

The Effect of Vocabulary and Sentence Structure Mastery on Students' English Descriptive Writing Skills

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of vocabulary mastery and sentence structure mastery on the English descriptive writing ability of seventh-grade students in State Junior High Schools in East Jakarta. Using a survey method, data were collected from 84 students across two schools. The results show that vocabulary and sentence structure mastery significantly affect students' descriptive writing ability (Sig. = 0.001 < 0.05; Fu = 19.723). Vocabulary mastery has a stronger influence (Sig. = 0.001; Fu = 8.356) compared to sentence structure mastery (Sig. = 0.001; Fu = 4.830). These findings highlight that vocabulary and sentence structure are essential components in enhancing students' descriptive writing performance in English.

Keywords: Vocabulary; sentence structure mastery, descriptive writing, English writing ability

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki pengaruh penguasaan kosakata dan struktur kalimat terhadap kemampuan menulis deskriptif Bahasa Inggris siswa kelas tujuh di SMP Negeri di Jakarta Timur. Dengan menggunakan metode survei, data dikumpulkan dari 84 siswa di dua sekolah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penguasaan kosakata dan struktur kalimat secara signifikan memengaruhi kemampuan menulis deskriptif siswa (Sig. = 0,001 < 0,05; Fu = 19,723). Penguasaan kosakata memiliki pengaruh yang lebih kuat (Sig. = 0,001; Fu = 8,356) dibandingkan dengan penguasaan struktur kalimat (Sig. = 0,001; Fu = 4,830). Temuan ini menyoroti bahwa kosakata dan struktur kalimat merupakan komponen penting dalam meningkatkan kinerja menulis deskriptif siswa dalam Bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci: Kosakata, Stuktur Kalimat, Kemampuan menulis teks deskripsi Bahasa Inggris

INTRODUCTION

English has become a crucial language in education worldwide. As an international language, English is used in various fields such as technology, science, economics, and culture. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) and plays a crucial role in helping students keep up with technological developments, access scientific resources, and participate in global discussions. Therefore, English proficiency is considered an essential skill for individuals who want to remain competitive in both academic and professional contexts.



Language learning relies on four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each skill contributes to effective communication and supports each other (Brown, 2007). Among these skills, writing holds a crucial position in the EFL context because it serves not only as a means of communication but also as a tool for thinking, organizing information, and conveying ideas in a systematic and structured manner (Ur, 1996). In formal education, writing skills are also used as an indicator of language competence through exams, assessments, and literacy projects. However, diagnostic assessments and student writing assignments indicate that many junior high school students in Indonesia still experience difficulties in writing, particularly descriptive texts. They tend to have limited vocabulary, use repetitive words, and struggle to construct sentences that adhere to grammatical rules. This results in unclear and incoherent writing, with ideas not fully developed.

This aligns with the findings of Anjomshoa and Ghaffari (2021), who stated that the main obstacles to writing lie in limited vocabulary and poor sentence structure. Vocabulary mastery plays a central role in writing skills, particularly descriptive texts. A rich and precise vocabulary enables students to describe objects, places, or events with detail and clarity. Furthermore, mastery of sentence structure is also crucial, ensuring ideas are conveyed coherently and understood by readers. Harmer (2020) emphasized that effective writing instruction must include sentence structure exercises to enable students to progress from simple sentences to compound and complex sentences. The combination of vocabulary mastery and good sentence structure will produce meaningful and communicative texts.

Descriptive texts, in particular, require adequate vocabulary and sentence structure, as they aim to evoke clear images in the reader's mind by utilizing sensory details (Kathy, 2013). In the Independent Curriculum, descriptive texts are taught as a means for students to develop their ability to describe people, places, or objects in detail and accurately. This curriculum emphasizes the use of the simple present tense, appropriate adjectives, and appropriate vocabulary in descriptive writing.

However, junior high school students in East Jakarta still face challenges in writing descriptive texts due to limited vocabulary and poor mastery of sentence structure. This underscores the need for further research into the extent to which these two linguistic aspects influence students' writing skills. Therefore, this study was conducted with the title "The Effect of Vocabulary Mastery and Sentence Structure on Descriptive Text Writing Skills: A Survey of Public Junior High Schools in East Jakarta."

This research is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the linguistic factors that contribute to writing skills and provide practical implications for teachers in designing more effective writing learning strategies. By understanding the relationship between vocabulary mastery, sentence structure, and writing skills, educators can direct more focused learning that is aligned with the actual needs of students in the classroom.

METHOD

This research applied a quantitative method with a survey approach to investigate the influence of vocabulary mastery and sentence structure mastery on students' descriptive writing ability. The study was carried out in two public junior high schools in East Jakarta, namely SMPN 128 and SMPN 158, during the academic year 2024/2025. The total population consisted of 532 seventh-grade students, from which a representative sample of 84 students was selected using random sampling technique and calculated through Taro Yamane's formula. The research instruments consisted of three main tests designed to measure the variables. First, a vocabulary mastery test containing 30 multiple-choice items was administered to assess students' ability to recognize and apply appropriate vocabulary in context.

Second, a sentence structure mastery test with 50 multiple-choice questions was used to evaluate students' grammatical competence in forming correct and meaningful sentences. Finally, a descriptive writing test with 5 essay prompts was conducted to examine students' ability to organize ideas, apply vocabulary, and construct sentences coherently in writing descriptive texts.

The collected data were analyzed through descriptive statistics to provide an overview of students' performance across the three instruments. In addition, correlation analysis was employed to identify and measure the strength of the relationships between vocabulary mastery, sentence structure mastery, and descriptive writing skills. This non-experimental design was chosen because it allowed the researcher to observe and interpret the natural relationship between the variables without providing specific interventions or treatments. Through this methodological approach, the study aims to generate empirical evidence regarding how linguistic competencies, particularly vocabulary and sentence structure mastery, contribute to the development of students' writing skills. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for English language teachers in designing more effective strategies to improve students' descriptive writing ability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study used 64 students as a sample, separated into two groups and given distinct learning media treatments: 32 students in the control group, who learnt using traditional media, and 32 students in the experimental group, who learned with infographics. The control group included 16 students with high learning interest and 16 students with low learning interest. The experimental group included 16 students with strong learning interest and 16 students with low learning interest. The results of the data processing in this study are:

The Influence of Learning Media on English Reading Comprehension

To test the hypothesis regarding the influence of infographic and conventional learning media on English reading comprehension, SPSS version 22 was used. The calculation above yields a sig. $0.024 < 0.05$, or $F \text{ count} = 5.377 > F \text{ table} = 3.15$. This indicates that the use of learning media has an influence on English reading comprehension.

The Influence of Learning Interest on English Reading Comprehension



To test the hypothesis regarding the influence of student learning interest on English reading comprehension, SPSS version 22 was used. The calculation above yields a sig. $0.019 < 0.05$, or $F \text{ count} = 5.783 > F \text{ table} = 3.15$. This indicates that learning interest influences English reading comprehension.

The Influence of Interaction between Learning Media and Student Interest in Learning (A and B)

To test the hypothesis regarding the interaction between Learning Media and student interest in learning, SPSS version 22 was used. The calculation above yielded a sig. $0.036 < 0.05$, or $F \text{ count} = 4.610 > F \text{ table} = 3.15$. This indicates that Learning Media and interest in learning significantly interact with English Reading Comprehension.

The results of this study indicate that the application of Infographic Media and interest in learning significantly influence students' English Reading Comprehension. This influence indicates that both variables jointly influence students' English Reading Comprehension. This conclusion is also evident from the results of the first hypothesis test, which states a significant effect of the application of Infographic Media on stThis study used the SPSS application with sample data taken from SMPN 128 Jakarta and SMPN 158 Jakarta with a total of 532 students. The author presents research data for the variables of English descriptive text writing skills (Y), vocabulary mastery (X1), and sentence structure mastery (X2). The following is a detailed explanation:

Tabel 1 Results of Calculation of Multiple Correlation Coefficient Test of Variables X and X2 through Y

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.867a	.751	.745	2.879

- a. Predictors: (Constant), sentence structure mastery, vocabulary mastery
- b. Dependent Variable: English descriptive text writing skills

Tabel 2 Results of Calculation of Multiple Correlation Coefficient Test of Variables X and X2 through Y

ANOVAa

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2026.249	2	1013.125	122.198	.001 ^b
	Residual	671.561	8	8.291		
	Total	2697.810	10			

- a. Dependent Variable: English descriptive text writing skills



b. Predictors: (Constant), sentences structure mastery, vocabulary mastery

Tabel 3 Hasil Perhitungan Persamaan Regresi Ganda Variabel X₁ dan X₂ terhadap Y

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Zeroorder	Correlational	Partial
(Constant)	2.202	.140	19.723	<.001			
Pengaruh Kosakata	.283	.602	8.356	<.001	.824	.680	.463
Pengaruh Struktur Kalimat	.142	.348	4.830	<.001	.732	.473	.268

a. Dependent Variable: English descriptive text writing skills

1. The effect of vocabulary mastery (X₁) and sentence structure mastery (X₂) together on English descriptive text writing skills (Y)

In table 1.1 it can be stated that there is a significant influence of vocabulary and sentence structure together on the ability to write English descriptive texts. This is proven by the acquisition of Sig. 0.001 < 0.05 and F count = 122.198. Meanwhile, the multiple regression line equation can be expressed as $\hat{Y} = 42.202 + 0.283 X_1 + 0.142 X_2$. This means that an increase in one score of vocabulary mastery and sentence structure mastery variables contributes 0.283 by X₁ and 0.142 by X₂ to the variable of ability to write English descriptive texts.

Based on the research results above, it can be concluded that vocabulary mastery and sentence structure mastery together have a positive influence on improving the ability to write descriptive texts in English for students at State Junior High Schools in East Jakarta. This implies that vocabulary mastery and sentence structure mastery have a significant influence on improving the ability to write descriptive texts in English for students at State Junior High Schools in East Jakarta.



Through multiple linear regression analysis, a coefficient of determination of 0.751 was obtained, indicating that 75.1% of the variation in the variable of descriptive text writing ability is determined or can be explained by variations in English vocabulary mastery and sentence structure, while the remaining 24.9% is explained by other factors outside the research variables.

Enriching English vocabulary and sentence structure plays a crucial role in writing good essays. Sirait et al. (1985:1) stated that writing a good essay requires mastery of several skills in sentence structure and choosing the right words, thus facilitating the relationship between the writer and the reader. Based on the researchers' observations during the study, many students found that they did not fully understand how to write descriptive essays. Many students still struggle to choose words to describe something.

This is in line with Paul Nation's theory, which states that vocabulary mastery involves two main aspects: passive vocabulary and active vocabulary. Passive vocabulary refers to words that can be understood when listening or reading, while active vocabulary includes words used productively in speaking and writing. Nation emphasizes that vocabulary mastery depends not only on understanding word meanings but also on the ability to use those words in various contexts.

This demonstrates that students' inability to create comprehensive descriptive texts is due to difficulties in using the vocabulary they have learned.

2. The effect of vocabulary mastery (X1) on English descriptive text writing skills (Y).

Table 1.2 shows a significant effect of vocabulary mastery on the ability to write descriptive texts in English. This is evidenced by the Sig 0.001 <0.05 and Fh = 8.356. The contribution of vocabulary mastery to the ability to write descriptive texts in English can be expressed using the formula:

$$KD = \text{Value of } \beta_{x1y} \times \text{Passive Correlation Value (rx1y)} \times 100\%$$

$$KD = 0.602 \times 0.824 \times 100\% = 49.6\%$$

From the calculation above, it can be concluded that vocabulary mastery contributes 49.6% to improving the ability to write descriptive texts in English. The results of the above study conclude that vocabulary mastery has a positive impact on improving the ability to write descriptive texts in English at East Jakarta State Junior High Schools. This means that vocabulary mastery significantly improves students' ability to write descriptive texts in English at East Jakarta State Junior High Schools.

Vocabulary mastery is not a simple skill, as it encompasses recognition, selection, and application. Vocabulary mastery is also not a spontaneous process, but rather a process leading to good and correct vocabulary mastery. Vocabulary mastery will increase with development. According to Dale (in Zuchdi, 2008: 35), assuming that children end first grade with an average vocabulary of 3,000 words, it is likely that by this time they will have increased their vocabulary to around 14,000 to 15,000 words, and for college students, it will be around 18,000 to 29,000



words. Vocabulary mastery contributes significantly to descriptive writing skills. Vocabulary is indeed important in the writing process and for communication with other members of society. (In this case, readers), everyone needs to expand their vocabulary and learn as much as possible. The difference between words and language (Keraf, 2004: 64-65). Good vocabulary mastery will make it easier to write well. This means that vocabulary mastery has a positive effect on descriptive writing skills. This is proven by the product-moment correlation test, which found that $p < 0.001$ is smaller than the 5% significance level ($0.001 < 0.005$). In conclusion, this study successfully proved the hypothesis that vocabulary mastery has a positive and significant effect on the writing skills of seventh-grade students at East Jakarta State Junior High Schools.

3. The Effect of mastery of sentence structure (X2) on English descriptive text writing skills (Y).

Table 1.2 shows a significant effect of sentence structure mastery on the ability to write descriptive texts in English. This is evidenced by the Sig. $0.001 < 0.05$ and $F_h = 4.830$. The contribution of sentence structure mastery to the ability to write descriptive texts in English can be expressed using the formula:

$$KD = \beta_{x1y} \text{ Value} \times \text{Passive Correlation Value (rxly)} \times 100\%$$

$$KD = 0.348 \times 0.732 \times 100\% = 25.1\%$$

From the calculation above, it can be concluded that sentence structure mastery contributes 25.1% to improving the ability to write descriptive texts in English.

Based on the research results and existing theories, it can be concluded that mastery of sentence structure has a positive influence on improving the ability to write descriptive texts in English at East Jakarta State Junior High Schools. This means that high mastery of sentence structure has a significant impact on improving the ability to write descriptive texts in English at East Jakarta State Junior High Schools. Mastery of sentence structure is related to the ability to understand sentences in syntax. Surimiharja et al. (1996: 1-2) state that writing is the highest level of language skill. Descriptive writing is a writing activity that aims to describe something so that the reader understands and comprehends what is conveyed, using vocabulary and sentence structure to illustrate what is presented.

This means that there is a positive and significant influence of mastery of English sentence structure on descriptive writing ability. The product moment test showed that $p < 0.001$ is smaller than the 5% significance level ($0.001 < 0.05$). In conclusion, this study successfully proved the hypothesis that there is a positive and significant influence of mastery of English sentence structure on the writing ability of seventh-grade students at East Jakarta State Junior High Schools students' English Reading Comprehension, and the second hypothesis, which states a significant effect of Interest in Learning on students' English Reading Comprehension.

CONCLUSIONS



Based on the research results and data analysis, it can be concluded that vocabulary mastery and sentence structure play a significant role in improving descriptive writing skills among junior high school students in East Jakarta. Simultaneously, these two variables were shown to have a significant influence on descriptive writing ability, contributing 32.6%. Partially, vocabulary mastery had a greater influence than sentence structure, although both were equally significant. These findings confirm that descriptive writing skills depend not only on students' ideas but also on adequate vocabulary mastery and the ability to construct sentences correctly. Therefore, efforts to improve the quality of English writing instruction at the junior high school level should be directed at strengthening vocabulary and practicing sentence structure through systematic and contextual learning strategies.

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