

CORRELATION BETWEEN GRAMMAR MASTERY AND WRITING SKILLS OF 4th-semester STUDENTS

***Randy¹⁾, Jamiluddin²⁾, Maf'ulah³⁾**

^{1,2,3)}English Education Study Program, Teacher Training and Education Faculty
Tadulako University, Palu
*randymuhamad131@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to find out the correlation between grammar mastery and writing skills. The researchers applied a correlational research design. There were two variables in this research, they were grammar mastery as variable X and writing skills as Variable Y. The researchers took the 4th-semester students as the population and the sample of this research. In selecting the sample, the researchers used a random sampling technique. 3 students from each class were taken randomly as the sample of this research. The total sample was 18 students. In conducting this research, the researchers used two tests. The tests were grammar and writing tests. A grammar test measured students' competence in simple past tense. The test consists of 20 multiple-choice questions. The test is aimed at collecting data on students' grammar mastery. In the writing test, the students chose one of three topics that were provided in the test's instructions. The students wrote the text in the form of a recount text. The data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The result shows that the correlation coefficient between students' grammar mastery and writing skills is 0.630. The result is categorized as substantial or high. It indicates that there is a positive correlation between grammar mastery and writing skills of 4th-semester students of the English Education Study Program of Tadulako University. It means that the students who have good grammar mastery also have good writing skills and the students who lack grammar mastery also have poor writing skills because grammar is one important aspect that influences students' writing skills. The implementation of this finding in the teaching of writing skills is that the lecturers must find a way to integrate the teaching of writing skills with grammar.

Key Terms: Grammar mastery; writing skills

INTRODUCTION

Grammar is an essential part of any language and helps us to communicate effectively with others. It provides us with the rules and structure that we need to convey our thoughts and ideas clearly. Nurhayati (2015) states that grammar is a structural rule that manages the composition of sentences, phrases, and words in a language. It is also stated by Priya (2015) that grammar is the rules that show words are combined, arranged or changed to make meaning. Therefore, by understanding grammar, we can make proper sentences that can be avoided misunderstandings and ensure that our messages are received as intended. It also helps us to express ourselves more eloquently and precisely, which can be particularly important in professional or academic settings. Overall, grammar is a crucial component of language that allows us to communicate effectively and efficiently.

As colleges student, they must understand how to communicate well. The students have to master grammar in order to have well communicative skillss. They must not only use language that can be understood but also with a standard that is in accordance with academic rules. This is most applied to students majoring in language, in this case, students of English Education Study Program. In students' lecture activities, the majority of their based learning is language. At the end of students' period of study, they will be required to be able to use academic standard language skillss that are not just focused on speaking but also writing as a condition to finish college.

Grammar can be a challenging aspect of language learning for many students. This is because grammar rules can be complex and require a deep understanding of the structure and function of language. In order to use grammar effectively, students need to understand the various components of a sentence, such as the subject, verb, object, adverb, and complement, and how these components work together to create meaning. They also need to understand how to use different verb tenses, pronouns, and other grammatical structures to convey different meanings. However, despite the challenges, a strong understanding of grammar is essential for effective communication in writing. Students who understand grammar are able to construct well-formed sentences with clear meaning, which is crucial for writing texts that are easy to understand and convey the intended message.

Students with good grammar normally able to write text better than those who does not. It is due to the fact that in writing, the students should express their ideas or messages to be a written form. According to Pincas (1998), writing is a way of people to communicate with each other by expressing their message for a purpose. Thus, we can use our writing to deliver our ideas or messages to the readers.

One of the issues when students start to writing is that they do not comprehend important aspects in writing which are content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. They believe it is difficult for them to produce good written work since they are unable to fulfill the aspects. In a different situation, the students frequently struggle to decide which tenses should

be used. Liz-Lyons (1987) states it is very difficult to write if you do not master writing skills in language because you should write clearly and accurately to give the message or information to the readers. The statement clearly states that it is very difficult to write sentences, paragraphs, essays, and others. This could happen because someone does not master the language. By understanding grammar, one can understand and know how to write English clearly and accurately.

Lecturers have a big role in making a suitable method in order to make the students understand how to write a text because it will improve their mastery of grammar and writing skills. Referring to the curriculum where the students have met grammar courses starting at the first semester and writing courses in the second semester, they should have at least a good foundation in using grammar and applying it in writing. However, there are still possibilities that students still have many difficulties in grammar mastery and writing skills. It can be seen by paying attention to some factors whether on their grades or how they apply grammar and writing skills in their daily activities.

Some researchers have conducted some research on the correlation between grammar and writing. A positive correlation is found by Muhsin (2015) where his research aimed to see the correlation between the students' grammar and writing ability to students. Through the formulation of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, his findings showed a correlation between grammar ability and writing skills of the students which is categorized as moderate. On the other hand, Helmiati (2019) found a positive correlation of grammar mastery with writing ability but the result was categorized as low.

Based on the explanations above, the researcher conducted research to the correlation between grammar mastery and writing skills of 4th-semester students of English Education Study Program of Tadulako University. He wanted to find out whether the students that used correct grammar were good in their writing skills or vice versa. Therefore, the researchers wanted to know whether there was a correlation or not.

METHOD

The research used a correlational research design. It is stated by Latief (2013:11), "Correctional research is one of the descriptive research designs used to measure the correlations between two or more continuous variables." By seeing the statement, correlational research is a type of research design that looks at the relationship between two variables. Correlational studies are non-experimental, which means that the researchers do not have to manipulate or control anything about the variables. It is useful to describe and find out the correlation between grammar mastery as variable X and writing skills as variable Y.

This research was taken at the English Study Program of Tadulako University. The researcher chose some of 4th-semester students as the sample of this research. The 4th-semester students have passed *Basic Communicative Grammar* at the the first semester and *Text Type Writing* at the third semester. Thus, they already learned about simple past tense and

recount text. In selecting the sample, the researchers used a random sampling technique. Three students from each class were taken randomly as the sample of this research. The total sample was 18 students.

In conducting this research, the researchers used a test. The tests were grammar and writing test. First, the grammar test was designed in form of multiple-choice test and consisted 20 numbers of questions. Second, the writing test was designed in form of writing a recount text based on their own words.

In scoring grammar test, the researchers used the scoring rubric from the researchers themselves. The students got score 1 when the answer is correct and score 0 when the answer is incorrect for each number of the test. In scoring writing test, the researchers used the scoring rubric from Brown (2007) in Yulanda (2018: 28) as follows:

Table 1 - The Scoring Rubric of Writing Test

Aspect	Score	Performance Descriptive
Content (C) 30 % - topic - detail	4	The topic is complete and clear and the details are relating to the topic
	3	The topic is complete and clear but the details are almost relating to the topic
	2	The topic is complete and clear but the details are not relating to the topic
	1	The topic is not clear and the details are not relating to the topic
Organization (O) 20 % - identification - description	4	Identification is complete and descriptions are arranged with proper connectives
	3	Identification is almost complete and descriptions are arranged with almost proper connectives
	2	Identification is not complete and descriptions are arranged with few miss uses of connective
	1	Identification is not complete and descriptions are arranged with misuse of connectives
Grammar (G) 20 %	4	Very few grammatical or agreement inaccuracies
	3	Few grammatical or agreement inaccuracies but not effect on meaning
	2	Numerous grammatical or agreement inaccuracies
	1	Frequent grammatical or agreement inaccuracies
Vocabulary (V) 15 %	4	Effective choice of words and word forms
	3	Few grammatical or agreement inaccuracies but not effect on meaning
	2	Limited range confusing words and word forms
	1	Very poor knowledge or words, word forms, and not understandable
Mechanics (M) 15 % - Spelling - Punctuation	4	It uses correct spelling, punctuation and capitalization
	3	It has occasional errors of spelling, punctuation and capitalization

- Capitalization	2	It has frequent errors of spelling, punctuation and capitalization
	1	It is dominated by errors spelling, punctuation and capitalization

After collecting the result of grammar test, the researchers found each of the students' individual scores. The researchers used a formula by Purwanto (1987:102) to calculate the grammar test as follows:

$$NP = \frac{R}{SM} \times 100$$

Next, after collecting the result of speaking test, the researchers found the raw and individual score of the students' speaking test using formula by Brown (2007) in Yulanda (2018: 28) as follows:

$$\text{Score} = \frac{3C+2O+2G+1,5V+1,5M}{40} \times 100$$

Finally, to calculate the students' achievement in both grammar and speaking test, the researchers used formula by Gay, *et al.* (2006) as follows:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

Later, the researchers measured the relationship the between two variables. To find out that the two variables had a correlation, the researchers used Pearson's Product Moments coefficient of correlation in Bungin (2005:207). The formula was:

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

The formula above was used to find index correlation "r" product moment between X variable and Y variable (r_{xy}). Meanwhile, to interpret the result of the coefficient value of the correlation of two paired variables, the researchers used criteria for evaluation and interpretation of a correlation coefficient by Best and Kahn (2013), as follows:

Table 2 - The Criteria for Evaluation and Interpretation of Correlation

Coefficient (r)	Interpretation	Relationship
0.00 – 0.19	There is correlation between X andY, but the correlation is very weakor little so it is ignored or it is considered no correlation in this rating.	Negligible
0.20 – 0.39	There is correlation between X andY, but it is weak or little.	Low
0.40 – 0.59	There is correlation between X andY, the values are medium.	Moderate

0.60 – 0.79	There is high correlation between X and Y.	Substantial
0.80 – 1.00	There is a very high correlation between X and Y.	High to very high

The criterion of the hypothesis was in the following. If the coefficient (r) is higher than 0.19, it means that the hypothesis of the research is accepted where there is a positive correlation between grammar mastery and writing skills of 4th-semester students of English Education Study Program of Tadulako University. If the coefficient (r) is lower than 0.20, it means that the hypothesis of the research is rejected where there is a negative correlation between grammar mastery and writing skills of 4th-semester students of English Education Study Program of Tadulako University.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers gave grammar test to find out the students' competence in using simple past tense. The grammar test consisted of 20 multiple choice tests. All of the students could answer those questions although some of them chose incorrect answers when they were answering the questions. The test results are fully presented in the following table:

Table 3 - The Students' Score of Grammar Test

No.	Initials	Raw Scores	Individual Scores
1	NH	20	100
2	I	8	40
3	WNA	17	85
4	MDA	19	95
5	MFR	20	100
6	MF	18	90
7	APY	19	95
8	RMP	18	90
9	FR	18	90
10	RM	16	80
11	A	20	100
12	SSS	20	100
13	MIM	16	80
14	R	17	85
15	SS	15	75
16	AH	19	95
17	F	17	85
18	IH	13	65
Total Score			1550
Mean Score			86.1
Maximum Score			100
Minimum Score			40

Writing test was given by the researchers to find out the students' skills in writing recount

text. There were three topics that researchers provided for the students, and the students chose only one topic to be written down. The results of the students test in writing recount text are presented in the following table:

Table 4 - The Students' Score of Writing Test

No.	Initials	C Scores	O Scores	G Scores	V Scores	M Scores	Raw Scores	Individual Scores
1	NH	12	6	6	6	4.5	34.5	86
2	I	12	8	4	4.5	4.5	33	82
3	WNA	12	8	8	4.5	6	38.5	96
4	MDA	12	6	8	6	4.5	36.5	91
5	MFR	12	8	8	6	4.5	38.5	96
6	MF	12	8	6	4.5	4.5	35	87
7	APY	12	8	6	4.5	4.5	35	87
8	RMP	12	8	6	4.5	4.5	35	87
9	FR	12	8	6	4.5	4.5	35	87
10	RM	12	6	6	4.5	4.5	33	82
11	A	12	8	6	6	6	38	95
12	SSS	12	8	6	6	4.5	36.5	91
13	MIM	12	6	6	4.5	4.5	33	82
14	R	9	6	8	4.5	4.5	32	80
15	SS	12	6	6	3	4.5	31.5	78
16	AH	12	8	6	4.5	4.5	35	87
17	F	12	6	8	4.5	4.5	35	87
18	IH	9	6	6	4.5	4.5	30	75
Total Score								1556
Mean Score								86.4
Maximum Score								96
Minimum Score								75

In order to find out the correlation between students' simple past tense mastery and the students' skills in writing recount text, the researchers presented both of the results in the following table:

Table 5 - The Score of Grammar Test and Writing Test

No.	Initials	Variables		Squares		Cross Products
		X	Y	X ²	Y ²	XY
1	NH	100	86	10000	7396	8600
2	I	40	82	1600	6724	3280
3	WNA	85	96	7225	9216	8160
4	MDA	95	91	9025	8281	8645
5	MFR	100	96	10000	9216	9600
6	MF	90	87	8100	7569	7830

7	APY	95	87	9025	7569	8265
8	RMP	90	87	8100	7569	7830
9	FR	90	87	8100	7569	7830
10	RM	80	82	6400	6724	6560
11	A	100	95	10000	9025	9500
12	SSS	100	91	10000	8281	9100
13	MIM	80	82	6400	6724	6560
14	R	85	80	7225	6400	6800
15	SS	75	78	5625	6084	5850
16	AH	95	87	9025	7569	8265
17	F	85	87	7225	7569	7395
18	IH	65	75	4225	5625	4875
Σ		1550	1556	137300	135110	134945
		ΣX	ΣY	ΣX²	ΣY²	ΣXY

After gathering all of the data of grammar and writing tests, the researchers applied Pearson's–Product Moment Correlation Coefficient formula to find out the correlation between students' mastery of simple past tense as (X) and the ability of the students in writing recount text as (Y). The r_{xy} result of the calculation based on the formula was 0.630.

Besides using manual calculation, the researchers also used SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 20 to ensure that the result above is correct. The researchers recalculated the data to avoid mismatches between scores of the calculation that he did. The result of SPSS calculation is presented on the table below:

Table 6 : Students' Grammar Mastery and Writing Skills

		Grammar Test	Writing Test
Grammar Test	Pearson Correlation	1	.630**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.005
	N	18	18
Writing Test	Pearson Correlation	.630**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	
	N	18	18

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result of both manual and SPSS calculation above shows that correlation coefficient between students' grammar mastery of simple past tense as (X) and the ability of the students in writing recount text as (Y) is 0.630. It means that there is a positive correlation between students' mastery of simple past tense and the ability of the students in writing recount text. When this result is consulted with standard critical value of Pearson's Product–Moment Correlation (r), this result is categorized substantial because it lies between 0.60-0.79. It means that the correlation coefficient value is on high level.

The result of this research showed that Alternative Hypothesis (Ha) was accepted. There is a positive correlation between grammar mastery and writing skills of 4th-semester students of English Education Study Program of Tadulako University. Best and Khan (2006:379) state, "A perfect positive correlation is +1.00. A perfect negative correlation is -1.00. A complete lack of relationship is zero (0)." and the result of two variables of this research was 0.630. The correlation is categorized as substantial or high. It means that grammar is one important aspect that influence the students' writing skills.

This recent research has very intense similarities with previous studies, especially with research by Bannu (2015), "The Correlation Between Students' Mastery of Grammar and Writing Ability of the Tenth Grade." Both previous and recent studies have found a positive correlation between grammar and writing. The main difference between the two studies is the samples. Bannu (2015) took the samples from the tenth-grade students, and the recent study took the samples from the 4th-semester college students. It is clear that those two different samples are on an extremely different level. Meaning that, even with the same positive result of correlation coefficient, there is a main difference in the results for each variable. On the grammar and writing test results, Bannu (2015) found high frequencies of scores under 60; on the other hand, the recent study found high frequencies of scores above 80.

Even though this research showed a positive correlation in the results, it was only at substantial, not at significant or very high level because several students in the sample did not show a correlation in the two tests that the researchers gave. Some students scored very well on the grammar test but wrote poorly on the writing text. This could happen because there are other aspects that contribute a significant score to the writing test, such as content, organization, vocabulary, and mechanics, based on the scoring rubric in Yulanda (2018: 28). For example, content has nothing to do with grammar but gives the highest accumulated score, which is 30% on the writing test. Of course, when the sample gets a high score on that aspect, the individual score will increase a lot, regardless of how low that sample got on the grammar aspect. On the other hand, some students showed significant scores at grammar both on the grammar test and the writing test but were poor at identifying content, organization, vocabulary, or mechanics correctly in their text.

Last but not least, this research confirmed that apart from mastering grammar in order to write properly, there are also other important aspects in writing to be mastered. According to Jacobs, et al (1981), in writing text, the content must be relevant to assigned topic, the organization is clearly and well organized, the vocabulary that been using is effective, and demonstrate mastery of conventions, few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing. Thus, the good writer is someone who mastering grammar and noticing every important aspect that will make the text clearly and understandable.

CONCLUSION

Concerning the research problem and hypothesis, the researchers conclude that there is a positive correlation between students' grammar mastery and writing skills of 4th-semester students of English Education Study Program of Tadulako University. It is proven because the result of correlation coefficient between variable (X) and variable (Y) is 0.630. It means that the coefficient (r) is higher than 0.19. Furthermore, the correlation between students' grammar mastery and writing skills of 4th-semester students of English Education Study Program of Tadulako University is positive and categorized as substantial (high). It means that the students who have good grammar mastery also have good writing skills and the students who lack grammar mastery also have poor writing skills. In conclusion, the result of this research shows that grammar can be one aspect that influence the students' writing skills.

REFERENCES

- Bannu, A. (2015). *The Correlation between Students' Mastery of Grammar and Writing Ability of the Tenth Grade*. Palu: e-Journal of English Language Teaching Society Universitas Tadulako.
- Best, J. W. & Khan, J. V. (2013). *Research in Education* Pearson New International Edition. Pearson Edition Limited.
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy (second edition)*. New York: Longman.
- Bungin, B. (2005). *Metodologi Penelitian Kuantitatif: Komunikasi, Ekonomi, dan Kebijakan Publik Serta Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial Lainnya*. Jakarta: Kencana.
- Gay, R. I., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. (2006). *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Applications*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Helmiati, M. (2019). *The Correlation of Grammar Mastery with Writing Ability*. Pontianak: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Khatulistiwa.
- Jacobs., Holly. L., Stephen, A., Zinggraf., Deanne. R., Wormuth, V., Faye, H., Jane, B., Hughey. (1981). *Testing ESL Composition: A Practical Approach*. Rowley: Newbury House Publishers, Inc.
- Latief, M.A. (2013). *Research Methods on Language Learning. An Introduction*. Malang: UM Press.
- Liz, H. – Lyons, B. H. (1987). *Study Writing a Course in Writing English for Academic and Profesional Purpose*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Muhsin, M. A. (2015). *The Correlation between Students' Grammar Knowledge and Writing Ability*. Makassar: Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar.

- Nurdiyantoro, B. (2001). *Penilaian dalam Pengajaran Bahasa dan Sastra*. Yogyakarta: BPFE.
- Nurhayati, I. (2015). *Grammatical Errors on Students' Recount Texts (A Case Study of First Year of MAN 2 Banjarnegara in the Academic Year 2014/2015)*. Semarang: ELT Forum Universitas Negeri Semarang.
- Pincas. (1998). *Teaching English Writing: Essential Language Teaching Series*. London: The Macmillan Publisher.
- Priya, S. P. (2015). *The Importance of Teaching Grammar More Interestingly in the Class Rooms*. Vallam: International Journal of English Language, Literature and Translation Studies (IJELR).
- Purwanto, M. N. (1987). *Prinsip-Prinsip dan Teknik Evaluasi Pengajaran*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Yulanda, E. S. (2018). *Improving Students' English Writing Through Think-Pair-Share (An Experimental Study at English Department of UIN Ar-Raniry)*. Banda Aceh: <http://library.ar-raniry.ac.id/>.