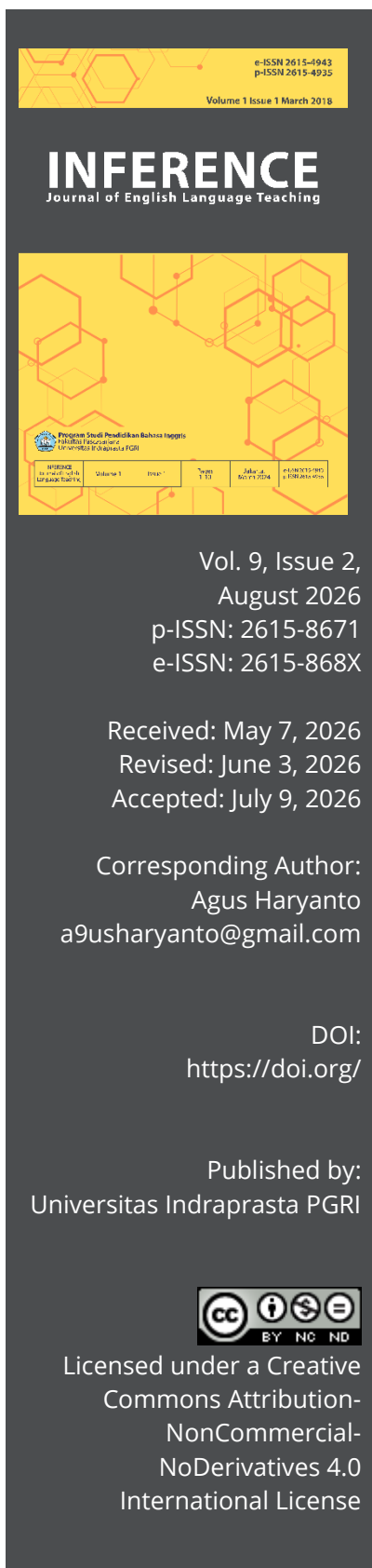




RESEARCH ARTICLE

HOW VOCABULARY AND GRAMMAR MASTERY SHAPE STUDENTS' DESCRIPTIVE WRITING SKILLS IN ENGLISH CLASSROOMS

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Abstract: Writing descriptive texts requires the ability to select appropriate vocabulary and use accurate grammatical structures so that ideas can be conveyed clearly and coherently. This study analyzes the importance of vocabulary and grammar mastery in improving junior high school students' ability to write descriptive texts English, particularly in East Jakarta. Based on a quantitative survey and multiple linear regression analysis involving 87 students, the findings indicated that vocabulary and grammar mastery influenced significantly to students' writing quality, both simultaneously and partially. Vocabulary mastery enriched content and expression, while grammar mastery supported sentence accuracy. These findings highlight the need for balanced instruction in both areas. With well-planned teaching strategies, strengthening vocabulary and grammar can effectively enhance students' descriptive writing skills.

Keywords: Vocabulary mastery; Grammar mastery; Descriptive writing; Writing skills; English language learning; Junior high school students

BAGAIMANA PENGUASAAN KOSAKATA DAN TATA BAHASA MEMBENTUK KETERAMPILAN MENULIS DESKRIPTIF SISWA

Abstrak: Artikel ini membahas pentingnya penguasaan kosakata dan tata bahasa dalam meningkatkan keterampilan menulis teks deskriptif bahasa Inggris pada siswa Sekolah Menengah Pertama, khususnya di Jakarta Timur. Menulis teks deskriptif menuntut kemampuan memilih kosakata yang tepat serta penggunaan struktur tata bahasa yang akurat agar gagasan dapat tersampaikan secara jelas dan runtut. Melalui kajian hasil survei dan analisis regresi linear berganda terhadap 87 siswa, ditemukan bahwa penguasaan kosakata dan tata bahasa berkontribusi signifikan terhadap kualitas tulisan siswa, baik secara simultan maupun parsial. Penguasaan kosakata membantu siswa memperkaya isi dan variasi ungkapan, sedangkan penguasaan tata bahasa mendukung ketepatan struktur kalimat. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa pembelajaran bahasa Inggris perlu menekankan penguatan kedua aspek tersebut secara seimbang. Dengan strategi pembelajaran yang terarah, peningkatan kosakata dan tata bahasa dapat secara efektif mendukung perkembangan keterampilan menulis teks deskriptif siswa.

Kata kunci: Penguasaan kosakata; Penguasaan tata bahasa; Menulis deskriptif; Keterampilan menulis; Pembelajaran bahasa Inggris; Siswa SMP

INTRODUCTION

English is a fundamental subject in junior high schools and a core component of Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum, designed to equip students with essential skills for effective communication in the 21st century. Among these skills, writing in English is particularly critical because it requires not only grammatical accuracy but also the ability to think critically, creatively, and systematically. Writing is widely recognized as one of the most complex and demanding areas of English language learning, as it integrates linguistic competence, cognitive processes, and expressive abilities (Hyland, 2019; Harmer, 2020; Nunan, 2022).

One of the key text types introduced in Grade VIII is the descriptive text. Descriptive writing aims to provide detailed, vivid, and engaging portrayals of people, places, or objects. Within the Merdeka Curriculum, writing descriptive texts is emphasized as a tool for students to communicate ideas, experiences, and observations in a coherent, meaningful, and communicative manner (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). Despite its importance, classroom observations and interviews with English teachers in several junior high schools in East Jakarta indicate that students frequently face challenges in writing descriptive texts. These challenges include limited vocabulary, incorrect sentence structures, and inappropriate use of language features, which reduce clarity, coherence, and overall effectiveness.

Linguistic competence is a crucial factor influencing writing success, with vocabulary mastery and grammar mastery serving as foundational components. Vocabulary mastery enables students to express ideas accurately and with variety, enriching content and making texts more engaging. Grammar mastery, on the other hand, ensures that sentences and paragraphs are logically structured, coherent, and contextually appropriate (Ellis, 2021; Richards, 2020; Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, 2021). Limitations in either domain can lead to writing that is difficult to understand, ineffective, or uncommunicative. Nation (2022) asserts that vocabulary is the cornerstone of language proficiency, as communication cannot occur effectively without a sufficient lexicon. Similarly, Thornbury (2019) emphasizes that vocabulary is the primary vehicle for constructing meaning, while Harmer (2020) highlights that grammar organizes relationships between ideas, supporting clarity and cohesion.

Empirical researches reinforce the critical role of linguistic factors in writing. Wulandari and Pratiwi (2023) report that vocabulary mastery significantly improves clarity of ideas and fluency of expression in students' writing. Hidayat and Rahmawati (2022) find that grammar mastery strongly contributes to accurate sentence structures and meaningful communication in descriptive texts. Rahayu (2021) concludes that students proficient in both vocabulary and grammar produce more structured, coherent, and communicative texts. International studies mirror these findings: EFL students often struggle with writing due to limited vocabulary and weak grammar, resulting in difficulties organizing ideas logically and conveying messages effectively (Al-Khasawneh, 2019; Fareed, Ashraf, & Bilal, 2019). Furthermore, Pham and Tran (2023) demonstrate that improvements in linguistic competence directly enhance academic writing quality among secondary-level EFL students.

Based on these findings, it is evident that descriptive writing proficiency is closely linked to students' mastery of vocabulary and grammar. Understanding this relationship is essential for designing effective instructional strategies that strengthen both aspects of linguistic competence. This study investigated the influence of vocabulary and grammar mastery on the descriptive writing skills of Grade VIII students in public junior high schools in East Jakarta during the 2025/2026 academic year. The study aimed to provide insights for educators to develop evidence-based approaches that enhance students' writing ability, ensuring that they are equipped with the linguistic and cognitive tools needed to succeed in both academic and real-world communication contexts.

RESEARCH METHOD

In the bustling classrooms of SMP Negeri 7 and SMP Negeri 97 in East Jakarta, a study unfolded over six months, from October 2025 to February 2026, aiming to explore the relation between students' mastery of English vocabulary and grammar and their ability to write descriptive texts. These two schools were chosen not only for their accessibility and alignment with the research goals but also for practical reasons, allowing the researcher to gather data efficiently.

To uncover meaningful insights, the study adopted a quantitative survey approach. Rather than experimenting in a controlled lab, the researcher observed real classroom conditions, using structured tests to capture authentic student abilities. The data were analyzed through multiple linear regression, enabling the researcher to see how vocabulary (X_1) and grammar mastery (X_2) influenced descriptive writing skills (Y).

A careful planning guided the research from start to finish. The journey began with the design of reliable instruments, continued with thoughtful data collection from Grade VIII students, and culminated in detailed statistical analysis. Each step was designed to ensure that findings would accurately reflect how language skills interact in a real learning environment.

The study's population included 611 Grade VIII students, from which 86 were selected as a representative sample using Proportional Cluster Random Sampling. This method ensured fair representation: 41 students from SMPN 7 and 45 from SMPN 97, giving a balanced picture of the student body's abilities.

Data collection revolved around well-crafted tests. Vocabulary mastery was measured through 30 multiple-choice items designed to probe understanding and usage in descriptive contexts. Grammar mastery, also assessed with 30 items, evaluated students' grasp of sentence structure, verb forms, and other rules essential for clear, coherent writing. The final test measured their actual descriptive writing skills, capturing their ability to convey ideas accurately and vividly.

The research instruments underwent rigorous calibration before being implemented to collect the data. Each item was tested for validity, reliability, difficulty, and discrimination, ensuring the tools measured what they were intended to measure. Results showed high reliability ($X_1 = 0.909$; $X_2 = 0.888$) and moderate difficulty, confirming that the tests could effectively differentiate between high- and low-performing students. The testing phase was more than just numbers—it was a window into students' language journeys. By analyzing patterns in correct and incorrect answers, the study identified strengths and gaps in vocabulary and grammar knowledge, painting a clear picture of how these foundational skills contribute to writing performance.

Finally, the data were analyzed using multiple linear regression to reveal the precise impact of vocabulary and grammar on descriptive writing. With a thoughtfully chosen sample, carefully designed instruments, and a systematic approach, this study told a compelling story of learning: how students' command of words and rules shaped their ability to express themselves in English.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Description Data

The journey into the English descriptive writing skills of 86 students reveals a fascinating landscape of abilities. On average, students scored 74.28, with individual scores ranging from 40.00 to 95.00, and a median of 75.00. These numbers suggest that the classroom is filled with learners who generally perform well, yet there is a striking diversity in how students express themselves through writing. The standard deviation of 13.499 indicates that while some students excel with vivid, detailed descriptions, others are still developing their ability to communicate ideas effectively, creating a colorful mix of strengths and challenges.

Looking closer, the mean and median scores were nearly identical, suggesting that the data set is well-balanced and representative of the students' abilities. What is particularly noteworthy was that more students scored above the average than below, indicating a classroom where above-average performance was common. This reflects a group of learners who are not only capable but also

increasingly confident in using vocabulary, grammar, and organization to craft meaningful descriptions of people, places, animals, and objects. Each score, high or low, tells a story of individual effort and growth in mastering the nuances of descriptive writing.

Beyond the numbers, the data also hints at a dynamic learning environment. The variety in scores mirrors the diversity of thought, creativity, and expression among students. Some produced highly detailed, engaging texts that captured the essence of the subject, while others provided more straightforward descriptions, showing room for development. The histogram in Figure 1 visually illustrates the distribution of scores, offering a clear glimpse into the classroom's writing profile. Overall, this analysis portrays not just statistics, but a lively snapshot of student learning, highlighting strengths while pointing toward opportunities for growth in descriptive writing.

Table 1
Research Data Description
Statistics

		Vocabulary Mastery	Grammar Mastery	Descriptive Writing Skills
N	Valid	86	86	86
	Missing	0	0	0
	Mean	71.99	68.83	74.28
	Median	73.00	70.00	75.00
	Mode	70	63	80
	Std. Deviation	16.061	18.009	13.499
	Minimum	30	20	40
	Maximum	100	100	95

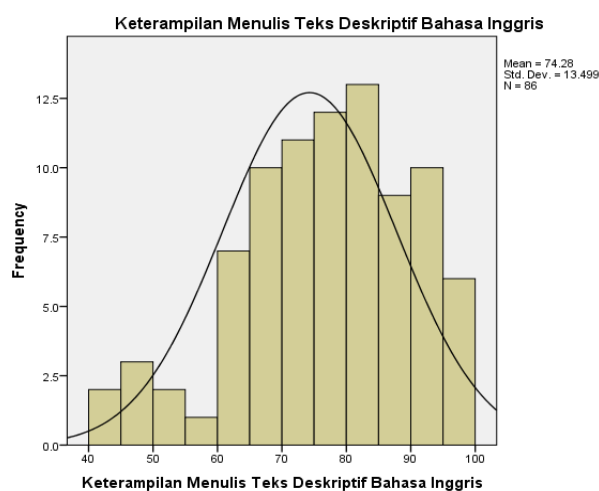


Figure 1
Descriptive Writing Skills

From the figure and the histogram as well as frequency polygon, it can be concluded that the scores for English Descriptive Text Writing Skills in this study exhibit a distribution that tends to be normal.

Turning to Vocabulary Mastery scores, from 86 respondents showed an average of 71.99, a standard deviation of 16.061, a median of 73.00, a mode of 70.00, a minimum score of 30.00, and a maximum score of 100. The relatively high standard deviation indicates considerable differences in students' responses, suggesting that vocabulary mastery varies widely among the participants.

Moreover, the mean and median are very close (71.99 and 73.00), indicating that the data are fairly representative. It is also noticeable that more scores fall above the average than below, showing that most students have a relatively high level of vocabulary mastery.

A complete description of the data can be found in the Appendix, while the histogram illustrating the distribution is presented in Figure 2.

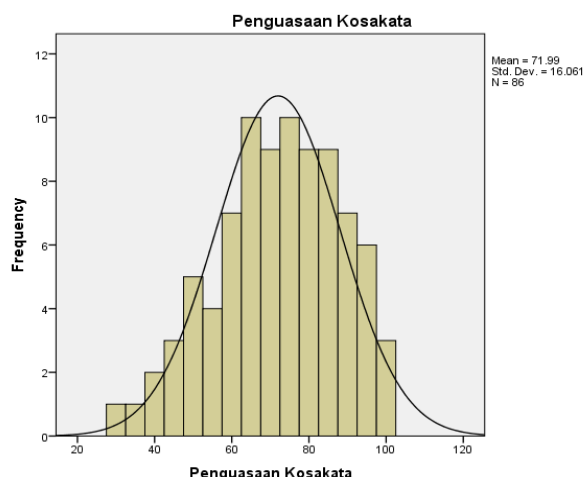


Figure 2
Vocabulary Mastery Score Data Histogram

The histogram and frequency polygon shown in Figure 2, it can be concluded that the Vocabulary Mastery scores in this study exhibit a distribution that tends to be normal.

Furthermore, the Grammar Mastery scores obtained from 86 respondents revealed an average of 68.83, accompanied by a standard deviation of 18.009, a median of 70.00, a minimum score of 20.00, and a maximum score of 100. The relatively close values of the mean and median (68.83 and 70.00) indicate that the distribution of scores is fairly balanced, suggesting that the data provide a reliable representation of students' grammar abilities.

In addition, it is noteworthy that the number of students achieving scores above the average surpasses those below it. This pattern demonstrates that a majority of students possess a reasonably strong command of grammar, while only a small fraction fall into the lower-performance category. The wide range of scores, from 20 to 100, highlights the diversity of grammar mastery within the group, reflecting differences in individual learning experiences, study habits, and exposure to English grammatical structures.

Taken together, these findings suggest that, although there are some students who require additional support, most participants exhibit grammar skills that can be categorized as moderate to good. This variability underscores the importance of differentiated teaching strategies to ensure that all students have opportunities to improve. A complete and detailed description of the data is provided in the Appendix, while the histogram depicting the distribution of scores is presented in Figure 3.

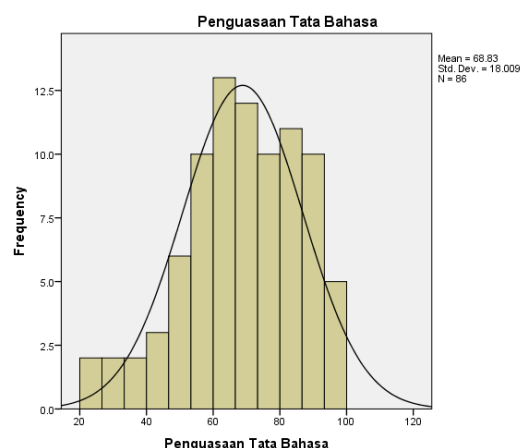


Figure 3
Grammar Mastery Score Data Histogram

From the figure, as well as the histogram and frequency polygon, it can be concluded that the Grammar Mastery scale scores in this study exhibit a distribution that tends to be normal.

Testing the Requirements for Data Analysis

Data Normality Testing

In this study, the requirements for data analysis were tested through normality testing and the linearity of the partial regression line between the independent and dependent variables. The normality of each sample's data was examined using the hypotheses that H0: the sample data are normally distributed, and H1: the sample data are not normally distributed. Calculations were carried out using the SPSS 22 program, which considers data to be normally distributed if the p-value (Sig.) is greater than 0.05, meaning H0 is accepted. The p-value (Sig.) can be found in the Sig. column of the SPSS 22 output table for the normality test. In this study, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method was applied to test normality, and the results of these calculations are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Recapitulation of Normality Test Results

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Vocabulary Mastery	.088	86	.100
Grammar Mastery	.094	86	.060
Descriptive Text Writing Skills	.106	86	.018

Based on the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test presented in the table above, it was found that all variables have significance values (Sig.) greater than 0.05. The Vocabulary Mastery variable (X_1) has a Sig. value of 0.100, the Grammar Mastery variable (X_2) has a Sig. value of 0.060, and the English Descriptive Text Writing Skills variable (Y) shows a Sig. value of 0.18. Therefore, all three variables in this study are normally distributed.

Testing the Linearity of the Regression Line

The linearity test in this study was conducted using the following hypotheses: H_0 : The regression line between variable X and variable Y is linear. H_1 : The regression line between variable X and variable Y is not linear.

The calculations were carried out using a computer with SPSS version 22. According to the program's criteria, data are considered normally distributed if the p-value (Sig.) is greater than 0.05, in which case H_0 is accepted. This indicates that the research sample comes from a population with a normal distribution. Conversely, if the p-value (Sig.) is less than 0.05, H_0 is rejected, meaning the data are not normally distributed.

The p-value (Sig.) used as the reference for normality testing can be found in the Sig. column of the SPSS output table. Meanwhile, for the regression linearity test, the significance values are reported in the Sig. column of the Linearity row in the ANOVA table generated by SPSS version 22. Therefore, the determination of data normality and regression linearity in this study is entirely based on the p-values (Sig.) produced by SPSS.

Multicollinearity Testing

The multicollinearity test aims to examine whether the regression model finds any correlation among the independent variables. A good model should not have correlations among the independent variables. The following is the table of the multicollinearity test results.

Table 3

Multicollinearity Test Results

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)		
Vocabulary Mastery	.924	1.082
Grammar Mastery	.924	1.082

Based on the results of the multicollinearity test in the Coefficients table, a Tolerance value of 0.924 and a VIF of 1.082 were obtained. These values meet the criteria of Tolerance > 0.10 and VIF < 10, so it can be concluded that there are no symptoms of multicollinearity among the independent variables in the regression model.

Heteroskedasticity test

The heteroscedasticity test aims to examine whether the residual variance (the difference between the actual values and the values predicted by the model) is constant across all observations. If the residual variance remains constant, this condition is called homoscedasticity. If the residual variance varies across observations, the condition is referred to as heteroscedasticity.

This test is important because the presence of heteroscedasticity can make regression results less accurate and cause the regression coefficients to be inefficient. By conducting this test, researchers can determine whether the regression model meets classical assumptions or requires adjustments, such as data transformation or alternative regression methods. The results of the heteroscedasticity test for the research data are presented below, indicating whether the regression model satisfies the assumption of homoscedasticity.

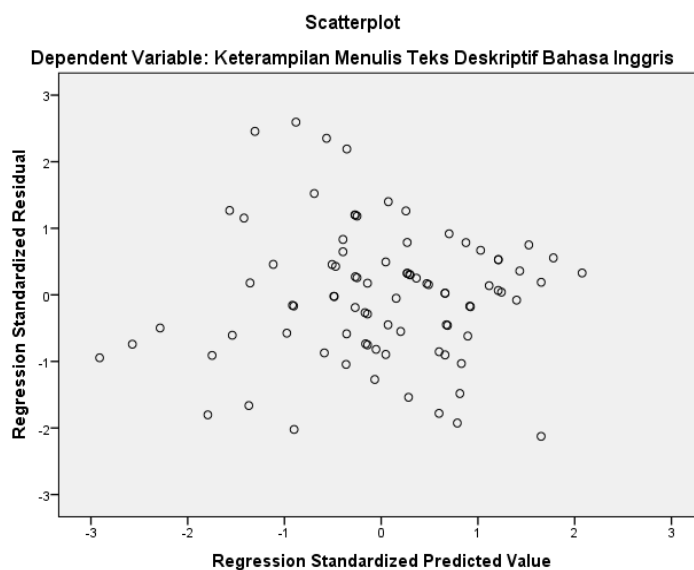


Figure 4
Heteroscedasticity Test Histogram

Based on the graph above, it shows that the points are scattered randomly and do not form any clear patterns, and are distributed both above and below zero on the Y-axis. This indicates that there is no heteroscedasticity in the regression model, so it can be used to predict the variable of English Descriptive Text Writing Skills based on Vocabulary Mastery and Grammar.

Research Hypothesis Test

The hypothesis test was conducted to determine whether there is a significant effect of vocabulary mastery (X_1) and grammar mastery (X_2) on English descriptive text writing skills (Y). This test aims to verify the validity of the previously formulated hypotheses, both simultaneously (the combined effect of X_1 and X_2 on Y) and partially (the effect of each independent variable on Y individually).

The data analysis in this study employed multiple linear regression with the assistance of SPSS version 22, as the research involves two independent variables and one dependent variable. Multiple linear regression was chosen because it can measure the extent to which vocabulary mastery and grammar mastery affect descriptive writing skills both together and separately.

The complete results of the multiple linear regression analysis are presented in the following tables, including the regression coefficients, t-values, F-values, significance levels, and the contribution of each independent variable to the dependent variable.

Table 4
Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.613 ^a	.375	.360	10.797

a. Predictors: (Constant), Penguasaan Tata Bahasa, Penguasaan Kosakata

Table 5
F Test (Simultaneous)
ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	5814.191	2	2907.095	24.939	.000 ^b
Residual	9675.112	83	116.568		
Total	15489.302	85			

a. Dependent Variable: Skills in Writing English Descriptive Texts

b. Predictors: (Constant), Mastery of Grammar, Mastery of Vocabulary

Table 6
t-Test Table (Partial) and Regression Equation
Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	31.076	6.231		4.987	.000
Vocabulary Mastery	.350	.076	.417	4.620	.000
Grammar Mastery	.261	.068	.348	3.861	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Skills in Writing English Descriptive Texts

The Influence of Vocabulary Mastery (X₁) and Grammar Mastery (X₂) Together on English Descriptive Text Writing Skills (Y)

Based on Table 4, it is known that the multiple correlation coefficient between Vocabulary Mastery (X₁) and Grammar Mastery (X₂) simultaneously on English Descriptive Text Writing Skills (Y) is 0.613. The significance test of the multiple correlation coefficient (as shown in the regression calculation appendix) indicates that this value is significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that Vocabulary Mastery and Grammar Mastery together have a significant effect on students' English descriptive writing skills.

The coefficient of determination (R²) is 0.375, meaning that Vocabulary Mastery (X₁) and Grammar Mastery (X₂) together contribute 37.5% to students' descriptive writing skills, while the remaining 62.5% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study.

Furthermore, based on the regression analysis presented in Tables 5 and 6, the regression equation describing the influence of Vocabulary Mastery (X₁) and Grammar Mastery (X₂) on English Descriptive Text Writing Skills (Y) is as follows:

$$Y = 31.076 + 0.350X_1 + 0.261X_2$$

The significance of the regression line was tested by examining the Sig. value and the F-value in Table 5. According to the criteria, the regression is considered significant if Sig. < 0.05 or

$F_{\text{observed}} > F_{\text{table}}$. From the table, the results show $\text{Sig.} = 0.000 < 0.05$ and $F_{\text{observed}} = 24.939$, so H_0 is rejected. This indicates that the regression model is significant simultaneously.

Thus, it can be concluded that Vocabulary Mastery (X_1) and Grammar Mastery (X_2) together have a significant effect on students' English Descriptive Text Writing Skills (Y).

2. The Influence of Vocabulary Mastery (X_1) on English Descriptive Text Writing Skills (Y)

To test the hypothesis regarding the effect of Vocabulary Mastery (X_1) on English Descriptive Text Writing Skills (Y), the t -value and Sig. value for the Vocabulary Mastery (X_1) row in Table 6 were examined. According to the criteria, significance is determined as follows:

If $t_{\text{observed}} > t_{\text{table}}$, H_0 is rejected, or

If $\text{Sig.} < 0.05$, H_0 is rejected.

This means that the variable X_1 is considered to have a significant effect on Y if either condition is met, namely $\text{Sig.} < 0.05$ or $t_{\text{observed}} > t_{\text{table}}$. The Sig. value is taken from the Sig. column in the Vocabulary Mastery (X_1) row in Table 6, while the t_{observed} value is obtained from the t column in the same row. The t_{table} value is determined from the t -distribution table at a 5% significance level with degrees of freedom ($df = n - k - 1$) = $86 - 2 - 1 = 83$, where n is the number of respondents and k is the number of independent variables.

Based on Table 6, the Sig. value is $0.000 < 0.05$ and $t_{\text{observed}} = 4.620$, thus H_0 is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that the independent variable X_1 (Vocabulary Mastery) has a significant effect on the dependent variable Y (English Descriptive Text Writing Skills).

The Influence of Grammar Mastery (X_2) on English Descriptive Text Writing Skills (Y)

To test the hypothesis regarding the effect of Grammar Mastery (X_2) on English Descriptive Text Writing Skills (Y), the analysis was carried out by examining the t -value and Sig. value in the Grammar Mastery (X_2) row of Table 6. The criteria for determining regression significance are as follows:

If $t_{\text{observed}} > t_{\text{table}}$, H_0 is rejected; or

If $\text{Sig.} < 0.05$, H_0 is rejected.

The Sig. value used is taken from the Sig. column in the Grammar Mastery (X_2) row, while t_{observed} is taken from the t column in the same row. The t_{table} value is obtained from the t -distribution table at a 5% significance level with degrees of freedom ($df = n - k - 1$) = $86 - 2 - 1 = 83$, where n is the number of respondents and k is the number of independent variables.

Based on Table 6, the Sig. value is $0.000 < 0.05$ and $t_{\text{observed}} = 3.861$, so H_0 is rejected. This indicates that the independent variable X_2 (Grammar Mastery) has a significant effect on the dependent variable Y (English Descriptive Text Writing Skills).

Therefore, it can be concluded that Grammar Mastery (X_2) significantly influences English Descriptive Text Writing Skills (Y).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis and discussion of the data, it can be concluded that both vocabulary mastery and grammar mastery have a significant influence on students' English descriptive text writing skills. The combined effect of vocabulary and grammar mastery on writing skills is statistically significant, with a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) and an F -value of 24.939 . Individually, vocabulary mastery also has a significant effect, supported by a t -value of 4.620 and $\text{Sig.} = 0.000$, while grammar

mastery shows a significant impact with a t-value of 3.861 and Sig = 0.000. These results indicate that students with stronger vocabulary and better grammar tend to achieve higher performance in writing descriptive texts, emphasizing the importance of developing both linguistic skills to improve overall writing proficiency.

Based on these conclusions, several recommendations can be made. First, teachers are encouraged to emphasize the development of students' vocabulary and grammar through various descriptive writing activities, such as regular writing exercises, group discussions, and the use of creative learning media. Second, students are advised to independently improve their vocabulary and grammar skills, for example, by reading English books or articles, keeping a daily journal, and practicing descriptive writing on a regular basis. Third, schools can provide additional programs or activities, such as English clubs or writing workshops, to support the improvement of students' writing skills. Finally, future researchers may consider including other variables, such as learning interest, writing strategies, motivation, or the use of digital learning media, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting students' writing abilities.

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