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## ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER'S WRITING COMPETENCE IN SMP NEGERI 2 EMPANG

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| ABSTRACTS  | ARTICLE INFO   |
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| Many students face challenges in mastering English vocabulary, impacting their writing competence. The most common challenges are lack of vocabulary knowledge, inappropriate word usage, and difficulty in constructing coherent sentences. This study aims to describe the English writing competence of grade IX students at SMP Negeri 2 Empang. Using a qualitative research method with a qualitative descriptive approach, this study provides an in-depth analysis of students' writing ability. The research subjects consisted of ninth-grade students in the 2024/2025 academic year who were selected as data sources. Based on the results from the documentation data and assessment categories, it shows that students' writing competence varies significantly based on their academic ability level, with students who have high competence showing better ability in organizing ideas, cohesion, and the use of relevant vocabulary. In contrast, students with low competence continue to face challenges in mechanical aspects such as grammar, punctuation, and spelling. To improve students' writing competence, it is crucial to implement a process-based approach that includes writing stages such as prewriting, writing, revising, and editing, as well as constructive feedback between teachers and students. | <p><b>Article History:</b></p> <p><i>Received: April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025</i></p> <p><i>Revised: April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025</i></p> <p><i>Published: April 2025</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b></p> <p><i>Writing, Competence</i></p> |

### INTRODUCTION

English is one of the compulsory subjects in Indonesia. In the current era of development, the ability to master more than one language is very important. As a nation that continues to open itself to global progress, the need to master foreign languages is increasing. As an international language, English is one of the most widely studied foreign languages. In addition to serving as a language of instruction in the business world, English also has an important role in the field of education. Good mastery of English can be utilized to improve understanding in the fields of science and technology and to support the improvement of the competitiveness of human resources in Indonesia. Given the importance of English language skills as a second or foreign language, many parties realize the importance of introducing English from an early age. English lessons have begun to be taught since the Junior High School (SMP) level of education.

In the era of globalization, learning English plays an important role. In Indonesia, English is a compulsory subject listed in the national curriculum. The English learning process starts from elementary school to secondary school. To master English, students need to develop four main skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these four aspects, writing ability is very important in learning English. Writing not only functions as a tool for conveying ideas but also as a means of critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication. According to Tarigan (2008), writing is a productive and expressive language skill that requires the ability to organize ideas systematically and the ability to use language appropriately.

Writing competence is the ability to convey ideas in writing in a clear, structured, and contextually appropriate manner. It includes language mastery, critical thinking, creativity, adjustment to the audience, and organization of ideas. Writing competence refers to a person's ability to write effectively and for the intended purpose of communication. This competence includes various skills, such as the ability to structure ideas, use correct grammar, choose appropriate vocabulary, and organize writing with a good structure. Writing competence also involves the ability to adapt the writing style to the intended audience or reader and understand the context of the writing, whether in narrative, descriptive, expository, or argumentative forms. Good writing competence allows writers to convey messages in a way that is easy to understand and influences readers by the purpose of writing.

According to Graham and Perin (2007), writing competence is the ability to convey ideas effectively through writing. This competence includes mastery of various writing strategies, such as planning, organizing ideas, revising, and editing, as well as the ability to adapt writing to the purpose and audience. In addition, mastery of technical aspects such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation is also an important element. The writing process involves repeated revisions and the use of feedback to improve the quality of writing.

However, in reality, many students still experience difficulties in writing. The obstacles faced include the inability to express ideas, limited vocabulary, and poor understanding of linguistic rules, such as grammar, text structure, and the use of punctuation. This is often reflected in the low grades of students' writing assignments. Therefore, it is important to analyze the grades of writing assignments given by teachers to identify students' strengths and weaknesses in writing competency. One approach that can be taken is to utilize the writing assignment scores given by the teacher as data to evaluate the development of student competence. Writing assignment grades, which are obtained through various types of exercises such as writing essays, narrative paragraphs, or reports, reflect students' ability to apply the writing theories taught in class. These scores can be an important indicator for identifying students' weaknesses and strengths in writing skills.

Assessing writing assignments in English language learning plays a crucial role in measuring and understanding students' writing abilities. According to Crusan(2016), evaluating students' writing is an essential part of a foreign language teacher's responsibilities. This assessment not only measures the final written product but also the students' thinking process and creativity throughout the writing. Thus, teachers can gain a deeper understanding of students' writing competence and provide constructive feedback. White (2009) emphasizes that assessment in writing classes is crucial for students' academic

progress. This assessment helps teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses in various aspects of writing, such as grammar, structure, and text cohesion. Thus, teachers can provide specific guidance to improve students' writing competence. Overall, writing assignment assessment not only serves as an evaluation tool but also as a means to comprehensively understand and enhance students' writing competence. Through effective assessment, teachers can provide feedback that helps students develop their writing competence.

In the era of globalization, writing competence is a skill that is very necessary in various aspects of life. In an educational context, students are expected to be able to produce various types of academic writing, such as essays, narratives, descriptive texts, and reports. Therefore, schools or educational institutions need to equip students with adequate writing skills to be ready to face real-world challenges that require effective use of language. In this research, researchers focused on identifying the English writing abilities of grade IX students at SMPN 2 Empang for the 2024/2025 academic year, by utilizing student writing assignments from teachers as assessment material. Based on the research background above, this research is limited to discussing by stating the following research questions: How does the student's writing competence?

## RESEARCH OF METHODS

This research method design qualitative which is expected to provide a detailed and in-depth description of a phenomenon using a descriptive qualitative approach. Qualitative research focuses on the exploration, interpretation, and meaning of data, so it is often used to answer research questions oriented to "why" and "How." Creswell (2014) explains that qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning given by individuals or groups to social or human problems. This research typically begins with open questions and develops into a rich, data-based understanding. Qualitative research aims to understand social, cultural, or human behavior phenomena in depth and holistically. This approach focuses on exploring the meanings, interpretations, and experiences of individuals or groups in a particular context. The subject is one of the most important things in this research because the data will be obtained from the subjects of class IX students at SMP Negeri 2 Empang for the 2024/2025 academic year who will be involved in this research. In qualitative research, research instruments play an important role as a tool for collecting data relevant to the research focus. According to Creswell (2018), the main instrument in qualitative research is the researcher himself (human instrument), whose task is to interpret and understand data in a specific context. In the context of the documentation technique of student assignment scores, researchers use documents as the main data source to analyze student abilities in depth. According to Creswell (2018), it is one of the effective data collection methods in qualitative research, especially to understand complex phenomena through historical or written data. In the context of student assignment grades, this technique involves collecting student writing, grading rubrics, and teacher-assigned grades. These documents allow researchers to assess various aspects of student competence, such as mastery of grammar, writing structure, cohesion, and vocabulary. In other words, the student

assignment score document becomes a valid instrument to objectively evaluate students' writing competence.

## RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the research. The results of the research were obtained from the ninth-grade students' English text writing assignment scores at SMP Negeri 2 Empang. The results of the research are presented to answer the research problem formulation, namely: How does student's writing competence?

This study aims to analyze the level of students' English text-writing competence with a qualitative approach. Data were collected through writing analysis techniques and documentation on the results of students' writing assignments in class IX SMP Negeri 2 Empang. The research sample consisted of five students who were purposively selected based on variations in academic ability (high, medium, and low). The writing tasks analyzed were descriptive text. The research instrument refers to the writing assessment rubric which includes five main aspects of Huges in Tamrin (2012):

1. Content: Depth and relevance of information.
2. Cohesion and Coherence: The relationship between paragraphs and sentences.
3. Grammar: Correct use of grammar.
4. Mechanisms: Emphasizes the technical aspects of writing
5. Vocabulary: Use of appropriate and varied words.

In addition, documentation of assignment scores was used to confirm the results of the analysis and provide a complete picture of students' competence. The sampled students consisted of various levels of academic ability. For example, students with high competence (S1 and S5) have academic backgrounds that tend to be more stable than students with low competence (S3). This data was obtained from the English teacher's notes which showed the consistency of their daily grades. The writing task given to students is in the form of descriptive text on the topic "My Friend" The choice of this topic aims to make it easier for students to express ideas based on personal experiences so that they are expected to be able to provide authentic and diverse writing results.

Data analysis focused on the five main aspects of writing assessment. For the mechanical aspect, student texts were analyzed in terms of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and text format. In the content aspect, students' texts were analyzed to assess the depth of ideas conveyed. Cohesion and coherence are seen from the smoothness of interparagraph relationships and transitions between ideas in the text. Grammar is assessed based on the appropriateness of using sentence structure, including subject-verb agreement, tenses, and the use of prepositions. Meanwhile, word choice is analyzed to assess the appropriateness of vocabulary with the writing context and the diversity of diction.

Additional data in the form of teacher notes documenting students' difficulties during the writing process were also analyzed. Teachers noted that students with low competence often took longer to organize ideas before starting to write. This is in line with Graham and Perin's (2007) findings that students with limited writing ability tend to be slower in organizing their ideas. The data analysis process was conducted in-depth through several stages. The first stage was to read the entire text produced by students to gain a thorough



understanding. The second stage was to identify and record errors or deficiencies in the predetermined assessment aspects. Next, the results of the analysis were compared with the documentation scores to validate the findings. Preliminary findings show that students with high competence tend to use a more logical and well-organized paragraph structure. They also have a better ability to choose a diverse vocabulary. In contrast, students with low competence often showed repeated errors in grammar and inappropriate word usage.

Teachers also noted that motivation and self-confidence influenced the quality of students' writing. Students with low competence tend to show a passive attitude during the learning process and are reluctant to ask questions when experiencing difficulties. In contrast, students with high competence were more proactive in seeking feedback from the teacher. As a final step in the analysis, data triangulation was conducted between the results of writing analysis, documentation scores, and teacher observation. This aims to ensure that the research results are not only dependent on one data source but also supported by other relevant evidence.

Documentation of students' assignment scores shows that the level of competence of students varies:

**Tabel 1 Result of Student's Writing Competence**

| Student's | Content | Grammar  | Vocabulary | Coherence and Cohesion | Mechanise | Conclusion      |
|-----------|---------|----------|------------|------------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| AD        | Good    | Good     | Good       | Good                   | Very Good | Good Competence |
| AA        | Good    | Ver Good | Good       | Good                   | Poor      | Good Competence |
| AR        | Good    | Poor     | Very Poor  | Poor                   | Poor      | Low Competence  |
| FAM       | Good    | Poor     | Good       | Poor                   | Poor      | Low Competence  |
| FZ        | Good    | Poor     | Good       | Good                   | Very Good | Good Competence |

Based on Table 1 which shows the results of students' writing competence, it can be concluded that students' writing competence varies but is very good in terms of content. There are variations in ability among students regarding grammar. AD and AA students showed a good understanding of grammar, while AR, FAM, and FZ still had difficulties applying proper grammatical structures. This indicates that some students need additional guidance in understanding and applying correct grammar rules in their writing.

In terms of vocabulary, most students had a fairly good understanding. However, one student, AR, still had difficulty in choosing appropriate vocabulary, which was evident from her "Very Poor" rating in this category. Difficulty in choosing the right words can have an impact on the readability and effectiveness of the message in their writing.

Coherence and cohesion in students' writing also showed variations. Most students, such as AD, AA, and FZ, have quite good skills in connecting ideas logically. In contrast, AR and FAM still need improvement in this aspect to make their writing more structured and easily understood by readers. In the aspect of mechanics, there were significant differences

among the students. AD and FZ scored “Very Good,” indicating that they had a good understanding of punctuation, spelling, and paragraph structure. However, students such as AA, AR, and FAM still needed improvement as they received a “Poor” rating in this aspect.

Overall, AD and FZ were the best-performing students in writing competence, as they had a good understanding of various aspects, especially in content, cohesion, and writing mechanics. This shows that they have almost perfect writing skills, although there is still room for improvement in certain aspects. AA students also showed quite good writing skills, especially in grammar and cohesion. However, weaknesses in the writing mechanism need to be improved so that the writing becomes more effective and by the correct writing rules.

On the other hand, AR and FAM students still need additional guidance, especially in the aspects of grammar, cohesion, and writing mechanisms. Difficulties in these aspects can hinder the communication effectiveness of their writing, so special attention should be given to help them improve their writing competence. To improve students' overall writing competence, it is recommended to provide additional exercises in grammar, vocabulary, cohesion, and cohesion in writing. More intensive guidance can also be given to students who still have weaknesses in these aspects so that they can improve their writing competence gradually.

In assessing students' writing competence, the aspects analyzed include content, grammar, vocabulary, coherence and cohesion, and writing mechanism. Based on the results presented in Table 4.1, all students performed well in the content aspect. This indicates that students were able to develop their ideas quite well in their writing, which is in line with Hyland's (2019) findings that content development is a fundamental aspect of writing.

However, there were significant variations in the grammar aspect. Although some students showed good understanding, others still faced difficulties, especially in the use of proper sentence structure. This finding is consistent with research by Ellis (2020), who emphasized that grammar is often a challenge for second language learners and requires continuous practice.

In terms of vocabulary, some students have shown a fairly good mastery, but some still experience limitations in choosing the right words. According to Nation (2021), a good mastery of vocabulary is instrumental in improving the quality of writing, as it allows students to express their ideas more clearly and variably.

Coherence and cohesion in writing also show mixed results. Some students have been able to compose paragraphs with logical connections between sentences, while others still have difficulty connecting their ideas. In line with Halliday and Hasan's (2018) research, the use of cohesion tools such as conjunction, reference, and substitution is very important in improving the cohesiveness of the text.

In addition, the mechanics of writing, such as spelling, punctuation, and writing format, are aspects that require further attention. The table results show that only a small number of students have excellent writing mechanisms, while others still need improvement. This is in line with Ferris' (2019) findings, which state that good writing mechanics can improve readability and professionalism in a text.

Overall, although students have shown a good understanding of the content aspect, there are still challenges in grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and writing mechanics that need

to be improved through further practice and guidance. More focused learning approaches, such as direct feedback from teachers and repeated practice, can help improve the quality of students' writing (Hyland & Hyland, 2021).

Thus, this result confirms that writing instruction should pay more attention to the aspects of weakness found, especially in grammar and cohesion, to ensure students can compose better writing in the future. The use of feedback-based learning strategies as well as the integration of technology in writing instruction can be effective solutions in improving students' writing competence (Teng, 2022).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research on the writing competence of grade IX students at SMP Negeri 2 Empang, it can be concluded that students' writing ability varies greatly depending on their academic ability level. Students with good competence show excellence in the organization of ideas, the use of diverse vocabulary, as well as coherent and cohesive paragraph structures. In contrast, students with low competence still face challenges in mechanical aspects such as grammar, punctuation, and spelling. In addition, learning motivation and study habits proved to play an important role in determining the quality of students' writing. Students who have high motivation tend to be more active in learning and responsive to feedback, while students with low motivation tend to be passive. Other factors, such as the teacher's ability to guide the writing process and a supportive learning environment, also influence the development of students' writing competence.

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