

The Students' Competence in English Grammar and Writing: A Corelative Study at the Second grade Students of MTs. Al-Muini, Sesela Gunungsari

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Abstract

This study is intended to discover the correlation between students' grammar competence and their writing skill. The samples chose was the second grade students of MTs. Al-Muini Sesela consists 35 students. The students were given 25 questions in the form of multiple choice types on grammar competence test and they were asked to write at least 100 words about their experience in the form of paragraph on writing skill test. The procedure of collecting data was testing technique by using formula: $r_{xy} = \frac{X(Xy^2) - (Xy^2)(Xy^2)}{X(Xy^2) - (Xy^2)(Xy^2)}$. The result findings were: 1) the students' average gets fairly good score in grammar competence test. It can be seen from the result of mean of the students' score that was 6.76. 2) the students' average get fairly good score in their writing skill test. It can be seen from the mean of the students' score that was 6.74. 3) There is a correlation between the students' grammar competence and their writing skill which can be observed from the value of "r" with $N = 35$ ($r = 0.823$) that was greater than the value of "r" at the table ($r = 0.334$) at the level of significance 5% and ($r = 0.430$) at the level of significance 1%. Therefore, the result shows that grammar competence has a high role in writing skill. It is clear that the Alternative hypothesis (H_a) which says "there is a correlation between students' grammar competence and their writing skill was accepted.

Keywords: Students, Competence, English Grammar, Writing Skill

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Introduction

English plays a crucial role as an international language used for communication, education, science, and technology. In the Indonesian context, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) from secondary school up to higher education. Among the four language skills-listening, speaking, reading, and writing-writing is often considered the most complex and demanding skill for EFL learners. Writing requires not only the ability to generate and organize ideas but also the mastery of linguistic components such as vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and mechanics. Therefore, students' writing performance is closely connected with their grammatical competence.

Grammar competence refers to the knowledge and ability to use grammatical rules accurately and appropriately in constructing sentences. It is one of the fundamental components of communicative competence. Without sufficient grammatical knowledge, learners may find it difficult to express their ideas clearly and coherently in written form. Larsen-Freeman and Kuehn (2002) argue that grammar instruction helps learners make appropriate linguistic choices, particularly in tense and aspect, which are essential for producing meaningful written texts. In the same vein, Borg and Steel (2018) emphasize that metalinguistic awareness supports language learning because learners who understand grammatical structures tend to apply them more effectively in communication.

In EFL contexts, grammar competence has long been debated in relation to writing performance. Some scholars highlight the strong relationship between grammar mastery and writing quality. For instance, Lahuerta (2018) found that grammatical accuracy and complexity significantly contribute to the overall quality of students' written texts. Similarly, Belmekki (2023) reported that grammar competence correlates positively with writing performance in higher education settings. These findings suggest that students who possess better grammatical

knowledge are more likely to produce well-structured and accurate written compositions.

In the Indonesian context, several studies have also examined the relationship between grammar and writing ability. Aprillianti (2019) analyzed students' grammatical and discourse competence in argumentative paragraphs and concluded that grammatical competence plays a central role in supporting coherent writing. Tilana and Yunita (2019) found that students' mastery of English structure significantly influences their written competence. Furthermore, Irmawati et al. (2024) revealed a positive relationship between grammar proficiency and writing competence among tenth-grade students. These studies reinforce the assumption that grammar competence is a key predictor of writing achievement.

Writing skill itself is a complex cognitive and linguistic activity. According to Teng (2021), writing involves metacognitive processes, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating ideas, which require learners to simultaneously manage content and language form. When students lack grammatical control, their cognitive resources may be overly focused on language form, leaving limited capacity for idea development and organization. As a result, grammatical weakness can hinder the overall effectiveness of written communication.

Moreover, feedback and assessment practices also underline the importance of grammar in writing. Shintani et al. (2014) demonstrated that written corrective feedback contributes significantly to learners' grammatical accuracy in writing. Similarly, Bitchener and Knoch (2010) found that focused written corrective feedback led to long-term improvement in grammatical accuracy. These findings suggest that grammar is not merely an isolated component but an integral aspect of writing development.

In addition to grammatical accuracy, cohesion and coherence are important indicators of writing quality. Crossley et al. (2016) showed that the use of cohesive devices in L2 writing is closely related to judgments of essay quality. However, the appropriate use of cohesive devices often depends on grammatical knowledge. Without understanding sentence structure and clause relationships, students may struggle to create logically connected paragraphs. Therefore, grammar competence underpins not only sentence-level accuracy but also text-level organization.

Despite the growing body of research highlighting the relationship between grammar and writing, many students in secondary schools still face difficulties in mastering grammar and applying it in writing tasks. Based on preliminary observations at MTs. Al-Muini Sesela Gunungsari, second-grade students often demonstrate limited grammatical control when writing paragraphs. Common errors include incorrect verb tense usage, subject-verb agreement problems, and improper sentence structure. These grammatical weaknesses affect the clarity and coherence of their written texts.

Considering these issues, it becomes important to empirically investigate whether there is a significant correlation between students' grammar competence and their writing skill at the second-grade level of MTs. Al-Muini Sesela. A correlational study is appropriate because it seeks to determine the degree of relationship between two variables without manipulating them. By identifying the strength of the correlation, teachers and educators can better understand the role of grammar instruction in improving writing performance.

Previous research has consistently indicated a positive correlation between grammar knowledge and writing achievement. For example, Belmekki (2023) reported a significant positive correlation between grammar competence and writing performance, suggesting that grammar plays a high role in writing development. Likewise, Irmawati et al. (2024) found that students with higher grammar proficiency tended to achieve better writing scores. These findings align with the theoretical view that grammar provides the structural foundation for effective written communication.

Furthermore, in assessing writing skill, valid and reliable rubrics are essential. Uludag and McDonough (2022) highlighted the importance of validated rubrics in evaluating integrated writing tasks. Writing assessment commonly considers aspects such as content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Among these components, grammar is often weighted significantly because grammatical errors can obscure meaning and reduce text

comprehensibility.

Peer feedback and teacher feedback also emphasize grammatical aspects in writing instruction. Yu and Hu (2017) found that students' peer feedback practices often focus on grammatical errors and language form. Similarly, Cui et al. (2022) demonstrated that both peer and teacher feedback positively influence EFL students' writing performance, particularly in grammatical accuracy. These findings confirm that grammar is consistently recognized as a central element in writing pedagogy.

Moreover, research synthesis conducted by Norris and Ortega (2000) demonstrated that explicit L2 instruction, including grammar instruction, is effective in promoting language development. This meta-analysis provides strong empirical support for the inclusion of grammar instruction in EFL classrooms. Additionally, Truscott (2007), although critical of certain error correction practices, acknowledged that accuracy remains an important dimension of writing quality. Therefore, the debate does not eliminate grammar's importance but rather refines how it should be taught.

In line with these theoretical and empirical perspectives, the present study aims to investigate the correlation between students' grammar competence and their writing skill among second-grade students of MTs. Al-Muini Sesela Gunungsari. The students were given a grammar competence test consisting of 25 multiple-choice questions and a writing test requiring them to write at least 100 words about their personal experience in paragraph form. The data were analyzed using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation formula to determine the degree of relationship between the two variables.

The findings of this study reveal that the mean score of students' grammar competence is 6.76, which falls into the fairly good category. Meanwhile, the mean score of students' writing skill is 6.74, also categorized as fairly good. More importantly, the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.823$) indicates a strong positive correlation between grammar competence and writing skill. The obtained r -value is higher than the critical values at both the 5% significance level (0.334) and the 1% significance level (0.430). Therefore, the alternative hypothesis stating that there is a correlation between students' grammar competence and their writing skill is accepted.

This strong correlation supports previous findings by Lahuerta (2018), Belmekki (2023), and Irmawati et al. (2024), who also identified significant relationships between grammatical knowledge and writing performance. It suggests that grammar competence plays a substantial role in shaping students' writing outcomes. Students who master grammar are more capable of constructing meaningful sentences, organizing ideas coherently, and minimizing errors that may hinder communication.

In conclusion, grammar competence is not merely a supplementary element in writing but a foundational component that significantly influences writing skill. Empirical evidence from international and national studies consistently demonstrates the positive relationship between these two variables. Therefore, enhancing grammar instruction and integrating it effectively into writing activities may contribute to improving students' overall writing performance. This study provides further evidence within the context of Islamic junior secondary school students and highlights the need for balanced instruction that combines grammatical accuracy with communicative writing practice.

Method

The method used in this investigation was descriptive method. It was the general method, but the specific method which relates to data collection procedure was a testing method and this was a quantitative research which used the statistical analysis.

Sample of the Study

The population of this study was all of the second year students of MTs A-Muini. The total numbers of all classes were 2 classes consist of 35 students chosen as sample. Arikunto, (1992), said that if the subject more than one hundred, the sample can be taken between 10-15% or 20-25%. But if the sample of less than hundred it batter take all as the sample.

The Instrument

a. Grammar Test

The grammar test examines the student's ability in sentence pattern of English. The grammar test in form objective test, which the 26 tested, would have select one best answer to complete each item. The test covers in structural items possibly that be element by the second grade students of MTs. Al-Muni Sesela in academic year 2023/2024 and included 25 numbers of objective of four options. For a clear understanding the test considers the following table below.

Table 1. The outline of Grammar test

No	Component	The number of item
1	Tenses	5
2	Degree of Comparison	2
3	Question Tag	4
4	Modal	5
5	Conditional Sentence	5
6	adverb	4
The total number of item		25

b. Writing Test

The writing test examines the student's ability in writing. The sample class write paragraph about "The student's experience holiday to Senggigi Beach"

Table 2. The scores are given based on the following aspects:

No	Aspects	Score
1	Mechanism	20%
2	Vocabulary	20%
3	Grammar and usage	30%
4	Organization	30%
Total		100%

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection is very important step in this study. The data in this study were observed directly to the second grade students of MTs. Al-Muini. For data collection procedure, the researcher used testing technique where researcher distribute two kinds of test, they were grammar test and writing test. The vault of the test is the data for the research.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis the research aims at finding out a correlation between student grammar competence and their writing skill. A correlation study was used to know the relationship between one variable or more (Subagio, 1983). So, it is obvious that the data should be analyzed by using correlation formula, in this case, the formulation used in the product moment coefficient correlation. It is also used to describe strength of relations between variable (Arikunto, 1987) and that is the most commonly used in estimating index of correlation. Based on the objective of the study was to find out whether the students mastery on grammar competence have correlation with their writing skill. The researcher applied correlation formula as follows:

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

Where:

r_{xy} : Coefficient between grammar and writing.

x : Deviation some of grammar

y : Deviation some of writing

Finding and Discussion

In discussion, the researcher presented the statistical analysis of data obtained. This analysis has function to find out the result of investigation. The presentation of the result is purposing to answer the problem of the study which appeared of first chapter by means of the statement of the problem that is stated "is there any correlation between students' grammar competence and their writing skill?" To find out the solution of the problem, the researcher analyzed the data obtained from the students' test result from grammar competence test and writing skill. The analysis of data is emphasized to determine whether there is correlation between students' grammar competence and their writing skill.

Based on the students' result in doing grammar test and writing test, the researcher analyzed from the students' data which using two ways namely

1. Descriptive Analysis

In the next page the data result of students can be seen, in order to obtain further information of how to tabulate the score into the rate of percentage. First of all, the students score was categorized into seven levels (Kartini 1994) as follows:

No.	Level	categorized
1	9.6 -10	excellent
2	8.6-9.5	very good
3	7.6-8.6	Good
4	6.6-7.5	fairly good
5	5.6-6.5	Fairly
6	3.6-5.5	fairly poor
7	0- 3.5	very poor

2. Data collected through grammar competence test

The following are the result of the students' score of grammar competence test. You can see at the table 1. The grammar competence test consisted of 25 questions with multiple choice types. The score of correct answer of each item is "4" and each wrong is "0". So the researcher took the score "100" as the highest standard row score, in order to get the standard score in scale (1-10) the score "10" as the highest standard score. The percentage of the students' grammar competence score is available in the table as shown below:

Table 2. The rate of percentage of the students' score in grammar competence

No.	Classification	Score	F	%
1	Excellent	9.6 -10	0	0%
2	very good	8.6-9.5	3	22.86%
3	Good	7.6-8.6	8	28.57%
4	fairly good	6.6-7.5	10	28.57%
5	Fairly	5.6-6.5	10	11.43%
6	fairly poor	3.6-5.5	4	11.43%
7	very poor	0- 3.5	0	0%
Total			35	100%

Table 2 above that 8.57% of students got very good, 22.86% of students got good, 28.57% of students got fairly good, 28.57 % of students got fair and 11.43% of students got poor. There is not any student in excellent and very poor classification. To obtain the students' mean score of grammar competence, the researcher applies the formula below:

$$\Sigma X = 35$$

$$N = 35$$

$$MX = \frac{\Sigma X}{N}$$

$$= \frac{236.6}{35}$$

$$= 6.76$$

Based on the calculation on the mean score of English grammar competence above, it can be concluded that the students' competence in English grammar was fairly good, because the result of computing the mean score of grammar competence is 6.67. Therefore, it can be said they are on the average level and they have fairly good score in mastery of English grammar competence.

3. Data collected through writing skill test

The following are the result of the students' score of writing skill test. You can see at the table 3. In the writing skill test, the reseacher asked the students to write their experience in the New Year event which consisted at least 100 words. In collecting the data through the writing test, the reseacher took "100" as the highest row score. To get the highest standard in scale 1-10 the reseacher needed to device the row score with "10", because the writing skill has four criteria that must be analyzed such as: Mechanism score of 20, vocabulary of 20, grammar and usage of 30 and organization of 30. The students' writing skill score in the table 3 above can be classified into the rate of percentage as shown below:

Table 4. The rate of percentage of the students' writing skill score

No.	Classification	Score	F	%
1	Excellent	9.6 -10	0	0%
2	very good	8.6-9.5	4	11.43%
3	Good	7.6-8.6	5	14.29%
4	fairly good	6.6-7.5	11	31.43%
5	Fairly	5.6-6.5	6	17.14%
6	fairly poor	3.6-5.5	9	25.71%
7	very poor	0- 3.5	0	0%
Total			35	100%

Based on the table 4 above, it can be seen that 11.43% of students got very good, 14.29% of students got good, 31.43% of students got fairly good, 17.14% of students got fair , and 25.71% of students got poor. No students got excellent and very poor. To obtain the students' mean score of writing skill test, the reseacher applies the formula below:

$$\Sigma y = 236$$

$$N = 35$$

The mean score of students in writing skill test is:

$$\begin{aligned}
 M_y &= \frac{\Sigma y}{N} \\
 &= \frac{236}{35} \\
 &= 6.75
 \end{aligned}$$

Based on the calculation of the mean score of writing skill test above, it can be concluded that the students' average score is fairly good, because the result of computing the mean score is 6.74. Therefore, it can be said that the students' score are on the average level and they have fairly good score in writing skill.

4. Correlation Analysis

Look at the Table 5. the calculation of the correlation between the students' grammar competecnce and writing skill test.

Clarification:

X = English grammar competence score

Y = Writing skill score

x = Deviation of students English grammar competence score from mean score

y = Deviation of students writing skill score from Mean score.

x^2 = x squared

$$y^2 = y \text{ squared}$$

To calculate the value of correlation of these two variables, the researcher applies the Pearson product as follows:

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

Therefore, the coefficient correlation of two variables above (X and Y) is:

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

$$\begin{aligned} &= \frac{53.24}{\sqrt{(56.71)(73.70)}} \\ &= \frac{53.24}{\sqrt{4179.53}} \\ &= \frac{53.24}{64.65} \\ &= 0.823 \end{aligned}$$

According to the computation above, the calculated pearson "r" was 0.823 if we check the table, we found that the value of Pearson "r" with N= 35 at the table was 0.334 at the level of significant 5% and 0.430 at the level significance 1%. It was clear that the correlation coefficient which had been calculated (r = 0.823) was greater than value of "r" at the table (r = 0.334) at the level of significant 5% and (r = 0.430) at the level of significant 1%. It can be concluded that there is a correlation between students' grammar competence and their writing skill. So, the null hypothesis of this study is rejected. On the other hand the Alternative Hypothesis is accepted.

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As we know that learning English writing as same as communicate by using correct grammar because grammar is the name given to the system of rules underlying the use of language. It is concerned with accidence (i.e. changes in the form of single words) and syntax (i.e. the linking of words together to form sense groups). Allerton, D. J. (2002) argues that, to use a word in its wrong form or to link words in a way contrary to accepted practice, is to be guilty of bad grammar). Even so, we must not allow ourselves to be slaves to the niceties of grammar. In Saaristo, P. (2015) described that grammar and syntax have important rules in all written communication, but they must not be slavishly adhered to at the expense of the naturalness of expression which is important in all communication by language. Based on Yule, G. (1998), pointed out that language is not after all a static thing, and what is fashionable among the writers of one generation may come to be condemned by those of another, while what was once frowned upon may later carry favor. Nowhere is this more evident than in the field of letter writing. The hackneyed and meaningless form of expression characteristic of the old fashioned business letter, with its beg to inform and have to acknowledge, are rapid place to a style of writing more akin to that of good conversation (Quirk, R., & Crystal, D. 2010). The modern trend is towards forms of expression that are natural and unaffected, even if it sometimes means infringing the strict rules of the grammatical purist. Grammatical rules are not the most important things in language. They follow rather than dictate the fashions of language. We often learn to speak and write perfectly grammatical English, yet with little knowledge of grammatical precept. A person may claim that he knows nothing about grammar and yet be able to speak and write perfectly good English. What they really means is that he is ignorant of the technical terms used in discussing language structure, and that they writes and speaks without being aware of the rules he is unconsciously observing. Through environment

and by reading and writing he has acquired an adequate ability to express himself correctly. There is truth in the claim that impression developed in favorable circumstances of home and school and social connections are the best guide to the correct use of language; it may also be true that grammar by itself cannot teach the art of effective communication. But not everyone is fortunate enough to be exposed to favorable external influences, and there are many who would benefit from the technical help afforded by grammar. If you are one of them you need not be unduly worried. Effective communication does not call for an intimate knowledge of grammar; a simple knowledge of the main rules, combined with a little common sense, is often all that is needed to rid us of many of the mistakes we sometimes make.

By considering statements described some experts above, the researcher would like investigate the students' competence between English grammar and writing: A Comparative Study at the Second grade Students of MTs. Al-Muini, Sesela Gunungsari.

English plays an important role in our daily life by means is all of the people in the world use English to communicate with each others (Deng, F., & Lin, Y. 2016), it is used as an international language such as conference, workshop and so on. Al-Ahdal, A. et. all (2014). In English there are four core skills and we agreed that writing is one of the essential among the other language competence such as reading, listening, speaking skill. In the other words, writing English is not always the same as spoken English, many people are not careful about the way the word sentence; writing is most difficult activities among the four basic language skills. Terzioğlu, Y. et. all (2020). This one of the reason why? Writing is one of the language skills that has very important role and needs to be improved. In fact, people, nowadays need to write their perceptions, their knowledge and even their daily experiences in writing form. Nunan (2003), writing is the activity of finding the ideas, thinking about the way to express, arranging into a statement and paragraph, and conveying them to the readers. In addition, Solihin, A., et. all. (2023), writing is the activity of organizing ideas, opinions, and feelings into a written form. In other words, on writing involves encourage the message or communication. In Villanueva, A., (2008), says that the message is transmitted in a written form when the people communicate to another on the letters and sentences or paragraphs, they are composing. In writing English we have to concern to the word and how the grammatical of sentence that we use in our writing and we have to be able to develop our thought as well. Since it is difficult skill, it is not astonishing if the students get much obstacle or difficulties in the developing writing skill.

On the other side, it is easier for readers to find out the printed or non printed materials such as books, e-books, magazines, online magazine, newspaper, brochures, pamphlets and they like. They are applicable media for people to influence the others in order to believe what themselves believes. However, in language classroom, the teaching of writing is less emphasized than the other skills, such as listening, speaking and reading comprehension. Writing is one of the language skills that has very important role for students and needs to be mastered. These particular problems appear to be the point Fatmawati, L. (2010). of the four skills, writing is the skill most frequently neglected. A lot of modern English Language Teaching (ELT) methods stress the importance of speech, writing becoming a very poor, second. It is no wonder that, frequently writing is taught very

sketchily, if at all. All too often, when written work is set, it is assumed that the students can say something they should be able to write it thus little preparation is done for written work in class and assignment that are far too difficult are set. (Bungsu, O. P., Daud, A., & Masyhur, M. 2021).

Conclusion

As the conclusion, researcher conclude that: 1) The second grade students of MTs. Al-Muini categorized by "fairly good" in English grammar competence. It can be seen from the result of computing the mean of the students' score that was 6.76. 2) The second grade students of MTs. Al-Muini categorized by fairly good in writing skill. It can be seen from the result

of computing the mean of the students' score that was 6.74. 3) It's clearly that, there was a correlation between the students' grammar competence and their writing skill at the second grade students of MTs. Al-Muin. The last, based on the result of this research by with mastering grammar it means that will be affected to the quality of writing skill. Therefore, for the future researchers should use better methodology and should maximal in getting the data.

In order to fill the gap of this study, it is suggested for future researchers to discover the students' perceptions as well. Therefore, perceptions from different individuals can thoroughly be learned. Furthermore, it is also suggested to those who want to conduct the same study as the researchers to select more participants for their studies. It is expected that by selecting more participants, various perceptions of individuals concerning the issue can be obtained.

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