



## Students' Writing Ability In Descriptive Text At The Tenth Grade Of Al-Muhsinin Islamic Boarding School

<sup>1</sup>M. Hafizul Aldi, <sup>2</sup>Hanifah, <sup>3</sup>Zulfa Nafiszah Ramadhani, <sup>4</sup>Meyliza Hermantia Putri

<sup>1</sup>STAI Hubbulwathan Duri, <sup>2</sup>STAI Hubbulwathan Duri, <sup>3</sup>STAI Hubbulwathan Duri,

<sup>4</sup>STAI Hubbulwathan Duri

\*Corresponding Author. Email: [hafizulaldi5@gmail.com](mailto:hafizulaldi5@gmail.com)

### ARTICLE INFO

### ABSTRACT

#### **Keywords:**

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This study aimed to analyze the writing ability of tenth grade students at Al-Muhsinin Boarding School in composing descriptive texts. The research used a quantitative approach and using research design was descriptive. Collecting data through writing test. The finding showed that most students demonstrate a moderate level of writing proficiency, with strengths in vocabulary usage and sentence structure. However, common difficulties are found in the areas of grammar accuracy, organization of ideas, and use of cohesive devices. The result of the test of student's writing ability in descriptive text 11 students got good category. The study concluded that while students have a basic understanding of descriptive writing, more focused instructional strategies are needed to enhance their writing quality.

### Introduction

The ability to describe people, places, objects, or events clearly and in detail. writing descriptive texts is not only a requirement in the curriculum but also a means for students to train their imagination, develop sentence structure, and enrich their vocabulary (Yuniar & Siswana, 2024). Al-Muhsinin Boarding School where English is taught within the framework of an Islamic boarding school system, the development of writing skills is especially important. Students are expected not only to understand the language academically but also to be able to use it communicatively and creatively. This study specifically focuses on evaluating the students' performance in writing descriptive texts, examining both their strengths and the common difficulties they encounter in the learning process.

English writing proficiency remains a persistent challenge in senior high school level, particularly within genre-based writing such as descriptive text. Descriptive writing

tasks demand learners not only deploy vocabulary and grammar accurately, but also structure content logically to paint vivid mental imagery, reflecting both linguistic and cognitive competencies. In boarding schools, such as Al-Muhsinin Islamic Boarding School, students operate within distinctive socio-cultural settings that shape their English literacy development.

Despite the immersive nature of boarding school contexts, anecdotal and observational evidence suggests that students frequently struggle to produce coherent descriptive compositions. Their writings often reveal recurring errors in grammar, limited lexical range, structural misalignments, mechanical inaccuracies, and underdeveloped idea organization. These issues undermine the communicative purpose of descriptive text, which should ideally enable the writer to evoke a clear image of a place, person, or object. In the case of Al-Muhsinin, preliminary teacher observations indicate weaknesses in generic structure compliance and idea elaboration.

Empirical research on Indonesian Islamic schools confirms similar challenges. A study of tenth-grade students at an Islamic high school in Jakarta identified that grammar (50%) and limited vocabulary (30%) are primary obstacles, with content generation and idea expression also impeding writing performance. Another investigation in Palopo found students struggled with generic structure, linguistic features, and writing mechanics rooted in insufficient practice, lack of vocabulary, and low motivation. These Yin-Yang of structural and motivational deficits are especially telling in boarding school environments, where academic and religious responsibilities may crowd out dedicated time for English literacy (Yuniar & Siswana, 2024).

Internationally, the problem is neither unique nor anecdotal. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2018. PISA report revealed that Indonesian students' mean writing scores fall below the global average, placing Indonesia among the lower-performing nations in writing proficiency. This reflects systemic issues in instruction and language exposure, even in immersive settings. Further, UNESCO's 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report emphasized that writing remains the weakest of the four language skills across many non-native English context underscored by gaps in educational inputs such as teacher training, writing practice, feedback mechanisms, and curricular time allocation.

The descriptive texts of students Al-Muhsinin frequently exhibit deviations in structure (misplaced orientations, lack of detail), grammatical errors (misuse of tense and articles), limited vocabulary (simplistic lexical items), mechanical errors (spelling, punctuation), and content discontinuity (incoherent ideas). These difficulties reflect weaknesses in both linguistic competence and writing self-efficacy. Without empirical assessment and targeted intervention, students' written communication remains superficial and non-functional a concern for educators dedicated to producing graduates fluent in both religious and academic discourse.

Writing descriptive text at the tenth-grade level involves multi-faceted competencies grammar, vocabulary, genre structure, critical thinking yet data from domestic studies point to consistent deficiencies: grammar and vocabulary challenge 50–60% of students; mechanics and adherence to generic structure challenge an additional 30–40%. For example, the qualitative analysis showed three prevalent difficulties: applying generic structure, using appropriate linguistic features, and mechanical accuracy. Grammar as the most difficult aspect, followed by vocabulary and mechanics, while content remained relatively easier to manage (Ruwaida et al., 2022).

Jensen et al. (2022) reported that EFL learners often lack sustained writing practice, leading to limited vocabulary and structural coherence. UNESCO (2020) confirmed that students from non-native settings underperform in writing due to inadequate teacher feedback and assessment literacy. Moreover, OECD's PISA 2018 placed Indonesia

below the OECD average in writing, citing gaps in schools' literacy support systems.(Prastowo & others, 2022).

Some of phenomena at Al-Muhsinin Boarding School are as follow:

1. Less of English writing ability especially in grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, and generic structure.
2. Less of structured opportunities to practice writing descriptive texts.
3. Limited teacher capacity in delivering writing feedback and formative writing assessment.
4. Negative or low self-efficacy beliefs towards English writing which correlates with avoidance of writing tasks and diminished performance.

The combination of linguistic deficits and low writing self-efficacy creates a self-perpetuating cycle: students enter writing tasks unprepared, make errors that reduce confidence, shy away from writing, and therefore lack practice to improve undermining educational and communicative objectives.

This study on writing ability in descriptive text within Islamic boarding schools bears significance on several fronts: First, it contributes empirical evidence to a genre that is foundational in language proficiency yet under-investigated in boarding school settings. While many studies focus on general schools, few explore the intersection of Islamic religious education and L2 writing performance. This study will fill that gap by analyzing Al-Muhsinin's context. Second, addressing this educational issue aligns with current pedagogical emphases on communicative competence and content mastery. Underscored, "explicit writing instruction, frequent opportunities for writing, and formative feedback" are essential for improved language outcomes. Islamic boarding schools, historically stronger in recitation and religious writing, must adapt to global and national educational shifts emphasizing English proficiency (Graham, 2022). Third, the study has practical implications. Findings on student weaknesses and teacher practices can inform curriculum design, teacher professional development, and lesson planning tailored to the boarding school environment. Interventions like genre-based instruction, digital writing tools, and formative assessment strategies can be piloted and scaled. Finally, the research contributes to theory. By examining writing self-efficacy in an Islamic boarding context, it explores the psychological dimensions of language learning the relationship between belief, motivation, and writing performance. Identifying self-efficacy as a critical driver of behavioral engagement; in the writing context, students' beliefs in their capabilities significantly influence writing output and quality. Insights from students can inform both local educational policies and broader EFL theory on affective and cognitive factors in writing (Bandura, 1982)

In the face of increasing global competition and intercultural communication, producing English-literate graduates who can write is vital. The study thus aligns with

Indonesian national education goals articulated in the 2020 National Education, Policy emphasizing, language literacy, critical thinking, and global competence. It demonstrates how a genre-based writing initiative can support those aims in boarding school settings.

This study was built on several theoretical pillars:

1. Genre-Based Writing Theory:

Genre-based pedagogy emphasizes teaching writing through explicit instruction of genre structure, linguistic features, and social context. The generic structure of descriptive texts orientation, identification, description is central to student achievement; lack of structural knowledge impedes coherence. A “good” descriptive text must follow a clear orientation and systematically describe salient features (Emilia & others, 2020).

2. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) for Writing Analysis:

SFL provides analytic tools for examining how language constructs meaning in context. Analyzing students' writing via SFL reveals that middle and high achievers demonstrate strong control of rhetorical structure and linguistic features, while low achievers struggle to identify schematic structure and use appropriate lexis (Siahaan, 2022).

3. Writing Self-Efficacy Theory :

Students' confidence in their writing skills, writing self-efficacy critically influences their effort, persistence, and overall performance. Writing tasks perceived as too difficult or anxiety-inducing may be avoided. Building writing self-efficacy through successful writing experiences, scaffolded instruction, and positive feedback is consequently integral to improvement (Bandura, 1982).

4. Neurocognitive and Metacognitive Models of Writing:

Writing involves complex planning, idea generation, syntactic processing, and revision all demanding cognitive resources. Brain-based research advocates for active, scaffolded learning that involves mapping and metacognitive reflection. Effective writing classrooms where students model genre, brainstorm, plan, and revise support both cognitive processing and writing improvement.

This study aimed to analysis of students' writing ability at Al-Muhsinin Boarding School in composing descriptive texts

## Method

The writer used a quantitative approach and also will be designed by using descriptive research design. Quantitative approach is used to describe current conditions, investigate relationships, and study cause-effect phenomena. Through this approach, writers did research on tenth grade students in writing descriptive text. Then, researchers collected the data to analyze and describe the students' writing ability in descriptive text. Quantitative approach can be interpreted as approach on a particular

population or sample, data collection using research instruments, statistical data analysis, with the aim of testing the established hypothesis. According Fraenkel (2009), descriptive research is a research design that try to describe a phenomenon subject or area accurately and factually. Respondents (n = 33) wrote descriptive text. The writer used a rubric that involved content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics (adapted from PISA and assessments used in prior studies. In this study, the writer used sample the tenth grade students of Almuhsinin Islamic boarding school.

**Table 1: Rubric and Score of Writing Ability**

Variable	Indicator	Score
Writing	Content	13 – 30
	Organization	7 – 20
	Vocabulary	7 – 20
	Language Use/ Grammatical Features	5 – 25
	Mechanics	2-5

In this study, the writer selected students from the tenth grade at the Al-muhsinin Islamic boarding school.

**Table 2: Frequency of Result Score Students' Writing Ability**

No	Result	Total
1	85 – 90	8
2	75 – 84	11
3	65 – 74	9
4	50 – 64	5
Total		33 Students

In selecting the sample, the writer used a saturated sample. Saturated sampling is a sampling technique, if all numbers of the population are used as samples. This is often done when the population is relatively small. Less than 30 people, this term is a census, where all numbers of the population are sampled.

## Finding and Discussion

This result of the study was conducted by the writer in April 2025. In addition, the writer also presents the discussion on the results. For data collection, the writer came directly to the school to get the data that was the purpose of this research. Students are asked to write descriptive text. The time allotted to complete the test is 20 minutes. To determine the of student's writing ability in writing descriptive text at the tenth grade Al - Muhsinin Islamic boarding school. The result of students' writing ability test, the results showed that out of 33 samples there were 5 samples with category score was Bad, 9 samples category as fine , 11 samples with category as Good , and 8 sample category as Excellent.

The data indicates that the tenth-grade class at Al-Muhsinin Islamic Boarding School is generally strong in descriptive text writing:

- **Strength:** Over half the class (57.6% - Good and Excellent categories) performs well, suggesting the current teaching methodology is effective for the majority of students.
- **Focus Area:** The Fine category (27.3%) represents the primary group that would benefit most from specific, structured intervention to move them into the Good category.
- **Remediation Need:** The Bad category (15.2%) is the priority for focused, one-on-one or small-group remediation to address foundational skill gaps.

The results suggest in order to focus successfully moving most students toward competence or mastery, but the teacher should focus discussion on how to push the "Fine" group to "Good" and how to provide necessary support for the "Bad" group.

## Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the writing ability of tenth grade students at Al-Muhsinin Islamic School in composing descriptive text has fulfilled the expected academic standards. The overall writing ability of the 33 students in the descriptive text test shows a predominantly positive distribution, with the majority of students performing at or above the Good category.

- A combined total of 19 students (57.57% of the sample) achieved a score of Good (11 students) or Excellent (8 students), indicating that a majority of the class possesses a commendable to high level of writing ability.
- The largest single group, 11 students (33.33%), was categorized as Good.
- Only a small minority, 5 students (15.15%), fell into the Bad category, suggesting that significant remedial intervention is required for only a small subset of the class.

In summary, the tenth-grade students at Al-Muhsinin Islamic Boarding School generally demonstrated good writing ability in the descriptive text test, with performance skewed towards the higher scoring categories.

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