

# The Correlation Between Grammatical Competence and Students' Ability in Writing English Text at the Eleventh Grade of SMAN 9 Kota Jambi

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## ABSTRACT

This research aimed to investigate the correlation between grammatical competence and English text writing ability among eleventh-grade students at SMAN 9 Kota Jambi. This research was quantitative with a correlational approach. The subjects of the research were 36 eleventh-grade students at SMAN 9 Kota Jambi in Academic Year 2023/2024. The techniques of collecting data were a grammar test and a writing test. The research used the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to analyze the data. The results of the research show that there is a very low positive correlation ( $r = 0.166$ ) between students' grammatical competence and their ability in writing English texts. This correlation is not statistically significant at both 5% and 1% levels. The findings indicate that 11.11% of students had excellent performance in the grammar test, while 16.67% showed very good performance in the writing test. The study concludes that there is no significant correlation between students' grammatical competence and their ability in writing English texts.

**Keywords:** *Correlation, Grammatical Competence, Writing Ability, English Text.*

## INTRODUCTION

English is an important language in Indonesia, especially in the world of education and work. Therefore, English is integrated as a compulsory subject from junior high school to university level in Indonesia. Nonetheless, English teaching often tends to focus on theoretical grammar knowledge, with less attention to writing skills, which makes students less motivated and find difficulties in expressing their ideas in written form.

Grammar competence and writing skills are essential as they help students communicate effectively and express their thoughts clearly in academic contexts. Good writing ability involves various linguistic aspects, including proper grammar usage, vocabulary, and sentence structure. However, students at SMAN 9 Kota Jambi often experience difficulties in writing English texts because they struggle with grammatical rules, especially in using proper tenses and subject-verb agreement. With the increasing importance of English proficiency in academic and professional settings, students need to master both grammatical competence and writing skills. Research shows that

understanding grammar is crucial for effective written communication, as it forms the foundation for constructing meaningful sentences and coherent texts. At SMAN 9 Kota Jambi, many eleventh-grade students demonstrate weak grammatical competence, which directly affects their ability to write English texts effectively. Therefore, investigating the correlation between grammatical competence and writing ability is essential to improve English language teaching and learning outcomes at SMAN 9 Kota Jambi.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Definition of Grammar

Grammar is a fundamental component that is critical to students' language learning success. The process of understanding grammar involves mastering systems and rules that people use to choose and combine words to form proper sentences. In the context of education, especially when learning and teaching a foreign language, grammar and vocabulary are important components that should be mastered in the teaching and learning process of a language.

According to Sioco & De Vera (2018), grammar fundamentally involves the systems and rules people utilize to choose and combine words. They also explained that by studying grammar we have acquired the tools to discuss language systems because we know the structures and regularities of language. Meanwhile, Debata (2013) defines grammar as the study of words and the way words work together; an invisible force that guides us when we put words together to form sentences. Every person who communicates using a particular language, consciously or unconsciously becomes aware of the grammar of that language.

### **The Concept of Grammar**

Grammar is one of the most important aspects in translation. According to Abbasi & Karimnia (2011), in order to make a well-structured translation, one should be mastered in grammar. Grammar provides the guiding framework when constructing sentences and is fundamental to the proper use of any language when speaking, writing, teaching, learning, or translating.

Mark et al (2021) state that Language is a set of rules as the combination of words in a sentence does not occur through an arbitrary combination but according to a regulatory system within any language. Kharbouch et al (2006) adds that the grammar consists of a series of rules that have a twofold purpose: First, these rules can be used to create sentences of the associated language and second, they can be used to classify whether a particular sentence is an element of the language or not.

### **Types of Grammar**

According to Cook (2016), there are five types of grammar:

a. **Prescriptive Grammar**

A set of rules that prescribes what people should or should not say in language use. For example: In the use of the infinitive "I" instead of "me" as the subject.

- "Me going home" (wrong)
- "I am going home" (correct)

b.

c. **Traditional Grammar**

A system for labeling sentence structures commonly used in schools, based on grammars of classical languages like Latin. For example, the components of the sentence "Ali is eating rice" namely: Ali = noun, is = verb, eating = verb, rice = noun.

d.

e. **Structural Grammar**

A system for describing how words are assembled into phrases, and phrases into larger sentence structures in a language.

- Ali + is + eating + rice

Is a subject + verb + verb + object

- The + tall + boy

Is a determiner + adjective + noun (noun phrase)

f.

g. **Linguistic/Grammatical Competence**

The intuitive knowledge of a language's structural regularities that speakers acquire. Native speakers of Indonesian intuitively know the pronoun "he" refers to a third person singular male.

h.

i. **EFL Grammar**

The type of grammar learned by non-native speakers studying a language, which combines elements of traditional and structural grammar about things like verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, word order, etc.

### **Writing Ability**

Writing is a form of written communication that involves organizing thoughts, ideas, and information in a logical and systematic way. According to Galbraith (2009), writing is often seen as a process of meaning making and knowledge creation for the writer. This indicates that the act of writing is not merely pouring ideas into words, but also helps writers discover connections and

gain deeper understanding of the topic as they logically arrange ideas in the writing.

Schleppergrell & Go (2007) stated that one of the challenges in second language writing instruction is responding to the rudimentary texts of beginning writers. This indicates that in learning writing, proper guidance is needed to help students develop their writing abilities from early stages to proficient levels.

### **Components of Writing**

According to Jacobs et al (1981), there are five key components of successful writing:

a. Content

The writer thinks creatively to develop unique ideas and insights.

b. Organization

The writer structures their work in a logical, coherent way with smooth transitions between ideas and effective sequencing.

c. Vocabulary

The writer uses precise, vivid words and idiomatic expressions to convey meaning and tone.

d. Language Use

The writer demonstrates strong grammar, syntax and mechanics, including proper agreement between sentences, verb tenses, word order, articles, pronouns and prepositions.

e. Mechanics

The writer exhibits correct spelling, punctuation and capitalization.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational research design. According to Creswell (2012), quantitative research examines relationships among variables that can be measured and analyzed using statistical procedures. The correlational design was selected to investigate the relationship between two quantifiable variables: grammatical competence and

English text writing ability among eleventh-grade students.

The research was conducted at SMAN 9 Kota Jambi, with a population of 252 eleventh-grade students distributed across 7 classes. Using random sampling technique as recommended by Setiyadi (2018), 36 students were selected as the sample, representing approximately 14% of the total population. This sampling size aligns with Arikunto's (2010) recommendation of 10-15% for populations exceeding 100 subjects.

Two instruments were utilized for data collection. The first instrument was a grammar test consisting of 30 multiple-choice items that assessed students' mastery of subject-verb agreement and various tenses (simple present, present perfect, simple past, past perfect, simple future, and future perfect). The second instrument was a writing test requiring students to compose a narrative text of at least 150 words. The writing assessment employed analytical rubrics based on Jacobs et al. (1981), evaluating five aspects: content (30 points), organization (20 points), vocabulary (20 points), language use (25 points), and mechanics (5 points).

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 25 software, employing Pearson's product-moment correlation to determine the relationship between grammatical competence (X variable) and English text writing ability (Y variable). The strength of correlation was interpreted using Sugiyono's (2011) coefficient correlation scale, ranging from very low (0.00-0.199) to very high correlation (0.80-1.000). The significance of the correlation was determined by comparing the obtained r-value with the critical r-table value at  $df = N-2$ .

### **FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **Grammar Test and Writing Test Results of Students' Performance**

There were 36 students participating in this research. Two tests were administered: a grammar test assessing subject-verb agreement and tenses, and a writing test

evaluating students' ability to write English texts. The results of both tests were analyzed to examine the correlation between grammatical competence and writing ability.

**The Category of Students' Grammar Test Scores**

*Table 4.1.1-4*

*Frequency and Rate Percentage of the Students' Grammatical Competence*

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Classification
100	4	11.11	Excellent
90	6	16.67	Very good
80	2	5.56	Good
70	4	11.11	Fair
60	7	19.44	Poor
50	13	36.11	Very poor
	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>	

Based on the table above, 4 students (11.11%) scored in the excellent category, 6 students (16.67%) in the very good category, 2 students (5.56%) in the good category, 4 students (11.11%) in the fair category, 7 students (19.44%) in the poor category, and 13 students (36.11%) in the very poor category. The mean score for the grammar test was 63.47, with scores ranging from 35 to 97.

**The Category of Students' Writing Test Scores**

*Table 4.1.1-4*

*Frequency and Rate Percentage of the Students' Writing Ability*

Number	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Classification
1	91-100	0	0	Excellent
	80-90	6	16.67	Very good
	70-80	2	5.56	Good
	60-70	4	11.11	Fair
	50-60	7	19.44	Poor
	40-50	13	36.11	Very poor
		<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>	

Based on the table above, no students scored in the excellent or very poor categories, 6 students (16.67%) achieved very good performance, 15 students (41.67%) were good,

11 students (30.56%) were fair, and 4 students (11.11%) were poor. The mean score for the writing test was 73.17, with scores ranging from 54 to 90.

**Statistical Analysis Results**

The correlation analysis using Pearson's product moment formula yielded the following results:

*Table 4.2-1 SPSS Correlation Table Correlations*

Correlations			
		Student's Grammatical Competence	Student's Ability in Writing English Text
Student's Grammatical Competence	Pearson Correlation	1	,166
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,333
	N	36	36
Student's Ability in Writing English Text	Pearson Correlation	,166	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,333	
	N	36	36

The correlation coefficient (r<sub>xy</sub>) of 0.166 indicates a very low positive correlation between grammatical competence and writing ability. This falls within the range of 0.00-0.199 in Sugiyono's (2011) interpretation scale, suggesting a very weak relationship between the variables.

**DISCUSSION**

The analysis reveals that students generally performed better in writing than in

grammar. While 36.11% of students fell into the very poor category for grammar, no students scored this low in writing. Conversely, 58.34% of students achieved Good to Very Good scores in writing, compared to only 22.23% in grammar.

The correlation coefficient of 0.166 with a significance value of 0.333 ( $>0.05$ ) indicates that there is no significant correlation between students' grammatical competence and their ability in writing English texts. This suggests that strong grammatical knowledge does not necessarily translate to better writing performance, and conversely, weaker grammar skills do not always result in poor writing ability.

This finding implies that other factors beyond grammatical competence, such as content development, organization, and vocabulary use, may play more significant roles in students' writing ability. The results challenge the assumption that mastery of grammar is the primary determinant of writing success in English as a foreign language context.

## **CONCLUSION**

Students' grammatical competence and their ability in writing English texts showed a very low correlation coefficient ( $r_{xy} = 0.166$ ), which falls below the critical values at both 5% and 1% significance levels (0.339 and 0.436 respectively). This statistical finding leads to the acceptance of the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and rejection of the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ). The correlation coefficient of 0.166 falls within the 0.00-0.199 range, indicating a very weak relationship between the variables. The results of this study demonstrate that high grammatical competence does not necessarily translate to superior writing ability in English texts, and conversely, students with lower grammatical mastery may still demonstrate effective writing

skills. These findings suggest that writing proficiency in English is influenced by multiple factors beyond grammatical knowledge alone, emphasizing the need for a more comprehensive approach to writing instruction that incorporates various aspects such as content development, organization, and vocabulary usage. This study provides valuable insights for English language teachers to implement more holistic teaching methods that balance grammatical instruction with other crucial writing components, ultimately enhancing students' overall writing competence.

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