



The Relationship of Interest in English Learning and Mastering Grammar in Writing Skill at Junior High School 18 Jambi City

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| Article Info | Abstract |
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| Article History: Received : 05/12/2025 Revised : 23/12/2025 Accepted : 23/12/2025 | This study investigates the association between students' interest in learning English and their grammar mastery in writing at SMP Negeri 18 Jambi City (Indonesia). Using a descriptive-correlational design, data were collected from 33 ninth-grade students selected through random sampling in the 2025/2026 academic year. Learning interest was measured using a Likert-scale questionnaire, while grammar mastery was assessed through a descriptive writing test scored with a grammar-focused rubric. Pearson's product-moment correlation (SPSS 25) indicated a weak positive relationship between learning interest and grammar mastery ($r = 0.332$), but the association was not statistically significant ($p = 0.059$). The regression model shows that learning interest explains 11.0% of the variance in grammar mastery ($R^2 = 0.110$). These findings suggest that interest may support engagement, but it does not by itself ensure higher grammatical accuracy in writing. Pedagogically, grammar development should be strengthened through systematic form-focused instruction and repeated practice integrated into writing activities. |
| Keywords: Learning interest; Grammar mastery; Writing Skill; English learning; | |
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INTRODUCTION

Learning is a process in which a person acquires new knowledge or understanding, which requires effort from the student to master the material presented. Interest in a subject plays a crucial role in determining learning success, as it can increase student concentration and engagement. When a topic is considered interesting or enjoyable, students are often motivated to seek additional information, ultimately deepening their understanding. Students with a strong interest in a subject generally demonstrate full attention, not only following the teacher's explanations but also taking the initiative to utilize various other resources to broaden their horizons (Adinda & Sari, 2025).

Psychological factors, such as interest in learning, have a significant influence on students' academic achievement. According to experts, interest is a mental drive that focuses

an individual's attention on a subject, influenced by emotional and cognitive aspects. In biology learning, interest can shape a positive attitude toward the subject matter or, conversely, lead to disinterest, depending on the student's personality characteristics.

According to Slameto in Adinda & Sari (2025), interest is not a natural trait possessed from birth, but rather the result of the influence of internal and external factors, such as personal needs, sense of satisfaction, teacher learning strategies, and the learning environment. Teachers play a crucial role in fostering interest in learning through the presentation of engaging material, providing relevant stimuli, and creating a conducive learning environment.

According to Hamka et al., (2021) a person's level of interest in an object is influenced by their passion for that object, and this passion drives attention. Lack of attention to an activity indicates low interest in that activity. In the context of English language learning, attention plays a crucial role in communication, both verbally and in writing, helping individuals express ideas and understand others in social interactions.

In writing, it is necessary to use appropriate grammar, namely, a system of rules that regulates how words and sentences are arranged to produce clear and precise meaning. Many students experience difficulty understanding English grammar, which results in a decreased interest in learning and subsequently affects their writing skills. This condition is the basis for this study, which aims to analyze the influence of learning interest and grammar mastery on students' descriptive text writing skills in English.

In the context of second language learning, grammar is seen as the element that plays the most crucial role in language mastery (Singh et al., 2017). The method considered most effective in facilitating students' mastery of grammar in writing skills is by using students' writing as a starting point in discussing grammatical concepts. According to Harmer in Agung et al., (2022), grammar plays a crucial role in the process of language acquisition and mastery. Sentence construction and word usage require an understanding of how to combine words correctly. Furthermore, a language's grammatical system serves as the basis for determining the structure and arrangement of its sentences.

In English language learning, most students still show limited understanding of grammar, which makes it difficult for them to express their ideas orally and in writing. This obstacle primarily arises in writing, particularly in sentence structure, as students often lack a good understanding of English grammatical forms and the context in which they are used. Mastering grammar alone does not guarantee good writing. However, a deeper and more accurate understanding of how language is structured can improve control and accuracy in its use.

In ESL/EFL learning, writing skills are one of the important skills that students need to master (Romrome & Bato, 2023). Writing is one of the English language skills that students must master when learning a foreign language. This skill is considered a productive skill because it produces written products in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

(Sa'diyah & Cahyono, 2019). English as a foreign language learners are expected to master the language quickly; therefore, they need to make various efforts to improve their writing skills. However, writing skills are often seen as a difficult aspect to master. (Göçen, 2019). Writing skills develop more slowly than other language skills, because the writing process requires time, practice, experience, and strategies to express ideas in written form. Prastikawati et al., (2020) also claimed that students are expected to be able to express their ideas freely in writing, because writing is a complex skill that includes three competencies, namely effective, communicative, and physical. According to (Setyowati et al., 2022) In writing activities, students are required to master various skills, such as selecting grammar, constructing arguments, planning, organizing ideas, and applying appropriate linguistic rules.

Writing is a form of communication inherent in human life, as this skill is inseparable from daily activities. Through writing, one can deepen one's learning, hone one's thinking skills, and reflect on language and communication. Mastery of writing skills also demonstrates the potential to produce written works (Chanyoo, 2018). Writing is a form of communication, as it allows students to express their feelings and ideas in written form. By structuring text, they are able to convey their knowledge and beliefs through arguments. Writing is one of the essential components in applied linguistics (Abbas & Tawfeeq, 2018) and is also an English language skill that must be learned by EFL students (Ratminingsih et al., 2018).

Mastery of writing skills is an important factor in achieving educational and academic standing (Kamariah et al., 2018). Writing is a series of symbols used as a tool to convey meaning for various purposes, making it an important part of everyday life. According to Niño & Páez, (2018), the ability to produce writing will increase if there is development in advanced language skills and learning progress, considering that writing is an aspect that is directly related to the learning process and use of language. Meanwhile, Urrutia & Gutierrez, (2011) argued that writing activities not only include the creation of graphic symbols, but also require attention to the formal aspects of language so that the written results have good coherence. From a teaching and learning perspective, writing is a complex process. Through this activity, individuals can communicate ideas and emotions and attempt to persuade readers. Writing is constructed from words, phrases, and sentences that must be structured according to linguistic rules to be accepted and understood by the public (Jam & Shahin, 2012). The results of writing activities can be in the form of text, messages, or electronic letters Aljatila, (2015) stated that writing skills include the ability to form words, construct sentences, use spelling and punctuation correctly, and express ideas accurately, logically, and consistently. To ensure readers understand the content or message of a text, writers need to structure it carefully and in a structured manner. Furthermore, attention to language use, spelling, and word choice is crucial for effective and understandable writing.

One form of text used in language learning is descriptive text. This type of text is often used in the learning process because it includes basic writing skills that every language user needs to master. Descriptive text can encompass a wide range of experiences, observations, and interactions, allowing readers to understand them objectively or subjectively, depending on the author's purpose. According to Knapp & Watkins, (2005) descriptive texts can be categorized into several types, namely: (1) narrative descriptions, (2) information reports, (3) literary descriptions, and (4) process classifications. The word description is adapted from the English word descriptive, which has a meaning related to the activity of describing something (Finoza, 2013). The purpose of writing descriptive text is to provide detailed information about a particular object, be it an individual, animal, or location.

Descriptive text is a type of text that aims to provide a detailed description of an object in order to arouse the emotions and imagination of the reader, so that they can feel what the writer wants to convey (Aji, 2013). Dadi (2015) said descriptive text is a type of text that focuses on describing an object rather than simply telling a story. The purpose of writing this text is to describe in detail a particular person, animal, place, process, quality, or procedure. To write a good descriptive text, the writer needs to master aspects such as generic structure, linguistic elements, and social function. Miy, (2012), explains that descriptive text is characterized by several characteristics, namely clear presentation of information, in-depth explanations, the presence of descriptive comments on the objects being described, the use of present tense and past tense forms, and the use of adjectives.

The characteristics of descriptive text include clear presentation of information, detailed explanations, descriptive comments on the objects being described, use of present tense and past tense forms, and use of adjectives. Aljatila (2015) stated that according to experts, the main characteristic of descriptive text is its ability to describe and detail an object so that readers can feel and imagine it through their five senses. According to Knapp & Watkins (2005) descriptive texts are characterized by certain grammatical characteristics, including the use of present tense and past tense forms, the use of relational, action, and mental verbs, as well as adjectives and adverbs, all of which are arranged in sentences and paragraphs that are relevant to the topic being described.

METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach with a correlational method. According to Gay et al. (2012), correlational research is included in the descriptive research type because it aims to relate conditions that occur in the field in order to determine the relationship between variables. Researchers apply this type of research to analyze the relationship between two variables, namely the independent variable (X) in the form of student interest and the dependent variable (Y) in the form of grammar mastery.

The population in this study consisted of eight ninth-grade students of SMP Negeri 18 Jambi City. This study used a random sampling technique. From the sample selection results,

the researcher obtained 33 students as respondents, in accordance with the opinion of Gay et al. (2012), who stated that correlational research should involve a minimum of 30 participants. The instrument used was a learning interest questionnaire consisting of 20 statements, and each student was asked to answer according to their condition. To measure interest in learning English, the researcher used a Likert Scale with a score range of 1 to 5, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Interest scores

| Answer | Scores |
|-----------|--------|
| Very Good | 5 |
| Good | 4 |
| Fair | 3 |
| Poor | 2 |
| Very Poor | 1 |

According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), reliability refers to the consistency of the resulting scores. There are 20 items to measure students' English learning interest; this was done to determine the internal consistency of the reliability level. To determine and analyze the reliability of the student English learning interest questionnaire, researchers used Cronbach's Alpha in SPSS 25. The following decision-making criteria were established: student English learning interest is reliable if the p-output is >0.05 , and student English learning interest is unreliable if the p-output is <0.05 . Meanwhile, the results of the student English learning interest questionnaire were 0.794, indicating that all 20 items are reliable, as shown in the following table.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|------------------|------------|
| .794 | 20 |

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Researchers administered a descriptive text writing test to students to measure their mastery of grammar. A summary of the results of the questionnaire on students' learning interests and grammar mastery is presented in the following table.

Table 3. Recapitulation of the Result of Students' Interest in English Learning and Grammar Mastery

| Students' Codes | Interest in English Learning | Grammar Mastery | Students' Codes | Interest in English Learning | Grammar Mastery |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| S1 | 3,35 | 65 | S18 | 3,60 | 55 |
| S2 | 4,10 | 70 | S19 | 3,50 | 55 |
| S3 | 4,10 | 85 | S20 | 3,90 | 55 |
| S4 | 3,80 | 75 | S21 | 3,65 | 55 |
| S5 | 3,65 | 60 | S22 | 3,80 | 45 |
| S6 | 3,70 | 70 | S23 | 3,40 | 45 |
| S7 | 3,45 | 60 | S24 | 3,20 | 30 |
| S8 | 4,30 | 95 | S25 | 3,55 | 25 |
| S9 | 3,65 | 95 | S26 | 4,05 | 30 |
| S10 | 3,65 | 95 | S27 | 3,90 | 25 |
| S11 | 3,55 | 95 | S28 | 3,50 | 15 |
| S12 | 3,45 | 80 | S29 | 4,10 | 35 |
| S13 | 3,00 | 80 | S30 | 3,95 | 45 |
| S14 | 4,00 | 100 | S31 | 3,00 | 25 |
| S15 | 3,80 | 90 | S32 | 2,90 | 35 |
| S16 | 4,15 | 65 | S33 | 3,10 | 20 |
| S17 | 3,95 | 75 | | | |

Based on the results of descriptive statistical analysis, students' English learning interest scores ranged from 58 to 86, with an average of 73.18 and a standard deviation of 7.200. Detailed descriptive statistics regarding students' interest in English learning are presented in the following table.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics

| | N | Minim um | Maxim um | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-------------------|------|----------|----------|-------|----------------|
| Students Interest | 33 | 58 | 86 | 73.18 | 7.200 |
| Valid (listwise) | N 33 | | | | |

Descriptive statistical analysis shows that students' grammar mastery scores range from 15 to 100, with an average writing ability score of 59.09 and a standard deviation of 25.386. Further details regarding the descriptive statistics of students' grammar mastery can be seen in the following table.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics

| | N | Minim um | Maxim um | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---------------|----|----------|----------|-------|----------------|
| Grammar Score | 33 | 15 | 100 | 59.09 | 25.386 |

| | | |
|---------------------|---|----|
| Valid (listwise) | N | 33 |
|---------------------|---|----|

The normality test in this study aims to determine whether the data is normally distributed or not. The method used is the Shapiro-Wilk test, with the criteria that data is considered normally distributed if the significance value is > 0.05 , and not normally distributed if the significance value is < 0.05 . Based on the analysis results, the significance value for the English learning interest variable is $0.415 > 0.05$, so the data is normally distributed. Meanwhile, the significance value for the grammar mastery variable is $0.133 > 0.05$, which also indicates that the data is normally distributed. Details of the normality test results are presented in the following table.

| Table 6. Tests of Normality | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|----|-------|--------------|----|------|
| | Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a | | | Shapiro-Wilk | | |
| | Statistic | Df | Sig. | Statistic | df | Sig. |
| Students Interest | .082 | 33 | .200* | .968 | 33 | .415 |
| Grammar Score | .101 | 33 | .200* | .950 | 33 | .133 |
| *. This is a lower bound of the true significance. | | | | | | |
| a. Lilliefors Significance Correction | | | | | | |

In addition to conducting a normality test, the researcher also conducted a linearity test using SPSS version 25. The decision-making criteria were based on probability values, where if the value is > 0.05 , then the two variables are considered to have a linear relationship. The analysis results showed a significance value of $0.803 > 0.05$, indicating a linear relationship between students' interest in learning English and grammar mastery. Details of the linearity test results can be seen in the following table.

| Table 7. ANOVA Table | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|---------|-------------|----------|-----|------|
| | | Sum of Squares | | Mean Square | | F | Sig. |
| Grammar Score * Students' Interest | Between Groups | (Combined) | 10974.8 | 1 | 577.622 | .77 | .698 |
| | | | 11 | 9 | | 8 | |
| | | Linearity | 2269.78 | 1 | 2269.783 | 3.0 | .104 |
| | | | 3 | | | 58 | |
| | | Deviation from Linearity | 8705.02 | 1 | 483.613 | .65 | .803 |
| | | | 7 | 8 | | 2 | |
| Within Groups | | | 9647.91 | 1 | 742.147 | | |
| | | | 7 | 3 | | | |
| Total | | | 20622.7 | 3 | | | |
| | | | 27 | 2 | | | |

This study aims to determine whether there is a relationship between English learning interest and students' grammar mastery. To analyze this relationship, the

researcher used the Pearson Product Moment correlation test. The decision-making criteria were set as follows: if the significance value is <0.05 , the two variables are declared correlated, whereas if the significance value is >0.05 , the two variables are not correlated. Based on the results of the data analysis, a significance value of $0.059 > 0.05$ was obtained, indicating that the two variables do not have a significant correlation. The Pearson correlation coefficient value of 0.332 indicates that the relationship between the two variables is classified as weak. Details of the correlation test results are presented in the following table.

| Table 8. Correlations | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| | | Grammar Score | Students Interest |
| Grammar Score | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .332 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .059 |
| | N | 33 | 33 |
| Students Interest | Pearson Correlation | .332 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .059 | |
| | N | 33 | 33 |

Furthermore, the correlation coefficient value was tested through a significance test, which plays an important role in decision-making for hypothesis testing using the t-test. The decision-making criteria are set as follows: if the significance value is <0.05 , then there is a significant influence between the two variables; conversely, if the significance value is >0.05 , then there is no significant influence. Based on the results of the data analysis, a significance value of $0.059 > 0.05$ was obtained, which indicates that there is no significant influence between interest in learning English and students' mastery of grammar. Thus, the alternative hypothesis (H_a), which states that there is a correlation between interest in learning English and grammar mastery of grade IX students at SMP Negeri 18 Kota Jambi, is rejected, while the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted.

| Table 9. Coefficients ^a | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|
| | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | |
| Model | | B | Std. Error | Beta | T |
| 1 | (Constant) | -26.511 | 43.923 | | -.604 |
| | Students Interest | 1.170 | .597 | .332 | 1.958 |

a. Dependent Variable: Grammar Score

To determine the extent of influence of English learning interest on students' grammar mastery, calculations were performed using the R-square value. The

analysis results showed that student learning interest had an insignificant effect, with a variance contribution to grammar mastery of 11%.

Table 10. Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .332 ^a | .110 | .081 | 24.332 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Students' Interest

The present findings indicate that students' interest in English learning and their grammar mastery move in the same direction, but only weakly. Descriptive statistics show that students' learning interest is moderately high on average, whereas grammar mastery is more varied across learners. Although the assumption checks suggest the data are normally distributed and the relationship is linear, the Pearson test yields a weak positive coefficient ($r = 0.332$) with a non-significant p-value ($p = 0.059$), meaning that interest alone does not reliably predict students' grammar performance in this sample. In practical terms, the regression model indicates that learning interest explains only a small portion of variance in grammar mastery ($R^2 = 0.110$).

One plausible interpretation is that "interest" primarily affects students' attention and willingness to engage in learning activities, but grammar mastery is a skill that typically requires sustained, structured exposure, explicit guidance, and repeated practice over time. In the introduction, interest is framed as a driver of attention and engagement (Slameto in Adinda & Sari, 2025; Hamka et al., 2021). However, grammar competence—especially in EFL contexts—is often shaped by instructional quality, opportunities for meaningful use, and feedback cycles that help learners notice and correct form (Singh et al., 2017; Sa'diyah & Cahyono, 2019). Therefore, interest may contribute indirectly through increased participation, but it may not translate directly into measurable grammar mastery unless mediated by effective learning processes (e.g., time-on-task, strategy use, and consistent form-focused practice).

The operationalization of grammar mastery may also help explain the weak relationship. In this study, grammar mastery is derived from a descriptive writing test, which is inherently multi-component: students' scores can be influenced not only by grammar accuracy but also by vocabulary, coherence, organization, and mechanics. Prior literature emphasizes that writing development is complex and requires planning, organizing ideas, and applying linguistic rules simultaneously (Setyowati et al., 2022; Urrutia & Gutierrez, 2011). Consequently, a student who is interested in learning English may produce richer content or be more willing to write, yet still show persistent grammatical errors if they lack explicit grammatical knowledge or have limited practice applying rules in context. This aligns with the view that grammar contributes to writing control and accuracy, but does not automatically guarantee strong writing performance (Harmer in Agung et al., 2022).

Methodological factors may further attenuate the observed relationship. First, the sample size ($N = 33$) is relatively small for detecting modest correlations; with a correlation close to conventional thresholds, statistical power may be limited.

Second, the interest measure is a self-report questionnaire; such instruments are useful for capturing perceptions but can be affected by social desirability or students' varying interpretations of the items. Third, grammar scoring based on writing can introduce measurement error if scoring rubrics and rater consistency are not tightly controlled. These factors can increase "noise" in the data and reduce the likelihood of finding a statistically significant association.

Pedagogically, the results suggest that teachers should not assume that students who report higher interest will automatically demonstrate stronger grammar mastery. To improve grammar outcomes, it is advisable to integrate grammar instruction with writing tasks so that students can practice form in meaningful contexts. Approaches that use learners' own writing as a starting point for grammar discussion and corrective feedback are consistent with recommendations in the literature (Singh et al., 2017; Abbas & Tawfeeq, 2018). In addition, classroom routines such as targeted mini-lessons on frequent errors, guided rewriting, peer review, and formative feedback can help convert engagement into sustained improvement in grammatical accuracy and control.

For future research, it would be valuable to include additional predictors that may better explain grammar mastery and writing performance, such as vocabulary knowledge, writing practice intensity, motivation/self-efficacy, exposure to English outside the classroom, and teaching strategies used by the teacher. Expanding the sample across multiple classes or schools and employing mixed methods (e.g., follow-up interviews about learning habits) may also clarify how interest interacts with learning opportunities to shape grammar development.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, two main conclusions emerged. First, no significant correlation was found between students' learning interest and grammar mastery at SMP Negeri 18 in Jambi City. Second, learning interest was shown to have no significant influence on students' grammar mastery. These findings emphasize the importance of students continuously improving their grammar skills. Based on these findings, it is recommended that further research explore more specific and effective teaching strategies to develop English language learning, particularly in increasing student engagement and grammar proficiency. Furthermore, future research could consider examining other factors that potentially influence writing ability, such as vocabulary mastery and the intensity of writing practice.

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