

A CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS' MASTERY OF FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR AND THEIR ACHIEVEMENT IN WRITING RECOUNT: A STUDY AT AN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the correlation between students' mastery of functional grammar and their achievement in writing recount texts, conducted within the context of an Islamic boarding school. The research aims to address two main questions: (1) How do male and female students perform in grammar learning and writing skills and (2) Is there a correlation between the mastery of functional grammar and students' writing skills in junior high school. The study collected the data from eighth-grade students and categorized the results according to gender. The findings demonstrated that male and female students performed slightly differently in functional grammar tests and writing tests. The lowest functional grammar exam score for male students was 58, while it was 52 for female students. In contrast, the top scores for both genders were 97. In the writing assessment, similar differences were found, with male students scoring as low as 60 and female students scoring as low as 48. A group of both male and female students obtained the highest maximum score of 100. This research also investigates the relationship between students' functional grammar mastery and their ability to write factual recount texts. The estimated r-count value of 0.9487 was found to be significantly higher than the r-table value of 0.3550, $r\text{-count} (0.9487) > r\text{-table} (0.3550)$ using the Pearson product-moment correlation and a significance level of 0.05, showing a significant positive correlation. Hence, it can be concluded that the implementation of functional grammar has a significant influence in developing students' writing skills on factual recount text with the aim that they are not only able to arrange words into a paragraph, but also able to convey the ideas and meanings they express in their writing.

Keywords: Functional grammar, writing ability, factual recount text, junior high school

INTRODUCTION

English is already being taught in schools in many countries, including Indonesia. In some schools, English served as both the primary subject and the main language. Based on the curriculum set in Indonesia, students should take English learning seriously and keep trying to master it. If students want to master English well, they need to explore the four main skills in English such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing so that they can communicate well. To achieve those four skills in English, it is important for students to master the language components namely vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

Generally, grammar is one of the elements of language that plays a crucial role in cultivating mastery of the English language. Mastering grammar will affect the mastery of language skills (Misemer, 2013). Grammar is existing in every language, and each language has its own grammar. Richards and Schmidt (2010, p. 251–252) said that “grammar is a description of the structure of a language and how language units such as words and phrases are formed into sentences”. The language units will form a text that can express various meanings in it Eggins, (2004, p. 12). Those meanings can be interpreted further in functional grammar.

Specifically functional grammar, a grammar model designed by Michael Halliday in the 1960s, focuses on how spoken and written language function in various social contexts and is dependent on systemic linguistics. It is enormously beneficial in demonstrating how texts operate beyond the sentence level, how various texts are constructed, and how language changes to fit the aim of the users. It adopts a descriptive style and

concentrates on word clusters that create meaning, as stated by Feng (2013). Schleppegrell states in Feng (2013) that functional grammar has more applications to speaking and writing in the field of language learning. The primary reason is that functional grammar assists EFL students in learning the English language for communicative purposes and provides them with the opportunity to recognize linguistic aspects of the language that they must acquire to succeed in school. Hence, it is expected that increasing students' understanding of functional grammar will facilitate their ability to deliver meaning, especially as it pertains to written language.

Furthermore, the application of a language through writing abilities or a writing system is known as a written language. Language is divided into two forms: written text and spoken text. Based on the language competencies in the 2013 curriculum for junior high school, constructing written text is more challenging and complex than speaking text. Sari, Saragih, and Djajanegara (2019) said that writing was one of the most challenging subjects in school since students were required to write a text in English. They had to write down their ideas and put them on paper in the correct structure. In addition, Heaton (1975) stated that “The writing skills are complex and sometimes difficult to teach, requiring mastery not only of grammatical and rhetorical devices but also of conceptual and judgmental elements”. In this case, one of the reasons that the written text is more challenging is that the construction of a text requires different lexico-grammatical features depending on the genre of the text.

In junior high school context, several text genres have been studied in



English classes, one of which is recount text. In composing recount texts, students need to master lexicogrammatical features to make it easier for them to convey the meaning of their thoughts in text form. Therefore, the role of functional grammar in the process of creating recount texts is quite important because it can support students in several ways, such as (1) vocabulary selection, (2) the use of grammar in the formation of recount texts, (3) the use of adverbial phrases in text writing, and (4) the use of conjunctions to connect sentences. According to Humphrey, Droga, and Feez (2012, p. 8) lexicogrammar feature includes three aspects: (1) language for expressing ideas (ideational meaning), (2) Language for connecting ideas (interpersonal meaning), and (3) Language for creating cohesive text (textual meaning). Martin and Rose (2007) explained that recount texts often include action verbs to describe the sequence of events, adverbs of manner to describe actions, and adverbial clauses to provide additional information about time, place, or cause.

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that functional grammar is one of the language components that have an important and crucial role in supporting writing ability. A good mastery of functional grammar and writing skills will allow the writers to deliver their message and thoughts to the readers in an understandable way as described by Sari, Saragih, and Djajanegara (2019). Otherwise, a lack of mastery of grammar while writing is only confusing to the readers. It is important to use a good and correct word in order to convey the meaning clearly.

The context in which the research was conducted was in a private boarding

school which has a culture of separating gender in religious activities according to Islamic values. This has also influenced the way academic achievement is reported. Hence, students' performance is also reported based on their gender because the boarding school leader needs to plan the required steps to take for the improvement of learning performance of male and female students. According to the researcher's experience in teaching English in one of private junior high school in Indonesia, a variety of text genres are taught in the classroom. However, the researcher discovered that a number of students seem to be having difficulty producing text properly, especially recount texts, as measured by sentence structure and lexicogrammatical features. The students cannot conduct an effective writing recount process and deliver their thoughts because they do not have good grammar mastery in constructing sentence structures and using correct lexicogrammatical features. Moreover, the students are still not applying some grammar rules when constructing phrases, sentences, and paragraphs to create a well-written text. The students who do not have good grammar mastery have a lack of confidence that could make them sometimes find some difficulties to compose short-function texts, especially in constructing sentence structure and using grammatical features in a good way.

Based on the explanations above regarding functional grammar, which has a related function in the formation of meaning, and the ability to write recount texts that require mastery of linguistic aspects in order to produce well-written text that can be understood effectively by readers, the researcher seeks to investigate the relationship between competency of

functional grammar and writing recount skills by raising the research title. "*A Correlation Between Students' Mastery of Functional Grammar and Their Achievement in Writing Recount: A Study at An Islamic Boarding School.*"

METHOD

This research applied quantitative research by implementing the correlation method. It means this research involved the procedures of collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and writing the results of a study (Creswell, 2014 p. 33). As stated by Creswell (2014, p. 41), that quantitative research as a method for testing objective theories by examining the relationship between variables. In addition, provided by Sugiyono (2013, p. 153) about prediction-type correlation research, it is aimed to examine the hypothesis of the relationship between one independent variable and one dependent variable. These variables can then be measured, frequently by using instruments, providing numbered data to be examined using statistical techniques. The population in this study was eighth-grade students in one of the private Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. The participants in this study were 30 students consisting of 14 male students and 16 female students. Meanwhile, the instruments used in this study were functional grammar test and writing factual recount text test. The grammar test that used in this study is in the form of jumble words in simple past tense. The test consisted of jumbled word list that students have to arrange those words into a proper sentence. This test aimed to measure the extent of students' understanding in analyzing and constructing proper sentence structures based on correct grammar rules in simple past tense. For the writing test, the researchers used the factual recount writing

test method to measure the extent of students' understanding in implementing simple past tense features as basic grammar in composing contextualized sentences in factual recount texts. In the writing test, the students were supposed to construct a factual recount text within the topic of their holiday experiences in one paragraph using simple past tense. The writing and grammar rubric assessment that used by the researcher is adapted from Jacob et al. (1981) in Weigle (2002, p. 116) and iRubric: Word Scramble Rubric. To test the validity of the instrument in this research, the researchers developed test instruments based on basic competency in grammar material and writing skills based on the existing syllabus. If both instruments meet the measured competencies, then the instruments are considered valid. For the reliability test, the data were analyzed using Pearson product moment and calculated using Microsoft Excel 2019 to find the correlation coefficient between functional grammar mastery and the ability to write factual recount text. To interpret the correlation coefficient of the data in this study, the researchers used the correlation coefficient r value adapted from Witte & Witte (2017, p. 113-114) as follows:

Table 1. Coefficient Correlation of r Value

No	Level	Score
1	Very Low Correlation	0.00-0.19
2	Low Correlation	0.20-0.39
3	Average Correlation	0.40-0.59
4	High Correlation	0.60-0.79
5	Very High Correlation	0.80-1.00

FINDINGS

DATA DESCRIPTION

Based on the Table 2 below, the data was provided generally as a sum, mean score, the highest and the lowest score, and standard deviation from each variable.

Table 2. Data Description

Variable	Functional Grammar Test	Writing Test
SUM	2298	2567
Mean Score	76,60	85,57
Minimum	52	48
Maximum	97	100
Standard Deviation	12,89	14,60

The data of functional grammar mastery

The data of functional grammar mastery was obtained from a functional grammar test in the form of jumbled words. The data was taken from 30 students as the sample of the research. Based on the data, the highest score in functional grammar test was 97 and the lowest score was 52. In addition, the mean score achieved by male students was 78 and for female students was 75.38. Furthermore, the mean score of the overall students obtained was 76.60 as well as the standard deviation for the functional grammar test result of 12,89.

The data of factual recount writing ability

The data of factual recount writing ability was obtained from a writing test in constructing factual recount text. The data was taken from 30 students as the sample of the research. Based on the data, the highest score in writing test was 100 and the lowest score was 48. In addition, the mean score achieved by male students was 87.07 and for female students was 84.25. Furthermore, the mean score of the overall

students obtained was 85.57 as well as the standard deviation for the factual recount writing test results was 14.60.

Male and Female Students' Functional Grammar Performance

The diagram below (Figure 1) presents a summary of the students' functional grammar test scores categorized by gender. We can observe that the male students had the lowest score at 58 and the female students had the lowest score at 52. Meanwhile, the highest score obtained by male and female students was 97. The researcher used Microsoft Excel 2019 to provide data in the form of a box and whisker diagram to calculate the results of the male and female students' performance in the functional grammar test.

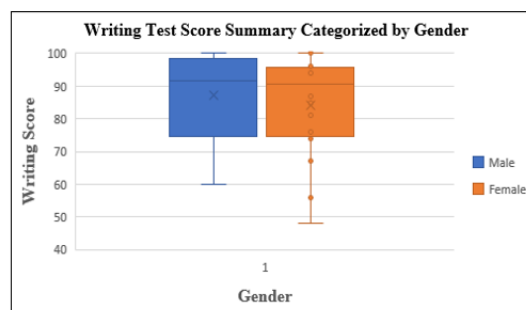


Figure 1. Grammar Test Score Summary Categorized by Gender

Male and Female Students' Writing Performance

The diagram below presents a summary of the students' writing test scores categorized by gender. We can observe that male students have the lowest score at 60 and for female students had the lowest score at 48. Meanwhile, the highest score obtained by male and female students was 100 achieved by 3 male and 3 female students.

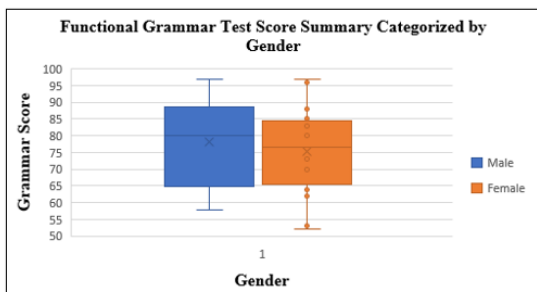


Figure 2. Writing Test Score Summary Categorized by Gender

The correlation between students' functional grammar mastery and their proficiency in writing factual recount texts

To investigate the correlation between students' functional grammar mastery in the achievement of writing factual recount text, the researcher calculated the data using Microsoft Excel 2019 by applying Pearson Product-moment correlation. The results of the calculation of the correlation between functional grammar mastery and writing recount ability that have been processed can be seen in the Figure 3.

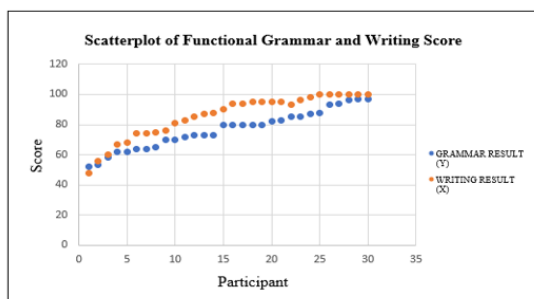


Figure 3. Scatterplot of Functional Grammar and Writing Score

DISCUSSION

The main objective of this research is to compare the performance of male and female students in functional grammar learning and writing skills. Male students scored slightly higher on the functional grammar test (78 for males and 75.38 for females) and the factual recount text test

(87.07 for males and 84.25 for females), identifying a slight difference in average scores. This result contrasts with Kamal et al.'s (2021) investigation, which found certain periods in which female students surpassed those of males. In contrast to the current study, male students performed slightly higher than their female counterparts. As the fundamental causes of these performance differences were investigated, a couple of significant factors emerged. According to student reflections at the end of the learning session, one influential factor is the higher level of competitiveness found among male students, which surpasses those of female students. Gurian (2010) investigated this phenomenon, demonstrating how both male and female individuals experience rising in testosterone levels during competitive conditions, with males typically showing a significantly higher baseline level, causing them to be naturally more competitive on average than females.

Furthermore, data obtained from the extracurricular division of the private boarding school where the study was conducted showed significant results. It was discovered that the majority of male students participated in a single extracurricular activity, instead their female counterparts participated in multiple. The difference in extracurricular involvement tends to lead to a split of focus among female students, which is divided between learning and extracurricular participation. This observation was supported by interviews with students, supporting the assumption that extracurricular obligations affect female students' academic performance. This pattern aligns with the findings of Abdelhafidh et al. (2022) in their investigation of the impact of

extracurricular activities on student behavior and learning performance.

Learning language is learning to understand the meaning in text and to select and use the appropriate genre and lexicogrammatical resources in order to participate in sociocultural activities. Learning language also develops the resources of the system of a language for the expression and comprehension of potential meanings (Yanto & Pravitasari, 2022). "This is a process of socialization which takes advantage of students' ability to use semiotic language resources from prior experience of, and exposure to, a wide range of texts" (Widiastuti, 2017, p.181). Mastering functional grammar for the eighth-grade junior high school students makes them easier not only to construct sentences into paragraphs, but also to help them express their ideas and convey meaningful writing that can be understood well by the readers. Lexicogrammar, as defined by Matthiessen and Halliday (2013), emphasizes the interaction between vocabulary choices and grammar arrangement, resulting in effective communication in both spoken and written language forms. The results of the research showed a significant relationship ($r\text{-count} = 0.9487$) between functional grammar mastery and writing skills, which supported the findings of Haryadi, Endah, and Dalimunthe (2021). As a result, there is a strong correlation between these two variables, indicating a significant relationship. This signifies that the correlation between grammar mastery and students' writing performance happens in a context-specific circumstances.

In conclusion, this study indicates the importance of functional grammar in the development of factual recount text writing

skills among male and female eighth-grade junior high school students. Male and female students perform differently due to a variety of reasons, including different levels of competitiveness and involvement in extracurricular activities. All of these factors, combined together, lead to a deeper understanding of gender differences in educational settings. Therefore, it is very important for teachers to pay attention to the factors that influence students' writing skills and grammar mastery. Thus, as educators, you can be wiser in assessing students' abilities without distinguishing their gender and applying appropriate learning methods to support their needs.

CONCLUSION

The performance of male students is only slightly higher than female students in participating the functional grammar test and writing factual recount text in the context of eighth-grade students at the junior high school level. This happens because of two factors. The first is that male students' testosterone level when in a competitive situation, especially in learning, is higher than female students. The second, the involvement of female students in extracurricular activities is higher than male students.

There is a strong significant positive relationship between functional grammar learning towards the improvement of students' ability to write factual recount text in the context of eighth-grade students at junior high school level. As the results obtained for the $r\text{-count}$ of 0.9487 then compared with the $r\text{-table}$ value of 0.3550, $r\text{-count} (0.9487) > r\text{-table} (0.3550)$. Thus, it can be interpreted that the ability to master functional grammar affects the ability to write factual recount text.

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