

The Correlation between Students' Grammar Mastery and Their Writing Ability in Descriptive Text

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to seek the correlation between students' grammar mastery and their writing ability in descriptive text. This is correlational study was conducted to all seventh-grade students of a high school in Bangka Belitung, Indonesia as the population of the study as well as the sample since the number of the population below 50. This study used two kinds of test as the instruments to collect the data; a grammar mastery test which consists of 25 questions and a descriptive writing test. The Boardman scoring scale was used to measure the score of students' writing. The result of this study showed the result of correlation coefficient computation was 0,305 and for the critical value from a significant level table 0.05/5% was 0,349. It is considered that the null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was rejected. In other words, there was no significance correlation between students' grammar mastery and their writing ability. The writer found out that most of the students received good scores both in grammar and writing test but they had low scores in other aspects of writing such as; content, organization, word choice, and mechanics.



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Introduction

Writing is one of the skills in English language. In recent years, many researchers have allocated considerable effort to investigation of the contrast and comparison between the processes in L1 writing and L2. Writing is related to the process of using symbols like spaces, punctuation, and letters of the alphabet to convey ideas and thoughts in a readable form (McLean, 2012). Writing is used by people to find opinions or ideas, so it can be used and understood by themselves. Therefore, the ability to write has many aspects and approaches in itself. Good writing means the writer should be able to produce correct grammatical, or logical argument to answer every question in an exercise, an exam or an essay. Good writing focuses on a particular audience.

The audience as the teachers who mark every student's work. The teacher are likely to be the kind of people who have an interest in grammar or spelling. The students have to consider the command of language as an important ideas to share (Abdallah, 2015). Moreover, Sousa declared that writing in English regarding writing mechanic such as placing adjectives, punctuating, spelling and forming the letters of the English alphabet, and one's English proficiency such as understanding of the English composition grammar and the amount of the one's mental lexicon (Sousa, 2011). According to the statement above, it means that students can express feeling through written communication. By writing, they can express the ideas, or feelings that are combined in words. In other words, writing is a skill which can make someone showed their feelings or writes the ideas that exist in their mind by making sentences (paragraph) by using eyes, brain or hand.

Dealing with Indonesian curriculum 2013, junior high school students have to be able to describe the things in the descriptive text such as describe (a person, thing, place) by using language elements correctly. The element of the identification in descriptive text is identifying the specific participant, they are; animal or event also person, thing and place. Writing is considered quite difficult for the students because they had to write correctly. Grammar is the supporting component which is learnt by many students in the

school. Sometimes, some students have less motivation did the tasks. In learning descriptive text, there were some difficult problems that faced by the students and the teacher.

In accordance with the preliminary study that had been provided by the writer in the essay form, the writer initiated that the students had low understanding in terms of learning greetings and partings, introducing oneself and others, expressing gratitude and descriptive text. It can be seen from the mean score of students' writing test grammar result is 39 and descriptive test result is 47.5. In this case, some of them still did not understand how to make and develop a topic well into paragraph as they still did not know about the meaning, the generic structure and the function of text in writing. There were several factors that might influence the students' quality of writing, as follows; vocabulary, students' lack of grammar, notions, motivation to write and teacher method of teaching writing.

Dealing with the interview with the English teacher, the students had low grammar mastery which became the barrier when they wanted to write well of English writing. If the students were confused to make a paragraph, then the teacher kept giving them worksheet and asked them to translate the text by looking up the dictionary (English – Indonesia or Indonesia – English).

Considering the statement above, grammar mastery and writing ability had some relationships. The use of target grammar would increase the students' writing. It means that the lack of grammar was one of the problems that faced by the students. The important thing in learning English was the students had to master a wide variety of grammar. The student could not do anything without learning grammar. The teacher did not give a special concern in it. Also, there was no curiosity and lack of ability among students was also the reason they were difficult to apprehend the process in learning grammar. Due to the things above, it was important for each student to know well about language elements, grammatical rules and vocabularies in learning and writing descriptive text. Students were able to know about grammar through their ability in writing effectively by using grammar guidelines, especially in descriptive text. In conclusion, it indicated that grammar had a great role and correlation in learning writing descriptive text.

Thus, the writer tried to connect especially between writing and descriptive text. The writer would like to determine the ability level of the student by learning both grammar mastery and writing descriptive text then the writer would like to find out the correlation between grammar in writing (especially in students writing descriptive text).

There were some related researches which have been conducted previously by other researchers, such as: Yun Hsuan Huang (Huang, 2011), Krista Uibu (Uibu, 2015), and Daniel (Daniel, 2017). After contrasting the above three previous studies, it indicated some differences and similarities. In this research, the writer focused on students' grammar mastery and writing skill. The first, second, and third previous studies had the same focus on the students' grammar and their writing ability. On the other hand, this research had the differences with study with those studies. The first study focused on the students' general proficiency test, and chose first grade of senior high school students as the participants in his research. The second one aimed to reveal the causes of students' grammar mistakes, and the difference method that was used by the teachers in correcting the students' mistakes and she chose first grade of primary school as the participants. Then, the last one chose first grade of senior high school as the participants. Whereas, in this research, the writer limited grammar mastery in the language features of descriptive text related to the syllabus which would be tested to the students, such as noun, verb, and adjective.

Grammatical rule is a key for the mastery of language since it is a standard set that you have to follow in order to write and speak better (Woods, 2010). People cannot make the words, paragraphs correctly unless they understand how the words should be arranged together. Most of English students are still confused about grammar and sometimes difficult to convey things they want to say. At the same time, they are even confused when they find and write English in written form, especially to deal with sentence structure, because they do not even understand the form used in English. Therefore, they should pay more attention to the form, the rules in constructing proper sentence. In addition, a good grammar makes a writer understand how to make writing successful. It helps the students arrange words into coherent sentences, and form those sentences into paragraphs.

Students all over the world should realize the importance of learning sentences and word structures because grammar is needed by human beings and it is used to help them speak and write in their daily life (Aarts, 2011). Grammar is a representation of the language structure in linguistic units such as phrases, words, that arranged to produce the sentences in the language. It grasps the meanings and functions of these sentences that have in the whole system of the language. It may or not consists of the representation of the sounds of a language (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

Aarts declared that grammar is concerned with the system or the structure of a language and of clauses and phrases (Aarts, 2011). It simply means that grammar is crucial since it is the study of words, and how people use them in sentences and change in different situations. In line with the statement above, Fromkin

pointed out that grammar of a language consists of sounds patterns, words and the rules all of these to combine them to deliver the right meaning. To know and understand the nature of a language people must know and understand about the nature of its grammar (Fromkin et al., 2017). In other words, grammar is the use of the words that change their form and combine the words to make proper sentences. The existence of grammar is important for people who want to learn a language.

Writing is like a challenge. It is related to the process of using symbols like punctuation, spaces, and letters of the alphabet to convey ideas and thoughts in a readable form (McClean, 2012). It simply means that writing is the act of using symbols in a written form and it describes what a specific term means (Bailey, 2011). Sousa declared that writing in English related the writing mechanic (placing adjectives, punctuating, spelling and forming the letters of the English alphabet), one's content knowledge, and one's English proficiency (understanding of the English composition and grammar and the amount of the one's mental lexicon) (Sousa, 2011).

Furthermore, Javed mentioned that English academic writing is considered as the most complex and difficult skill for the students which indicate the ability to tell and retell the information in the form of the text with proper grammar and opinion with proper unity and coherence even native speakers find it difficulty in showing a good command of writing (Javed et al., 2012).

In conclusion, writing is the ability or process of people who writes something written such as sentences, paragraph, ideas, line, which can make the readers can easily understand what they write. Writing is usually used by people as a tool of communication. At the same time, the ability to write is crucial for students because it will help them to upgrade their knowledge, creativity, and imagination through writing.

Descriptive text is a text that describes what people object or place in a story looks like. The purpose of descriptive text is to describe particular person, thing, and place in a specific way. In this research, the writer focused on this type of text because it contains the description of something about the characteristic of an object, animals, things and person and it is one of the materials in the syllabus.

Method

In this study, the writer selected the Seventh Grade Students' of SMPN 3 Puding Besar in Academic Year 2020/2021 as the subject of the research. According to Covey, population is the groups that must apply the results of their research. In essence, a population is the number of a group of people or individuals who have certain characteristics that will be used as writer concerns (Covey, 2011). Frankel and Wallen defined population as a study that is conducted in a large group with the aim of applying the results within a group itself (Fraenkel & Wellen, 2006). In other definition, a population referred to an object or called by the statisticians as a universe or in another sense as group of human beings.

In a research study, a sample means of items, a group of individuals, or events which represents; the characteristics of the larger group which the sample is drawn (Mills & Gay, 2018). On the other hand, sample means the part of the population that the writer needs to analyze or observed. This is aimed to obtain some information about population. In another meaning, sample is from a larger group of people or population that are taken which is aimed for measurement in research (Ary, 2010).

In this research, the writer took all the population as sample. According to Sugiyono, if the amount of population is less than 100, all of them can be taken as the sample. If the population is more than 100, the writer can take 10%-15% (20%-25%) as the sample (Sugiyono, 2019). Meanwhile, the sample of this research were 40 students chosen by using total sampling techniques. The reason for taking total sampling was because the population of this study was less than 100 participants.

Table 1 <Sample of Study>

Group	Class	Male	Female	Number of Student
Experimental	VII A	10	10	20
Control	VII B	10	10	20
Rata-rata		20	20	40

An instrument was very important to be used, because it was a way to get the data that the writer needs. For collecting the data, the writer used test as the instrument of this study. A test could be meant to be reliable if the measurements were accurate and consistent. The main technique that was used in the

research called test, which aimed to collect the data also measured the students' grammar mastery and their writing ability in descriptive text. Among them consist of answering the questions that have been given or the activities that must be performed by them. The purpose of a test was to provide valid information about the students' knowledge and abilities. The test could also be interpreted as a collection of practice or questions used to measure; intelligence, the skills, abilities, and talents of a group or an individual.

In this research, the writer used test as the instrument to collect the data. There were tests in written form, such as; grammar mastery test in term of simple present tense and writing ability test in term of descriptive text. For grammar mastery test in term of simple present tense, the writer used multiple-choice test in grammar test. The multiple choice itself had two parts, such as; a premise and a set of alternative answers in it. The writer gave 40 questions in 60 minutes for the students. While, for writing ability test in term of descriptive text, the students are asked to make an essay (paragraph form) in descriptive text, containing 50-75 words in 60 minutes of each topic of the test. They had to describe 3 topics in good writing such as; my lovely cat, my mother, and my hometown. The tense that was requested to be used was the present tense.

Furthermore, students' writings were analyzed by these five elements such as; content, organization, grammar, word choice and mechanics. The result of test in this research was conducted by two raters. They were the English teachers at MTSN 2 Bangka Barat, Mam Ani Malini, S.Pd and Ms. Miftahul Jannah, S.Pd. Then, the writer used the table of evaluation which was adopted from Boardman. The writer calculated the data from the results in this research by using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science) 16.0. The writer also used correlation product moment in analyzing the data which developed by Carl Pearson. Correlation product moment was used to show if there was a relationship among X variable and Y variable.

The writer used SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science) 16.0, especially Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient in order to see the validity of the test from the instrument. Therefore, r-count ought to compare with r-table in order to find out whether there is any significance or not. If the value of r-count is equal, or greater than the value in r-table, it can be concluded that the item is vice versa and valid or can be concluded that the item is not valid (Hatch & Farhady, 1982). The r-table of critical values for two tailed significance at 0.05 of 41 students was 0.308 (df: $N - 2 = 41 - 2 = 39$). Furthermore, after the try-out of the grammar test, the result of the try-out was calculated by microsoft excel program to find the valid items from the questions. In accordance with the try-out result of grammar test, the writer found that there were 25 valid from 40 items. Thus, the 25 valid items were used as the instrument of the test.

Based on the try-out result of writing test, the writer found that My Lovely Cat was the most valid. The writer used the topic My Lovely Cat as the instrument of the test. According to the computation of reliability test, it showed that My Lovely Cat was 0.741, My Mother was 0.718, and My Hometown was 0.612. Therefore, My Lovely Cat was the only one topic that could be used as an instrument or test in this research.

Based on the objectives of the study above, the hypothesis of the study could be identified as if r_o is same or higher than r_t , the H_a is accepted. It means there is a significant correlation between grammar mastery and writing ability. If r_o is lower than r_t , the H_a is rejected. It means there is no significant correlation between grammar mastery and writing ability.

Results and Discussions

To know the students' grammar mastery score, the writer gave a grammar test, consisted of 25 multiple-choice questions. The test was given to the VII grade students of SMPN 3 Puding Besar. The students had to answer the grammar test in the form of 25 multiple-choice questions. The writer collected the data on the students' grammar mastery as variable x.

In this section, the writer presented the statistical analysis of the correlation between students' grammar mastery and their writing ability. There were some computations that must be done before calculating the correlation analysis, such as normality test of grammar mastery and their writing ability and also the linearity test of both variables.

The writer collected the data on the students' grammar mastery as variable x. The writer needed to find out the descriptive analysis of grammar mastery, including the mean, median, mode, maximum score, minimum score, and standards deviation of the scores. To find out the descriptive statistics of grammar mastery, the writer used SPSS 16.0, such as:

Table 2 < Statistical Scores of Grammar Mastery >

N	Valid	32
	Missing	0
Mean		67.25
Std. Error of Mean		1.689
Median		68.00
Mode		76
Std. Deviation		9.555
Variance		91.290
Range		44
Minimum		40
Maximum		84
Sum		2.152

The descriptive analysis of grammar mastery was presented in the table above. The maximum score of students' grammar mastery was 84.00 also the minimum score of students' grammar mastery was 40.00. Furthermore, the sum of students' grammar mastery was 2.152, the mean was 67.25, and the standard deviation was 9.555. Meanwhile, the specifics of each category of students' grammar mastery could be seen in the table below.

Table 3 <The Category of Scores Students' Grammar Mastery>

Score Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
80-100	Very Good	2	6,25%
66-79	Good	17	53,12%
56-65	Enough	11	34,38%
40-55	Less	2	6,25%
30-39	Fail	-	-
Total		32	100%

The result revealed that 2 students (6,25%) were placed into very good category, 17 students (53,12%) were placed into good category, 11 students (34,38%) were placed into enough category, and 2 students (6,25%) were placed into less category. The "good" category was determined as the most frequent level of students' grammar mastery scores.

The data on students' writing ability was gathered from their writing test. The test was given to the VII grade students of SMPN 3 Puding Besar. In writing test, the students were asked to make an essay (paragraph form) in descriptive text, containing 50-75 words in 50 minutes from the topic that was given by the writer. They had to describe the topic (my lovely cat) into good writing. The writer collected the data on the students' writing ability as variable Y. The writer needed to find out the descriptive analysis of writing ability, including the median, mode, mean, maximum score, minimum score, and standards deviation of the scores. Therefore, to find out the descriptive statistics of writing ability, the writer used SPSS 16.0, such as:

Table 4 <Statistical Scores of Writing>

N	Valid	32
	Missing	0
Mean		71.50

Std. Error of Mean	1.833
Median	75.50
Mode	77
Std. Deviation	10.367
Variance	107.484
Range	41
Minimum	45
Maximum	86
Sum	2.288

The descriptive analysis of writing ability was presented in the table above. The maximum score of students' writing ability was 86.00, also the minimum score of students' writing ability was 45.00. Furthermore, the sum of students' writing ability was 2.288, the mean was 71.50, and the standard deviation was 10.367. Meanwhile, the specifics of each category of students' writing ability could be seen in the table below.

Table 5 <The Category of Scores Students' Writing Ability>

Score Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
80-100	Very Good	5	15,63%
66-79	Good	17	53,12%
56-65	Enough	8	25%
40-55	Less	2	6,25%
30-39	Fail	-	-
Total		32	100%

The result revealed that 5 students (15,63%) were placed into very good category, 17 students (53,12%) were placed into good category. 8 students (25%) were placed into enough category, and 2 students (6,25%) were placed into less category. The "good" category was determined as the most frequent level of students' writing ability scores.

Some calculations had to be completed before the correlation analysis could be calculated. The writer did a testing requirement analysis, namely normality test, prior to evaluating the connection between students' grammar mastery and their writing ability using the Pearson Product Moment Formula. Normality test was used to know whether instruments have normal distribution or not. In this research, the writer used One Sample Shapiro-Wilk (Used for small samples), because the sample in this research was less than 50.

Therefore, while testing the normality of the data, the data could indicate that it was normal if the value was higher than 0.05. Meanwhile, the data could indicate that it was not normal if the value was smaller than 0.05. A normality test was done based on the students' grammar mastery and their writing ability scores. In this part, the writer showed the statistical analysis of the correlation between students' grammar mastery and their writing ability.

Table 6 <Test of Normality Grammar Score>

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Grammar Score	.127	32	.200*	.951	32	.150

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance

From the calculation of SPSS program above, the output of One Sample Shapiro-Wilk, showed that the significance value of writing ability was 0, 274 which were higher than 0,05. The result of the data showed that, the data was normal because the percentage of the significance (sig) > 0,05.

The linearity testing was used in order to know whether the data was linear or not. As like in normality test, if the value was higher than 0.05, it revealed that the data was linear. If the value was smaller than 0.05, it revealed that the data was not linear. This test was done by using spss 16.0 program. Linearity test was conducted towards the grammar mastery score and writing ability score which were collected from the students.

Table 7 <Linearity Test of Grammar Mastery and Writing Ability>

			ANOVA TABLE				
			Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Writing Score*	Between Groups	(Combined)	234.377	8	29.297	.536	.817
		Linearity	29.615	1	29.615	.542	.469
	Deviation from Linearity		204.762	7	29.252	.535	.799
	Within Groups		1257.498	23	54.674		
Total		1491.875	31				

In accordance with the linearity result on the table above, the output of linearity indicated that the deviation from linearity test between grammar mastery and writing ability was 0.799, which were higher 0.05. It could be said that grammar mastery and writing ability were linear.

The correlation was examined using the formula of correlation (r_{xy}), Pearson Product Moment between the correlation students' grammar mastery as independent variable (X), and their writing ability as dependent variable (Y). The calculated value was compared to critical value in a significance level table 5% (0.05). The correlation was significant when r_{xy} was higher than r table. The table below showed the result of correlation between the two variables.

Table 8 <The Correlation between Students' Grammar Mastery and Their Writing Ability>

		Grammar Mastery	Writing Ability
Grammar Mastery	Pearson Correlation	1	-.305
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.090
	N	32	32
Writing Ability	Pearson Correlation	-.305	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.090	
	N	32	32

Based on the calculation of SPSS table above, the writer obtained the calculation coefficient correlation between students' grammar mastery and their writing ability. The table above presented the information about the result of correlation coefficient computation, that was 0,305 and for the critical value from a significant level table 0.05 / 5% was 0,349. Thus, r_{xy} was lower than r table. It can be stated that, there was no significant correlation between students' grammar mastery and their writing ability.

In accordance with the objectives of this research which were to test the students' grammar mastery, to discover the students' writing ability in descriptive text, and to find out the correlation between students' grammar mastery and writing ability at SMPN 3 Puding Besar, the writer began to collect the data by conducting two tests which were grammar and writing test. To know the students' grammar mastery score, the writer gave a grammar test, consisted of 25 multiple-choice questions.

The test was given to the VII grade students of SMPN 3 Puding Besar. The students had to answer the grammar test in the form of 25 multiple-choice questions. Then, in writing test, the students were asked to make an essay (paragraph form) in descriptive text, containing 50-75 words in 50 minutes from the topic that was given by the writer. They had to describe the topic (my lovely cat) into a good writing.

After collecting and calculating the data of the criteria of scores students' grammar mastery result, it revealed that 2 students (6,25%) were placed into very good category, 17 students (53,12%) were placed into good category, 11 students (34,38%) were placed into enough category, and 2 students (6,25%) were placed into less category. The "good" category was determined as the most frequent level of students' grammar mastery scores.

Furthermore, dealing with the criteria of scores students' writing ability, the result revealed that 5 students (15,625%) were placed into very good category, 17 students (53,125%) were placed into good category. 8 students (25%) were placed into enough category, and 2 students (6,25%) were placed into less category. The "good" category was determined as the most frequent level of students' writing ability scores.

Based on the calculation of SPSS table above, the writer obtained the calculation coefficient correlation between students' grammar mastery and their writing ability. The table above presented the information about the result of correlation coefficient computation, that was 0,305 and for the critical value from a significant level table 0.05 / 5% was 0,349. It is considered that the null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was rejected. To sum up, there was no significance correlation between students' grammar mastery and their writing ability.

Even though the scores of grammar mastery and writing ability were both in the good category, there was no significant correlation because one of the variables has a lower or higher score than the other (the average score for grammar is lower than writing). In addition, on the light with the findings above, it revealed that there were some students who received low scores in grammar but high scores in writing, suggesting that the students' grammar mastery features did not play a significant role in writing. Grammar might be a source for creating effective communication, but that did not mean all types of grammar are useful for writing. The worse performances on the grammar test but a better performance on the writing test could have been caused by other aspects of writing. The reason why some students perform poorly in grammar exams could be because they did not understand the grammatical concepts well and had no enough time to complete the examination.

The students who were good at grammar might be good at writing but they also need to have to practice other aspects of writing. The proper words to form the right sentences might elude them while they were trying to put them together. It simply demonstrated that students who did not have good grammar in their writing might be good in other aspects that are usually used in rating scales for writing assessment. As for the writing, there were some other factors that influenced students to make their writing better, such as the ability to think creatively and develop thoughts, the ability to choose excellent vocabulary, also write with good spelling and punctuation, etc.

Conclusions

After collecting and calculating the data of the criteria of scores students' grammar mastery result, it revealed that 2 students (6,25%) were placed into very good category, 17 students (53,12%) were placed into good category, 11 students (34,38%) were placed into enough category, and 2 students (6,25%) were placed into less category. The "good" category was determined as the most frequent level of students' grammar mastery scores.

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Based on the calculation of SPSS, the writer obtained the calculation coefficient correlation between students' grammar mastery and their writing ability. The table above presented the information about the result of correlation coefficient computation, that was 0,305 and for the critical value from a significant level table 0.05/5% was 0,349. It is considered that the null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was rejected. To sum up, there was no significance correlation between students' grammar mastery and their writing ability. The writer found out that most of the students received good scores both in grammar and writing test but they had low scores in other aspects of writing such as; content, organization, word choice, and mechanics.

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