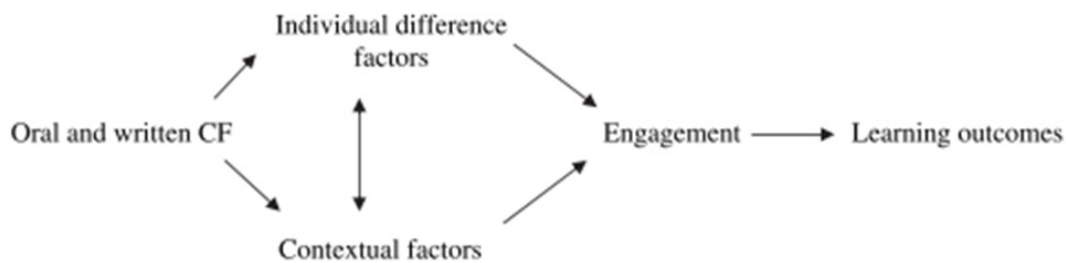


Figure 1. Framework for investigating corrective feedback (Ellis, 2010)

Nevertheless, feedback will be efficient only if students attend to the corrections. Ellis (2009) classifies students' response to feedback by whether or not revision is required. In the case where students do not need to make revision, students may be asked to study the correction. Recent studies have explored how students in various writing classroom context attend to the feedback. For example, despite their limited metalinguistic knowledge, two Chinese students were found to be able to make revision and use multiple sources to assist them in revising their drafts (Han & Xu, 2021). Moreover, another study reported the participants with various English proficiency believe that feedback could help in improving the quality of their draft that they attend to the corrections (Han, 2017). A study involving lower English proficiency students also shows that the students engage with teacher feedback in a relatively positive manner (Zheng & Yu, 2018).

Automated Writing Evaluation in writing instruction

AWE applies computational method to analyze texts then generates assessment in term of the texts' grammatical structures, mechanics and writing style. Some AWEs extends their function to also generate similarity reports which screen for plagiarism. Among the many available AWE, Grammarly is widely used by students (Barrot, 2020). Grammarly can be accessed online through web browsers. It is also now accessible as an online application, a native desktop program as well as an extension for various web browsers and Microsoft Word. Grammarly offers features, such as grammar checker, plagiarism checker and tone detector. The tone detector allows users to customize suggestions according to defined parameters, such as audience and style. All the features allow students to revise their writing assignments before submission.

A body of research investigated various aspects of AWE. One research examined the accuracy of the feedback and found that precision rates across error types are low (Bai & Hu, 2017). Another study also concerned about the quality of the feedback and concluded that standard validation of AWE as corrective feedback need to be set (Ranalli *et al.*, 2017). Despite the criticism, institutions continue to foster the integration of the machine feedback. Studies found that both teachers and students across writing classroom contexts expressed positive perspective of the AWE integration (Hyland & Jiang, 2021; Jiang *et al.*, 2020). In fact, an experiment which compared Grammarly feedback and teacher feedback found that students who received the automated feedback make less errors than those who received teacher's indirect feedback (Wang *et al.*, 2013). Studies also provided writing education direction that AWE is suggested to supplement peer and teacher feedback to improve students' writing quality (Xu & Zhang, 2022).

The technology affordance allows students to independently employ AWE hence offers new locus in the research. As shown in Figure 2, Zhang and Hyland (2018) proposed the concept of students' behavioral, cognitive and affective engagement with AWE. Behavioral engagement relates to the revision operations, meanwhile cognitive engagement concerns the way students noticing, understanding and using metacognitive and cognitive operations. Last, affective engagement deals with students' immediate emotional and attitudinal response to the automated feedback. It is important to note that the process of engagement is dynamic because the affective, behavioral and cognitive engagements work simultaneously. Studies reported how students engage with and internalize the generated feedback by the extent to which the participants revise or redraft their essays after AWE feedback. For example, only half of the students revised their essay after the generated feedback (El Ebyary & Windeatt, 2010). Likewise, two ESL students were found to only revised 57% of the total errors (Koltovskaia, 2020). These reports suggest that students tend to have low behavior, cognitive and affective engagements.

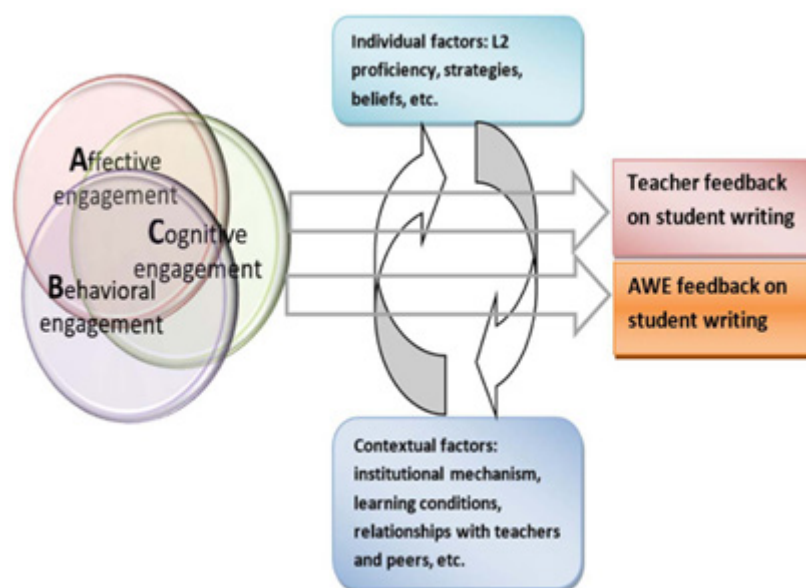


Figure 2. Student engagement with feedback on writing (Zhang & Hyland, 2018)

Another perspective can be used in perceiving the dynamic ways how students interact with the automated feedback. Feedback literacy can be defined as students' ability to understand and utilize feedback for learning (Henderson *et al.*, 2019). Previous research found that regardless English proficiency, students can benefit from the machine feedback (Ranalli, 2021; Ranalli *et al.*, 2017). However, another study confirmed that students with high proficiency usually question the automated feedback and make selective appropriation of the feedback. They are even aware of the drawback of the machine and might resist it because it has not always been successful in meeting their need (Ambarwati, 2021; Jiang & Yu, 2020). These findings show that students who appropriate AWE are likely to have goal-oriented learning whose learning beliefs are acquiring knowledge and improving skills.

Indeed, as proposed by Zhang and Hyland (2018), students engagement with feedback is likely to interact with individual factors, i.e. L2 proficiency, strategies and beliefs as well as contextual

factors, such as institutional mechanism and learning condition. Hence, investigations of the extent to which students appropriate AWE remains significant.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study utilized narrative inquiry in which participants tell detailed stories of a specific experience (Barkhuizen *et al.*, 2013). The research explores university students' experience in appropriating Grammarly independently (see Figure 3).

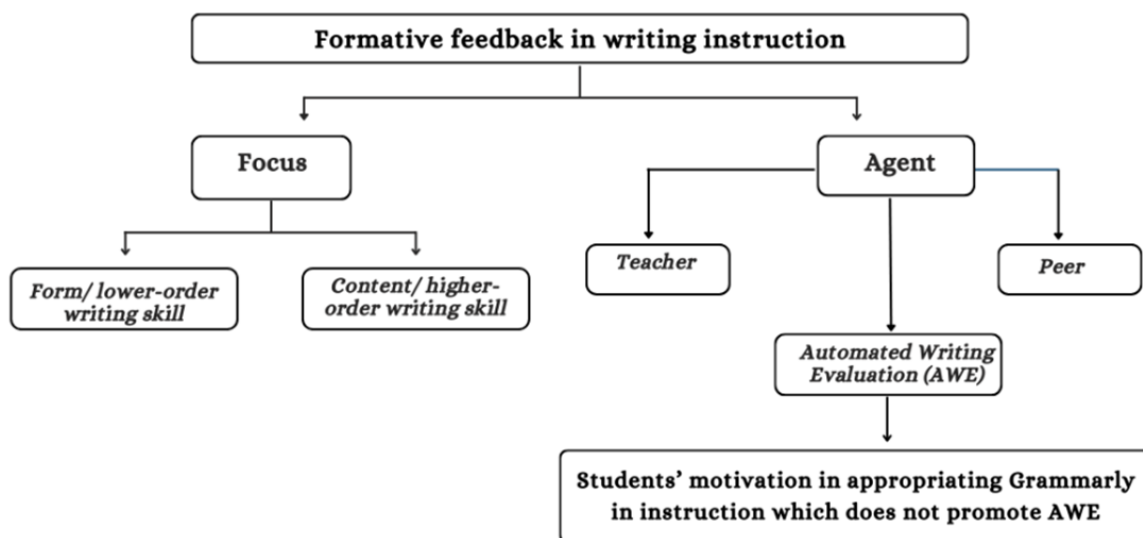


Figure 3. Research framework

Participants

This research focused on individual students' experience in an independent Grammarly appropriation context. The participants of this study were two Indonesian students, Bella and Joseph (pseudonym) who voluntarily participated in the research. They were fifth semester students of English Education Department in an Indonesian university. Throughout their study they have completed four compulsory writing courses, including Paragraph Writing, Essay Writing I, Essay Writing II and Academic Writing. They have also passed three Grammar classes, i.e. Basic, Intermediate, and Post-Intermediate English Grammar. Joseph and Bella were recruited in the study because they accomplished the writing projects in the Writing Courses and independently appropriated Grammarly to check their writing drafts. They were taught by different writing instructors in every class since they were from different classes. As part of the university policy, all first year students of English Education Department are required to take a university English proficiency test and the participants scores' were 506 (C1) and 600 (C1) respectively.

Data collection and analysis

To gain the two university students' experience in independent Grammarly appropriation, this study used multiple personal narratives, i.e. written and oral narratives. Written narratives

were gathered through narrative frames distributed via Google Forms. The participants explained their motivation and experience in using Grammarly to revise their essay assignments. While oral narratives were collected through audio-recorded interview. Their narratives were analyzed for emerging pattern and themes. Finally, member checking was conducted to validate the researchers’ analysis and interpretation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined 2 university students’ motivation in independently appropriating Grammarly. Their perception about the machine was also investigated. The analysis revealed that the students encountered Grammarly as a pop-up ad when they were browsing YouTube, an online video sharing platform. They were mostly concerned about grammar in their essays that they frequently utilized the grammar checker. The students also admitted that their interactions with the machine feedback have allowed them to improve both their writing quality and writing skill. However, they were aware of the potential error from the machine. While Table 2 summarizes the students’ independent appropriation behavior, the following paragraphs elaborate the findings and provide discussion related to the body of research.

Table 2. Grammarly independent appropriation behavior

Appropriation behavior	Joseph	Bella
Most used feature	Grammar checker Paraphrasing tool	Grammar checker
Motivation	Evaluate grammar knowledge	Timely feedback prior to submission
Tool evaluation	Likely to improve quality of writing, but the machine can be fallible	

Motivation to independent AWE appropriation

The participants of the current study knew Grammarly from the pop-up advertisement on the famous video sharing platform, YouTube. Then, they grew curiosity about the machine and decided to use it to check their essay draft prior to submission. Indeed, Grammarly is popular among university students and many have utilized it to support their writing assignment (Barrot, 2020). In regards to teacher corrective feedback, the participants mention that their teachers rarely provide feedback on Grammar.

The unmatched students’ feedback demand then motivates the participants to appropriate Grammarly independently. As shown in the answer excerpts, both participants’ self-perceived knowledge about English Grammar is lacking. Despite the Grammar courses they passed in the previous semesters, they found themselves still lacking in grammar.

“My teacher rarely discuss the grammar. I use Grammarly because I really suck at writing” (Bella)

“My teacher always gives feedback, but not on grammar. I use Grammarly because I’m still feeling lack on my grammar” (Joseph)

A similar situation was found in a Chinese university setting where students prefer feedback on grammar (Zhan, 2016). Even so, a writing class is advisably balance the focus on feedback, i.e.

form and content (Chugh *et al.*, 2022). The mismatch between the students' demand on grammar feedback and teachers' feedback practice seem to motivate students to independently seek for grammar feedback from the machine.

Moreover, the participants' independent appropriation was motivated by their lack of confidence and doubt in their drafts. Interestingly, they didn't always consult the machine for the feedback. Indeed, the participants are aware of their learning needs that they attend to the feedback accordingly.

"I use it when I am not confident with my writing, especially the grammar. Sometimes when I use this tool I do re-check and It's also not uncommon for me to find some sentences that are not appropriate" (Bella)

"I use it when I doubt about grammatical structure in my writing, and sometime also use it for paraphrasing" (Joseph)

Research has shown that regardless diverse language proficiency, students might still able to attend to feedback (Han, 2017; Zheng & Yu, 2018). One participant, Bella, even consulted other sources when in doubt with the Grammarly feedback. Similarly, students usually utilize various sources to help in understanding, checking and revising their draft (Han & Xu, 2021).

The same AWE encounter and independent appropriation was also found in a study in which participants independent appropriation was motivated by the unavailability of teacher feedback (Ambarwati, 2021). The characteristics of these students stimulate them to independently seek support from the machine. AWE has transformed into a self-assessment tool which allows them to test their grammar prior to submission then extend knowledge on both English grammar and writing. These findings show that students who appropriate AWE are likely to have goal-oriented learning whose learning beliefs are acquiring knowledge and improving skills. They are fully aware of their learning needs so they appropriate the machine accordingly. Indeed, empirical study shows that students who appropriate AWE usually have goal-oriented learning motivation in which they innately select and appropriate the machine generated feedback (Jiang & Yu, 2020).

All in all, feedback has long been recognized as a valuable tool for helping students enhance their writing skill. The students' Grammarly appropriation is shaped by their preference over form feedback. Moreover, their learning belief encourages the students' to control their AWE use.

AWE: Perception of university students

The participants of this study express their perception of Grammarly in a positive manner. They mention that the machine is easy to access. Joseph also compliments the alternatives generated by the machine. Overall they indicate that the generated feedback help them to improve their writing quality.

"I usually re-check the feedback because some sentences are not appropriate. This is just a human-made-tool so it'll never be accurate" (Bella)

"Sometimes the feedback doesn't make any sense, so maybe the machine makes mistake too" (Joseph)

Studies also found the same positive perspective about AWE integration from students in varying writing classroom contexts (Hyland & Jiang, 2021; Jiang *et al.*, 2020). In fact, due to the

numerous benefits, AWE is suggested in writing instruction to amplify peer and teacher feedback (Xu & Zhang, 2022).

However, the participants were found to make selection appropriation of the machine feedback. Similarly, many students made few revisions following the generated feedback (El Ebyary & Windeatt, 2010; Koltovskaia, 2020). From the perspective of Zhang and Hyland 's (2018) AWE engagement concept, the participants own moderate behavioral and cognitive engagement. Their ability to exploit the metacognition to notice, understand and analyze the feedback allows them to make selection appropriation. They usually "re-check" the feedback because they think that the feedback sometimes "doesn't make any sense".

Indeed, students' ability to understand and utilize feedback for learning are determined by various individual factors (Henderson *et al.*, 2019). One of the factors is students' L2 proficiency. Students' L2 proficiency, especially meta-language is required because the machine generated feedback utilize many terms (Ranalli, 2021; Ranalli *et al.*, 2017). Studies reported that students with high proficiency tend to question the machine feedback (Ambarwati, 2021; Jiang & Yu, 2020). Similarly, the participants usually analyze and select the feedback. Despite the self-perceived lack of grammar knowledge, the fact that they could analyze the automated feedback shows that their true proficiency is higher than that of they perceive.

Interestingly, despite the error-prone automated feedback, the participants still use Grammarly as a source to improve their writing quality. This shows that the students own high emotional engagement with the AWE.

I am actually still using this tool when I'm not confident about my writing (Bella)

The participants' emotional engagement with the machine shows their positive attitude about machine feedback (Zhang & Hyland, 2018). This positive attitude also reflects the students' learning belief. Their attitude shows their effort to acquire knowledge about proper English grammar and to improve their writing skill (Jiang & Yu, 2020).

In summary, the students' perception of Grammarly is positive. They show moderate behavioral and cognitive engagement in which they make selective appropriation of the automated feedback. Their L2 proficiency has allowed them to further analyze the feedback then revise accordingly. Regardless their analysis of the fallible machine, they emotionally engaged with the feedback and the machine that they continue to utilize the AWE.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

The present research investigated the motivation and perception of university students in appropriating Grammarly independently. In an instruction which does not promote AWE, students' are motivated to use the machine to boost their confidence, especially when teachers rarely focus their feedback on grammar. It was also found that students' response with automated feedback was shaped by their L2 proficiency and learning belief. English proficiency enables the participants to critically compare and analyze the generated feedback with the grammar rules, they usually make selective appropriation. Although they are aware of the error-prone feedback, the students generally perceive in a positive manner that they continue the AWE appropriation. These findings can inform writing instructors and institutions to mandate corrective feedback in the writing classroom.

However, conclusions should only apply to the context of the current research and some limitations of this study should be considered. Future research might collect data by means of stimulated recall and/or screencasts to gain deeper participants' experience. It would also be beneficial to include more participants so patterns of behavior are possible to withdraw.

Finally, pedagogical implications can be made. This study clarifies that technology affordances allow AWE to continue gaining significance in writing pedagogy. Institutions and writing teachers need to navigate for effective and highly engaged AWE appropriation.

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NHÀ XUẤT BẢN
ĐẠI HỌC QUỐC GIA HÀ NỘI
16 Hàng Chuối – Hai Bà Trưng Hà Nội

Giám đốc: (024) 39715011
Tổng biên tập: (024) 39714736
Kinh doanh: (024) 39729437
Biên tập: (024) 39714896
Fax: (024) 39724736

Chịu trách nhiệm xuất bản:

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