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## **Exploring the Relationship Between Grammar Proficiency and Writing Competence Among Tenth-Grade Students**

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### **Abstract**

*The objective of this study is to examine the relationship between grammar proficiency and writing ability among tenth-grade students at MA Al-Khairat Pusat Palu. Employing a correlational research design, the study focused on two variables: grammar mastery (Variable X) and writing skill (Variable Y). The sample comprised 20 students selected through purposive sampling from one of the excellent classes in the school. Data collection involved administering both grammar and writing tests. Analysis was conducted using Pearson Product Moment correlation and SPSS version 23. The findings revealed a correlation coefficient of 0.401 between students' grammar mastery and writing skill, indicating a moderate correlation. This suggests that while grammar proficiency influences writing ability to some extent, there are likely other factors at play. Further exploration of these factors could offer valuable insights for improving writing instruction and student performance.*

**Keywords:** *Correlation, grammar mastery, writing skill*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

All languages have grammar, and each language has its grammar. According to Trisnayanti et al., (2022) Grammar is the foundation of a language due it is one that starts to build language. Grammar is the rules for constructing words and writing sentences. Grammar is unavoidable, and it is a crucial aspect of learning English, mainly to master one of the English language skills, which is writing skill. It is in line with the explanation by Ismawan, (2024) state that to construct good writing, the mastery of grammatical knowledge is one of the crucial factors that will influence the output of the writers' writing.

According to Puspitaloka. N, (2019) grammar is one of the critical components that students must understand in studying English. People cannot use words unless they know how they should be put together. Herring, (2009) states that grammar refers to the way words are used, classified, and structured together in the form of writing. The rule of grammar is important because it helps us to speak and write correctly. In addition, Apsari et al., (2019) mention that

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students cannot deny that grammar and sentence structure encourage them to generate proper grammar to convey thoughts, concepts, or facts in their daily speaking and writing activities. It can be said that grammar has a significant impact for the students in creating proper sentences and combining sentences in a text.

Furthermore, Almelhi, (2021) states writing is an essential form of communication for students to express their ingenuity, viewpoints, concepts, and ideas. Next, Palanisamy and Aziz (Palanisamy & Aziz, 2021) define writing as the process of putting thoughts, feelings, and experiences in the form of written text. Besides putting the ideas down in a piece of writing, writers also need to consider significant factors in writing, such as the purpose of writing, the structure and grammar, and the audience. Therefore, writing skill is a skill that students should comprehend in learning English as the process of writing requires students' creativity to form their thoughts into sentences or paragraphs so that the readers may comprehend the information conveyed by the writer while they read it.

However, mastering writing is challenging, particularly for students. According to Fitria, (2020) Writing skill becomes the most complicated skill that should be mastered by the people, especially for the students because they should be able to combine and express their feelings or opinion in a well-written form. Besides, several writing components, such as the correct use of prepositions, grammatical tenses, punctuations, etc., frequently become issues for students at all levels to write English (Castillo-Cuesta et al., 2021). Moreover, it is crucial to know and able to use grammatical knowledge because grammar is one of the writing components that becomes the most challenging aspect of writing. Pratama, (2020) states that poor knowledge of grammar often leads to a lack of confidence in expressing one's thoughts in writing. This means that grammar is an essential aspect of writing that ensures sentences are constructed correctly.

Writing is taught in high schools as well as universities. The 2013 Indonesian Curriculum requires students to identify the social function, general structure, and language features of writing. Additionally, students are expected to create brief oral and written texts. One of the text types taught in schools is the recount text, which is a type of text that used to retell past event in time order purposed to entertain or inform the reader (Fitriah, 2022). Writing recount text is not easy. It requires a lot of process. The students have to follow the generic structure and use appropriate language features. The generic structure contains orientation, events, and re-orientation. Meanwhile, the language features involve nouns, descriptive words, past tense, and sequences.

According to Lestari et al., (2021) students frequently struggle with writing recount text, particularly in grammatical terms. Tulak et al., (2016) assume that there are at least two factors that make it challenging for students to write recount text. First of all, while students had ideas for what they intended to write, their language skills prevented them from turning those ideas into coherent sentences. Second, students were unable to create effective sentences because of their poor grammar. People tend to write with a lot of grammatical errors as a result of it.

When writing recount text, the common tense that is used is simple past tense. According to Pebriyanto, (2021) simple past is used to expresses specific events that took place in the past. Since the series of events in recount text happen in the past time, the students are required to use simple past tense while writing recount text. Tuminah et al., (2021) state when writing recount text, students need a good simple past tense foundation because this simple past tense will be applied and used when a student writes the recount text. In simple past tense sentences, there are changes in verbs that are used to explain that an event occurred in the past. If students cannot use tenses properly and correctly, students will make wrong sentences. Therefore, it is high possible that the mastery of simple past tense gives the contribution toward the ability to write recount text. As stated by Murdani & Mukhaiyar, (2020) students with a high mastery of the simple past

received a high score in writing recount texts, while students with a low mastery of the simple past received a low score in composing recount texts. It means that the more proficiency students had in the simple past tense, the better their ability to produce recount text was.

There are several previous studies that similar to this recent study. The first study by Septy & Zuhari, (2023) entitled “A Correlational Study about Students’ Grammar Mastery and Their Skill in Rewriting Short Narrative Text after Watching Movies at Bung Hatta University English Department.” The researchers found that mastering grammar is important for improving students’ narrative writing skills. They also discovered the value of using visual aids, like movies, to enhance grammar and writing abilities. The second study by Betoni & Ulfaika, (2020) entitled “The Correlation Between Students’ Grammatical Mastery and Students’ Writing Achievement at XI Grade Students of Sman 1 Tarakan Academic year 2019/2020”. The result of this study showed that between students’ grammatical mastery and students’ writing achievement obtained a significance value of  $<0.05$  with a significant value of  $0.002 < 0.05$  which means that there was a significant correlation between grammatical mastery and writing achievement, meanwhile for  $r$  test value  $> r$  table with the correlation value was  $0.510 > 0.3388$ , the correlation of grammatical mastery and writing achievement was 0.510 which is a medium correlation between grammatical mastery and writing achievement. From those explanations and previous studies above, the researcher conducts the research of grade ten students at MA Al-Khairat Pusat Palu to find out whether there is a correlation between grammar mastery and writing skill. In this research the researcher collects the data by using simple past test and writing recount test.

## **METHOD**

This study used a correlational research design. According to Creswell, (2012) correlational research is a statistical test to determine the tendency or pattern for two (or more) variables or two sets of data to vary consistently. In this study, correlational design used to find out the correlation between grammar mastery and writing skill of the tenth-grade students of MA Al-Khairat Pusat Palu. The Population of this study was the tenth-grade students of MA Al-Khairat Pusat Palu. It distributed into five classes. The total number of populations is 148 students.

The sample of this research was students from X MIPA 2 class which selected through purposive sampling technique. Isaac, (2023) states that purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where the researcher selects only those subjects that satisfy the objectives of the study based on the researcher’s conviction. The sampling technique was used due to the reason that the researcher was asked to only use one out of two excellent classes in the school.

## **Instruments**

In this study, the researcher used test method as the instrument. Test was a tool or procedure that is used to know or to measure something using ways and rules that had been decided Arikunto (2013:67). In this study, the researcher used two kinds of test, namely grammar test and writing test. To measure students’ mastery of simple past tense, the test will be given in the form of multiple-choice questions which consist of 30 questions. There are four answer’s option; a, b, c, or d in each question. Each item is score 1 for true answer and 0 for wrong answer. After that the students were asked to write a story about their experience going on vocation to the beach. This test is aim to measure their writing ability in the form of recount text. In scoring writing test, the researcher used the scoring rubric from Brown (2007) see appendix.

### Data analysis

To analyze the data, the researcher used both Pearson Product Moment and the SPSS to investigate is there any significant correlation between students' grammar mastery and writing skill. Next, in order to get the correlation of the paired variables the researcher determined the criteria for evaluation and interpretation of coefficient as quoted from Sugiyono, (2017) as follow:

**Table 1.** The Criterion for Evaluation and Interpretation of Correlation Coefficient

Coefficient	Relationship
0.00-0.199	Negligible
0.20-0.399	Low
0.40-0.599	Moderate
0.60-0.799	High
0.80-1.000	High to very high

In order to know whether there is a significant correlation between students' mastery of simple past tense (variable X) and ability in writing recount text (variable Y), the researcher use the hypothesis by using the formula proposed by Sugiyono, (2017) as follows:

$$t = \frac{r\sqrt{n-2}}{\sqrt{1-r^2}}$$

Where:

- Tr : t-counted
- R : the coefficient correlation
- N : number of sample

If the t-counted is higher than t-table, it means that there is a significant correlation between two variables and the hypothesis of the research is accepted. While, if the t-counted is lower that t-table, it means that there is a negative correlation and the hypothesis of this research is rejected.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

These findings reveal the result of the data collection and data analysis. The data was collected in 1 day on Sunday, 12 November 2023 at MA Al-khairat Pusat Palu. The result will be explained below.

### The Result of the Grammar Test

The researcher gave grammar test to find out the students' competence in using simple past tense. The test consisted of 30 multiple choice tests. All of the students could answer those questions although there were several students who answered incorrectly. The results of the test are presented in the following table:

**Table 2.** The Students' Score of Grammar Test

No	Initial	Raw Score	Individual Score
1	AA	24	80
2	AF	25	83.33
3	AN	15	50
4	FH	26	86.67
5	FR	25	83.33
6	I	28	93.33
7	KM	16	53.33
8	LF	23	76.67
9	M	21	70
10	MAM	25	83.33
11	N	28	93.33
12	NA	23	76.67
13	NAP	19	63.33
14	P	18	60
15	PSB	19	63.33
16	R	22	73.33
17	SM	21	70
18	T	23	76.67
19	UFS	25	83.33
20	W	16	53.33
<b>Total Score</b>			1473.33
<b>Mean Score</b>			73.67
<b>Maximum Score</b>			93.33
<b>Minimum Score</b>			50

In classifying how good students' ability in mastery of simple past tense based on the overall average score which is figured out in the table 3.1. The researcher used score classification from Sudijono, (2015) as follows:

**Table 3.** Score Classification

No	Students' Score	Mark	Interpretation
1	80-100	A	Excellent
2	66-79	B	Good
3	56-65	C	Fair
4	46-55	D	Bad
5	0-45	E	Failed



Based on the test that was given, the mean score of the grammar test was 73.67. It means that students' achievement in simple past tense was good.

### The Result of Writing Test

The researcher gave writing test to find out the students' competence in writing recount text. In the writing test, the students wrote a recount text about their experience going on vocation to the beach. The results of the students test in writing recount text are presented in the following table:

**Table 4.** The Students' Score of Writing Test

No	Initials	C Scores	O Scores	G score	V Scores	M Scores	Raw Scores	Individual Scores
1	AA	12	6	6	4.5	4,5	33	82.5
2	AF	12	6	6	6	6	36	90
3	AN	9	6	6	4.5	6	31.5	78.75
4	FH	12	6	8	4.5	3	33.5	83.75
5	FR	12	8	8	6	6	40	100
6	I	9	6	6	6	6	33	82.5
7	KM	12	8	8	6	4.5	38.5	96.25
8	LF	12	8	8	6	3	37	92.5
9	M	9	6	4	3	3	25	62.5
10	MAM	12	8	8	6	4.5	38.5	96.25
11	N	12	8	8	4	2	34	85
12	NA	12	6	8	6	4.5	36.5	91.25
13	NAP	12	6	6	3	4.5	31.5	78.75
14	P	12	6	6	3	3	30	75
15	PSB	9	6	6	6	6	33	82.5
16	R	12	6	8	6	6	38	95
17	SM	12	8	8	6	3	37	92.5
18	T	12	8	6	4.5	4.5	35	87.5
19	UFS	12	8	8	6	4.5	38.5	96.25
20	W	9	6	4	3	3	25	62.5
<b>Total Score</b>								1711.25
<b>Mean Score</b>								85.5625
<b>Maximum Score</b>								100
<b>Minimum score</b>								62.5
<b>Notes:</b>								
<b>C: Content</b>								
<b>O: Organization</b>								
<b>G: Grammar</b>								
<b>V: Vocabulary</b>								
<b>M: Mechanic</b>								



In classifying the score of writing test, the researcher used the same measurement as the grammar test. Based on the test that was given, the mean score of the writing test was 85.56. It means that the students' achievement in writing recount text was excellent.

**Correlation Between Grammar Test and Writing Test**

In order to find out the correlation between students' grammar mastery and writing skill of grade ten student at MA Alkhairat Pusat Palu, the researcher used Pearson Product Moment formula by Cohen et. al., (2017). The data presented both of the results in a table below:

**Table 5.** The Score of Grammar Test and Writing Test

No.	Initial	Variables		Squares		Cross Product
		X	Y	X <sup>2</sup>	Y <sup>2</sup>	XY
1	AA	80	82.5	6400	6806.25	6600
2	AF	83.33	90	6943.889	8100	7499.7
3	AN	50	78.75	2500	6201.563	3937.5
4	FH	86.67	83.75	7511.689	7014.063	7258.6125
5	FR	83.33	100	6943.889	10000	8333
6	I	93.33	82.5	8710.489	6806.25	7699.725
7	KM	53.33	96.25	2844.089	9264.063	5133.0125
8	LF	76.67	92.5	5878.289	8556.25	7091.975
9	M	70	62.5	4900	3906.25	4375
10	MAM	83.33	96.25	6943.889	9264.063	8020.5125
11	N	93.33	85	8710.489	7225	7933.05
12	NA	76.67	91.25	5878.289	8326.563	6996.1375
13	NAP	63.33	78.75	4010.689	6201.563	4987.2375
14	P	60	75	3600	5625	4500
15	PSB	63.33	82.5	4010.689	6806.25	5224.725
16	R	73.33	95	5377.289	9025	6966.35
17	SM	70	92.5	4900	8556.25	6475
18	T	76.67	87.5	5878.289	7656.25	6708.625
19	UFS	83.33	96.25	6943.889	9264.063	8020.5125
20	W	53.33	62.5	2844.089	3906.25	3333.125
	Σ	ΣX	ΣY	ΣX <sup>2</sup>	ΣY <sup>2</sup>	ΣXY
		1473.31	1711.25	111729.9	148510.9	127093.8

After gathering all of the data of grammar and writing test, the researcher applied Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient formula to find out the significant correlation between students' mastery of simple past tense as (X) and the ability in writing recount text (Y). The formula is as follow:



$$r_{xy} = \frac{N \sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{\{N(\sum x^2) - (\sum x)^2\}\{N(\sum y^2) - (\sum y)^2\}}}$$

$$r_{xy} = \frac{20(127093.8) - (1473.31)(1711.25)}{\sqrt{\{20(111729.9) - (1473.31)^2\}\{20(148510.9) - (1711.25)^2\}}}$$

$$r_{xy} = \frac{2541876 - 2521202}{\sqrt{\{2234598.00 - 2170642\}\{2970218 - 2928377\}}}$$

$$r_{xy} = \frac{20674}{\sqrt{\{63956\}\{41841\}}}$$

$$r_{xy} = \frac{20674}{\sqrt{2675982996}}$$

$$r_{xy} = \frac{20674}{5172.904}$$

$$r_{xy} = 0.400$$

Based on the calculation above, it was found that the rcounted was 0.400. It means that there is a correlation between students' mastery of simple past tense and their ability on writing recount text.

In order to ensure the calculation above, the researcher used SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 23 to recalculate the data to find out whether the calculation which the researcher did manually were correct and to avoid mismatches in the calculation between scores that the researcher did. The explanation of the result is presented on the table below:

**Table 6.** The Correlation between Grammar Mastery and Writing Skill Using SPSS version 23

		<b>Grammar</b>	<b>Writing</b>
Grammar	Pearson Correlation	1	.401
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.080
	N	20	20
Writing	Pearson Correlation	.401	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.080	
	N	20	20

The calculation results above show that from a total sample of 20 students, the correlation coefficient value obtained is rxy 0.401, which means that the two variables have correlation or positive correlation.

According to those results which have been calculated manually and using SPSS it can be concluded that both have the same result. This research used the interpretation table or correlation coefficient by Sugiyono, (2017) to see the relationship of the rxy value. The table is as follows:





**Table 7.** The Interpretation Table by Sugiyono (2017)

Coefficient	Relationship
0.00-0.199	Negligible
0.20-0.399	Low
0.40-0.599	Moderate
0.60-0.799	High
0.80-1.000	High to very high

From the table above it can be seen that the  $r_{xy}$  value is 0.401 is at Moderate level, so it can be concluded that the correlation between grammar mastery and writing skill of the Tenth Grade Students at Ma Al-Khairat Pusat Palu is in moderate correlation.

To test the hypothesis, the researcher used formula from Sugiyono, (2017) and the criteria for the hypothesis are if  $t_r$  or  $t$ -counted is greater than  $t$ -table ( $t_r$  or  $t$  counted  $>$   $t$ -table) the hypothesis of this research is accepted. It means that there is a positive correlation between the two variables. While if  $t_r$  or  $t$ -counted is less than  $t$ -table ( $t_r$  or  $t$ -counted  $<$   $t$ -table) the hypothesis of this research is rejected. The formula is as follows:

$$t = \frac{r\sqrt{n-2}}{\sqrt{1-r^2}}$$

$$t = \frac{0.401 \sqrt{20-2}}{\sqrt{1-0.401^2}}$$

$$t = \frac{0.401\sqrt{18}}{\sqrt{1-0.401^2}}$$

$$t = \frac{0.401 (4.243)}{\sqrt{1-0.161}}$$

$$t = \frac{0.401 (4.243)}{\sqrt{0.839}}$$

$$t = \frac{0.401 (4.243)}{0.916} = \mathbf{1.857}$$

Based on the calculation above, it is known that the  $t$ -counted value is 1.857 and the  $t$ -table significance value of 5% or 0.05 based on the total sample [ $df$  (degree of freedom) =  $N$  (total sample) - 2] is 0.444, the calculation results show that  $t$ -counted (1.857) is greater than  $t$ -table (0.444), indicating that the study's hypothesis is accepted and that two variables have a positive correlation.

## Discussion

The result of this recent research is related to previous study done by Ismawan, (2024), concludes that there is a nexus between students' grammar knowledge and students' writing in personal letters. The differences between the previous research and this research are in the participants and subjects being tested in the research. In this previous study, the students' being tested were the eleventh-grade students, while this research was tested on the tenth-grade students. Moreover, the subject of the writing test is also different from this research, the previous study utilized a personal letter as their writing test, on the other side, this research used recount text to measure students'

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writing skills. However, the previous study and this research also have similarities which is both of the research focus on students' grammar knowledge.

Despite the fact that the findings of this research indicated a positive correlation, it was only at moderate level, not at significant or very high level. This could happen because there are other aspects that contribute a significant score to the writing test, one of them is the lack of students vocabulary, there are some students who rich of vocabulary and that made the students easy to write anything they want to write, it was different with the students who were lacking in vocabulary, even when they had ideas they didn't know how to write it, because they were lacking of vocabulary, they may good in answering the grammar test but in writing it required the students to have good vocabulary, that's why there were some students who got high score in grammatical test but their score in writing were not good enough. This observation aligns with Wardani et al., (2021) who noted that when students have limited vocabulary and limited word choices, it makes it hard for them to express their thoughts well.

Aksoy, (2021) also stated that good writing skills require a person to have good grammar and knowledge of vocabulary. This notion is further supported by Kunah & Supriyani's, (2024) findings, which highlight the significant influence of vocabulary mastery on English descriptive text writing. They found that vocabulary mastery contributed 54% to improving writing skills, whereas grammar mastery contributed 31%. Therefore, having a strong vocabulary is crucial for language proficiency. This is emphasized by Maesaroh & Sari, (2021), who found a significant effect of vocabulary mastery on students' writing skills. In summary, while mastering grammar is essential, this research underscores the significance of other factors in writing proficiency.

From those finding above, a positive and significant correlation between students' grammar mastery and writing skill where the significance correlation was moderate. This implies that while proficiency in grammar positively influences writing ability, other factors also contribute to students' overall writing proficiency. The presence of other influencing factors indicates the need for a multifaceted approach to enhancing writing instruction and student outcomes. Educators can use these findings to inform their teaching strategies, emphasizing the importance of integrating grammar instruction with writing practice to foster holistic language development.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the recent research findings shed light on the positive correlation between students' grammar mastery and writing skills, albeit at a moderate level. While this correlation underscores the importance of grammatical proficiency in writing, it also highlights the multifaceted nature of writing proficiency. Factors such as vocabulary mastery, content relevance, organization, and conventions play significant roles in shaping students' writing abilities. Therefore, while grammar mastery is crucial, it is not the sole determinant of writing excellence. Educators can leverage these insights to adopt a comprehensive approach to writing instruction, integrating grammar lessons with vocabulary building and other essential skills to nurture well-rounded language proficiency. By recognizing and addressing the diverse factors that influence writing proficiency, educators can better support students in their journey toward becoming proficient writers.

Based on the conclusion above, it can be delivered some suggestions related to teaching and learning writing ability and grammar knowledge as follows:

1. For students, focusing on understanding English grammar, particularly tenses, is crucial for improving writing skills. Expanding vocabulary through regular practice and seeking feedback can also enhance writing proficiency.

2. Teachers should provide comprehensive grammar instruction and incorporate vocabulary-building activities into lessons. Offering diverse writing tasks and providing constructive feedback are essential for supporting students' development as writers.
3. Future research can explore specific teaching strategies' impact on grammar mastery and writing skills. Investigating the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and writing proficiency and conducting comparative studies across different contexts can further advance language education research.

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