



## The Impact of Grammar, Vocabulary, and Reading Interest on Descriptive Writing Skills in Islamic Higher Education

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**Abstract.** Reading interest, grammar mastery, and vocabulary knowledge are crucial components that contribute to students' ability to produce effective descriptive texts. This study aims to analyze the influence of these three variables on students' descriptive writing ability at the university level. The research was conducted at the University of Al-Amien Prenduan, involving first- to third-semester students from the Islamic Economics Study Program and other related programs under the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 109 students who had completed at least one semester of English instruction. Employing a quantitative approach with a correlational design, this study utilized a closed-ended questionnaire to measure grammar mastery, vocabulary knowledge, and reading interest, as well as a descriptive writing test to assess students' writing ability. Multiple linear regressions were applied to analyze the simultaneous and partial effects of the independent variables. Results revealed that grammar mastery, vocabulary knowledge, and reading interest jointly influenced students' descriptive writing ability significantly. Individually, grammar mastery and vocabulary knowledge showed statistically significant positive effects, while reading interest had a positive but non-significant impact. These findings highlight the importance of grammatical and lexical competence in academic writing, while also indicating the need for more innovative and practical strategies to foster reading interest..

**Keywords:** Grammar Mastery; Vocabulary Knowledge; Reading Interest; Descriptive Writing; Academic Writing.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Writing proficiency in English has become an indispensable skill for university students, especially in Islamic higher education institutions (Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam – PTKI). Within these institutions, students are not only expected to master specialized academic content in their respective disciplines but are also required to acquire communicative competence in English as a global lingua franca. Among the four essential language skills, writing is arguably the most complex and cognitively demanding, as it requires a harmonious integration of grammatical knowledge, lexical resources, and discursive competence. Writing descriptive texts in particular is crucial, not only for fulfilling academic assignments but also for participating in broader professional communication. Descriptive writing enables students to present information in an organized, vivid, and coherent manner, which demands interplay of language structure mastery, sufficient vocabulary, and a sustained interest in reading. These three elements are hypothesized to be central to the development of students' academic writing proficiency.

Although numerous studies have emphasized the individual contributions of grammar mastery, vocabulary knowledge, and reading interest in enhancing students' writing abilities, few have explored their simultaneous effects—especially within the socio-academic context of Islamic higher education. As noted by Yulistiani et al. (2023) and Haryadi et al. (2021), the fragmented treatment of these linguistic and cognitive factors in prior research has left a gap in understanding how they collectively influence students' ability to write descriptive texts. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the combined and individual effects of these three variables on writing performance among students at PTKI, particularly those enrolled in Islamic Economics programs.

Grammar mastery is widely recognized as the backbone of written communication. It refers to a learner's command of syntactic rules, tenses, parts of speech, subject-verb agreement, sentence structure, and punctuation. Without this structural foundation, students are unable to convey ideas clearly, cohesively, or correctly. Aryad (2018) asserts that grammar is not merely about accuracy but also about effective communication. Haryadi et al. (2021) further emphasize that grammatical competence enables students to organize their thoughts systematically and develop logical textual flow. This is especially pertinent for students in Islamic Economics programs, who are frequently required to write academic reports, research proposals, and argumentative essays in English. However, as Miftahul Rahmah (2024) indicates, there is often a discrepancy between students' theoretical knowledge of grammar and their practical application in writing tasks. This highlights the need to examine grammar mastery not in isolation but in conjunction with other supporting factors.

Vocabulary knowledge is another fundamental component of writing proficiency. A rich and contextually appropriate vocabulary allows students to select precise words, build complex sentences, and express nuanced ideas. As highlighted in Soenardjati's (2021) findings, vocabulary competence significantly influences descriptive writing ability because it facilitates the accurate and vivid depiction of objects, settings, and emotions. Moreover, vocabulary is closely linked to reading skills, as students often internalize new words and phrases through exposure to written texts. Limited vocabulary restricts students' ability to vary sentence structures, elaborate on ideas, and maintain reader engagement. Therefore, understanding the extent to which vocabulary knowledge contributes to writing success is vital in designing effective language instruction.

Reading interest, also referred to as reading habit or motivation to read, plays a crucial role in shaping writing ability. Students who are engaged readers are more likely to be exposed to varied sentence structures, idiomatic expressions, and diverse genres of writing, all of which

enhance their writing style and content. According to Kurniawati et al. (2022), students with high reading interest demonstrate better comprehension, textual awareness, and critical thinking, which are necessary for developing coherence and cohesion in their writing. Zhang et al. (2021) further argue that habitual readers are more capable of producing well-organized, grammatically accurate, and contextually rich texts. Despite its relevance, reading interest has not received sufficient attention in writing-focused studies, particularly in the context of Islamic higher education.

Most previous studies have examined grammar mastery, vocabulary, or reading interest in isolation, or at best in pairs, neglecting how these variables interact in a more holistic model. For instance, Yulistiani et al. (2023) explored vocabulary mastery in relation to writing performance but did not account for the role of reading habits or grammatical control. Similarly, studies like that of Haryadi et al. (2021) emphasized grammar's importance but overlooked lexical depth and reading motivation. This study therefore aims to fill this gap by analyzing the simultaneous and partial effects of grammar mastery, vocabulary knowledge, and reading interest on students' descriptive writing ability in a more integrated framework.

The urgency of this study lies not only in filling theoretical gaps but also in its practical implications. With the growing demand for graduates who are proficient in English, particularly in the era of globalization and digital transformation, writing skills have become a non-negotiable academic and professional competence. For students in Islamic higher education, mastering descriptive writing in English is essential for producing research outputs, participating in academic exchange, and communicating ideas effectively in both local and international contexts. Furthermore, this study will inform curriculum developers and English instructors on how to tailor instructional strategies that enhance writing performance among PTKI students.

In summary, the objective of this research is to investigate the simultaneous and partial influences of grammar mastery, vocabulary knowledge, and reading interest on students' ability to write descriptive texts. Using a quantitative approach with multiple linear regression analysis, the study seeks to contribute both to academic literature and pedagogical practices by offering a comprehensive understanding of the interrelated factors that shape writing proficiency in Islamic higher education contexts.

## **2. THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### **Grammar Mastery**

Grammar mastery is fundamental to producing clear, accurate, and cohesive written texts. It refers to a student's ability to apply syntactic rules, tenses, sentence structures, and punctuation in writing. Mastery of grammar enables students to construct well-formed sentences that contribute to the logical flow and clarity of their writing. As noted by Aryad (2018), grammar is not just about accuracy but also about effective communication. Additionally, Haryadi et al. (2021) emphasize that grammar mastery provides a foundation for organizing ideas systematically, which is crucial in academic writing, especially in descriptive writing, where logical structure and coherence are essential.

Therefore, grammar mastery is seen as a core component of writing proficiency, as it ensures that students can communicate their ideas clearly and effectively. The ability to manipulate grammatical structures allows students to build complex sentences and organize their ideas coherently, which directly impacts the quality of descriptive writing (Aryad, 2018; Haryadi et al., 2021).

### **Vocabulary Knowledge**

Vocabulary knowledge is another critical factor in writing proficiency. A broad and deep vocabulary enables students to express their ideas more clearly and vividly. In descriptive writing, the ability to choose precise and contextually appropriate words is crucial for creating detailed, evocative, and engaging descriptions. Soenardjati (2021) highlights that vocabulary competence is significantly linked to writing success as it allows students to depict scenes, objects, and emotions in a nuanced manner. Furthermore, vocabulary knowledge helps students vary their sentence structures, avoiding repetition and maintaining reader interest.

Research by Zhang et al. (2021) and Soenardjati (2021) also points out that vocabulary competence significantly enhances writing ability by enabling students to produce richer, more engaging texts. Without an adequate vocabulary, even students with strong grammar may struggle to express themselves effectively in descriptive writing. Hence, vocabulary knowledge is essential for the overall quality of writing, facilitating precision and depth in written expression (Zhang et al., 2021; Soenardjati, 2021).

### **Reading Interest**

Reading interest, also referred to as reading habit or motivation to read, plays a crucial role in shaping writing ability. Students with high reading interest are more likely to be exposed to a variety of writing styles, sentence structures, and vocabularies, all of which contribute to their writing development. Kurniawati et al. (2022) argue that reading interest enhances writing

by improving comprehension and textual awareness, which helps students develop coherence and cohesion in their writing. Moreover, Zhang et al. (2021) argue that habitual readers are better equipped to produce well-structured and grammatically accurate texts due to their exposure to different genres and writing styles.

While reading interest does not directly impact writing ability as strongly as grammar and vocabulary knowledge, it still plays an essential role. It supports writing by offering students a wealth of language input, helping them internalize various language patterns, styles, and vocabulary. However, reading interest alone is not sufficient to improve writing skills unless it is integrated with structured grammar and vocabulary instruction. Kurniawati et al. (2022) and Zhang et al. (2021) also highlight that reading interest is necessary for developing writing competence, but its impact is stronger when combined with grammar and vocabulary development (Kurniawati et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2021).

### **Descriptive Writing Ability**

Descriptive writing ability refers to the skill of conveying information clearly and vividly by using well-constructed sentences, appropriate vocabulary, and coherent structure. This skill is essential in academic and professional writing, where students need to describe people, places, or events in a detailed and engaging manner. Descriptive writing requires not only mastery of grammar and vocabulary but also the ability to organize ideas logically and present them with clarity and precision.

Descriptive writing ability is closely related to grammar mastery, as proper sentence structure is necessary for clarity and coherence. It is also linked to vocabulary knowledge, as a broader vocabulary allows students to create more detailed and nuanced descriptions. Lastly, reading interest plays a supportive role by providing students with exposure to diverse writing styles and vocabulary, which they can then apply in their own writing.

In sum, descriptive writing ability is the outcome of the interaction between grammar mastery, vocabulary knowledge, and reading interest. The better students master these components, the more proficient they will be in writing clear, coherent, and engaging descriptive texts (Kurniawati et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2021)..

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This section describes the research methodology employed in this study, including the research design, population, sample, data collection techniques, instruments, and data analysis methods. The procedures for conducting the research are explained in detail, ensuring clarity on how the data is obtained, analyzed, and interpreted in relation to the research objectives.

## Research Design

This study employs a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationships between three independent variables: grammar *mastery*, *vocabulary knowledge*, and *reading interest*, and the dependent variable, which is students' ability to write descriptive texts. The correlational approach is appropriate for understanding how changes in the independent variables are associated with changes in the dependent variable (Creswell, 2014). A correlational design allows for the exploration of both the simultaneous and partial effects of these variables, making it suitable for this study, as it seeks to investigate how each factor—grammar, vocabulary, and reading interest—affects descriptive writing ability.

The study focuses on first-year students (Semester I–II) enrolled in the Islamic Economics Program and related programs within the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business (FEBI) at Institut Dirosat Islamiyah Al-Amien Prenduan. The research is scheduled to take place during the 2024 academic year, and the data collection will occur in Semester I and II. The setting provides an opportunity to explore the early-stage writing abilities of students, making it suitable for examining their language skills development.

## Population and Sample

The target population for this study consists of first-year students enrolled in the Islamic Economics Program and related fields within the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business at Institut Dirosat Islamiyah Al-Amien Prenduan. The estimated population size is approximately 150 students (Semester I–III), who have completed at least one semester of English language instruction. Students in this group come from various educational backgrounds, including general high school (SMA/MA) and vocational schools (SMK), all of whom have received prior English language instruction.

Using purposive sampling, the study will select participants who meet the following inclusion criteria:

1. First-year students (Semester I–II).
2. Students who have completed at least one semester of English language instruction, specifically in the courses *Basic English* or *English for Islamic Economics*.
3. Participants must have access to academic records (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, writing test scores) that can reflect their English language proficiency.

Based on Slovin's formula for sample size determination, with a margin of error of 5%, the sample size is calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{150}{1 + 150(0.05)^2} = \frac{150}{1 + 0.375} = \frac{150}{1.375} \approx 109$$

Thus, the ideal sample size is between **100–120 respondents**, depending on the actual active population.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The data collection process will be carried out in two stages:

1. **Pre-Test (Grammar, Vocabulary, and Reading Interest):** Students will complete a set of tests and questionnaires to assess their grammar mastery, vocabulary knowledge, and reading interest. The pre-test will serve as baseline data for the independent variables.
  - **Grammar Mastery:** A grammar test consisting of multiple-choice questions and short-answer items, covering areas such as tenses, subject-verb agreement, and sentence structure.
  - **Vocabulary Knowledge:** A vocabulary test focusing on students' ability to identify words and apply them correctly in context.
  - **Reading Interest:** A self-report questionnaire assessing students' interest in reading English texts, their reading frequency, and their motivation to engage with English-language materials.
2. **Post-Test (Descriptive Writing Test):** After completing the pre-test, participants will be asked to write a descriptive text on a given topic. This writing task will allow the researchers to assess how well students apply their grammar knowledge, vocabulary, and reading interest in constructing a coherent and detailed descriptive text.

The pre-test and post-test will be administered in a classroom setting under controlled conditions to ensure consistency and reliability. All tests and questionnaires will be distributed and supervised by the researcher to maintain uniformity across participants.

### **Instruments**

Four instruments will be used to collect data in this study:

1. **Grammar Mastery Test:** A written test measuring students' understanding of English grammar, including sentence construction, tenses, and agreement.
2. **Vocabulary Knowledge Test:** A vocabulary test that evaluates students' understanding and use of English words in appropriate contexts.
3. **Reading Interest Questionnaire:** A self-report survey measuring students' reading habits, frequency of reading English materials, and their interest in reading for both academic and leisure purposes.
4. **Descriptive Writing Test:** A writing prompt asking students to write a descriptive text on a specified topic. The test will be evaluated based on coherence, grammar usage, vocabulary, and content richness.

These instruments have been chosen based on their ability to accurately measure the relevant constructs and have been validated in previous studies (Haryadi et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021).

## 2.5 Data Analysis Techniques

The data will be analyzed using multiple linear regression to determine the effects of the three independent variables (*grammar mastery*, *vocabulary knowledge*, and *reading interest*) on the dependent variable (*students' ability to write descriptive texts*). Multiple linear regression is an appropriate method for this study because it allows for the examination of the simultaneous effects of multiple predictors on a single outcome (Creswell, 2014).

The model will be specified as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon$$

Where:

- $Y$  represents the dependent variable (students' descriptive writing ability),
- $X_1$ ,  $X_2$ , and  $X_3$  are the independent variables (grammar mastery, vocabulary knowledge, and reading interest),
- $\epsilon$  is the error term.

The regression analysis will be conducted using statistical software such as **SPSS** or **R** to assess the strength and direction of the relationships between the variables. The results will provide a comprehensive understanding of how each independent variable influences students' writing skills, both individually and collectively.

## 2.6 Ethical Considerations

This study will adhere to ethical guidelines to ensure the protection and rights of participants:

- Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, and they will be informed about the purpose of the study, the data collection process, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.
- Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study, and all personal information will be kept anonymous.
- The students' participation will not affect their academic performance or grading in any way.



#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the results obtained from the research are clearly presented and interpreted. The findings are organized based on the research objectives and hypotheses. The data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression to assess the simultaneous and partial effects of three independent variables (*grammar mastery*, *vocabulary knowledge*, and *reading interest*) on the dependent variable, which is *students' ability to write descriptive texts*.

Results

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Interpretation
Grammar Mastery	78.5	8.3	High grammatical competence among students
Vocabulary Knowledge	75.3	7.9	High lexical proficiency; enables expressive and varied sentence construction
Reading Interest	68.7	9.1	Moderate reading engagement; potential area for pedagogical improvement
Descriptive Writing Ability	74.2	8.4	Moderately high ability to structure and write coherent descriptive texts

Source: Processed data (2025)

The descriptive analysis of the data revealed valuable insights into students' levels of grammar mastery, vocabulary knowledge, reading interest, and their overall ability to write descriptive texts. The mean score for grammar mastery was  $M = 78.5$  with a standard deviation of  $SD = 8.3$ , indicating a generally high level of grammatical competence among the respondents. This suggests that most students have an adequate command of English sentence structures, tenses, and grammatical rules, which are essential for producing well-formed and coherent writing.

The mean score for vocabulary knowledge was  $M = 75.3$ ,  $SD = 7.9$ , reflecting a strong and consistent lexical proficiency across participants. This indicates that students possess a reasonably broad range of vocabulary, allowing them to express ideas with clarity and nuance in their written texts.

In contrast, the mean score for reading interest was  $M = 68.7$ ,  $SD = 9.1$ , which is relatively lower compared to the other two independent variables. Although still within the moderate range, this suggests that students' motivation and frequency of reading English materials may be less developed, potentially limiting their exposure to varied sentence structures and idiomatic expressions. The relatively higher standard deviation for reading interest also indicates greater variation among students in terms of their engagement with reading activities.

The dependent variable, descriptive writing ability, showed a mean score of  $M = 74.2$  with  $SD = 8.4$ , implying that students' overall writing proficiency is moderately high. This score reflects students' ability to apply their grammatical knowledge and vocabulary in crafting coherent and vivid descriptive texts. The findings suggest that while students generally understand the principles of descriptive writing, there remains room for further development, particularly in areas related to elaboration, cohesion, and stylistic diversity.

Taken together, the descriptive statistics illustrate that students exhibit a relatively strong foundation in grammar and vocabulary—two critical components of effective writing. However, the lower mean in reading interest may indicate an area that requires pedagogical intervention. While students demonstrate sufficient competence in descriptive writing, enhancing reading engagement could further enrich their exposure to models of good writing, thereby reinforcing their own production skills.

These findings reinforce the interconnectedness of the three linguistic domains. A strong base in grammar and vocabulary appears to underpin students' writing competence, while their interest in reading—although comparatively lower—may still play a supplementary role in developing writing style and fluency. Consequently, these results highlight the importance of a balanced instructional approach that not only strengthens structural and lexical knowledge but also fosters a sustainable interest in reading as a means of language input and development.

### **Regression Analysis:**

The multiple linear regression model was used to determine the influence of grammar mastery, vocabulary knowledge, and reading interest on students' descriptive writing ability. The regression model was statistically significant with an  $R^2$  value of 0.68, suggesting that 68% of the variation in descriptive writing ability can be explained by the three independent variables.

The regression equation is as follows:

$$Y = 22.10 + 0.31X_1 + 0.45X_2 + 0.19X_3$$

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Where:

- YYY represents the students' descriptive writing ability.
- X1X\_1X1 represents grammar mastery.
- X2X\_2X2 represents vocabulary knowledge.
- X3X\_3X3 represents reading interest.

**Table 2:** Coefficients of Multiple Linear Regression

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t-value	p-value
Constant	22.10		10.02	<0.001
Grammar Mastery (X <sub>1</sub> )	0.31	0.23	3.12	0.003
Vocabulary Knowledge (X <sub>2</sub> )	0.45	0.35	4.24	<0.001
Reading Interest (X <sub>3</sub> )	0.19	0.14	2.68	0.009

Source: Processed data (2025)

As illustrated in Table 2, the findings of the multiple linear regression analysis provide compelling statistical evidence that all three independent variables—grammar mastery (X<sub>1</sub>), vocabulary knowledge (X<sub>2</sub>), and reading interest (X<sub>3</sub>)—exert a positive and statistically significant influence on students' ability to write descriptive texts in English. Notably, vocabulary knowledge demonstrated the strongest predictive power, with an unstandardized coefficient of 0.45 and a p-value of less than 0.001, highlighting its critical role in enhancing students' descriptive writing ability. This suggests that students who possess a wider and more nuanced vocabulary are significantly more capable of conveying ideas with clarity, precision, and stylistic variety—essential features in descriptive writing where word choice and vivid imagery determine the quality of expression. This finding reinforces the assertions of Soenardjati (2021) and Zhang et al. (2021), who emphasized that lexical richness directly contributes to more elaborate and contextually appropriate written compositions.

In second place, grammar mastery revealed a moderate but statistically significant effect, with a coefficient of 0.31 and a p-value of 0.003. This confirms the importance of syntactic control and grammatical accuracy in constructing coherent, logically structured texts. Students with higher levels of grammar mastery are better equipped to organize their ideas sequentially,

apply correct tenses, maintain subject-verb agreement, and utilize appropriate sentence patterns. These elements are indispensable in descriptive writing, where clarity, cohesion, and fluency hinge on a solid command of grammatical rules. The result aligns with the findings of Aryad (2018) and Haryadi et al. (2021), who emphasized that grammatical competence provides the structural backbone of effective writing.

Although reading interest exhibited the smallest regression coefficient, 0.19, it remained statistically significant ( $p = 0.009$ ). This indicates that students with greater interest and engagement in reading English texts tend to write better, albeit to a lesser extent than those with stronger grammar and vocabulary skills. Reading interest contributes to writing indirectly by exposing learners to diverse sentence structures, genre conventions, vocabulary usage, and rhetorical styles. It supports the development of textual awareness, fluency, and a sense of linguistic rhythm, all of which contribute to improved writing. However, its relatively weaker effect size suggests that reading interest alone is insufficient to substantially enhance writing performance unless reinforced by deliberate and structured grammar and vocabulary instruction. This finding is consistent with Kurniawati et al. (2022) and Zhang et al. (2021), who assert that reading plays a supportive rather than central role in developing productive language skills such as writing.

In summary, these regression results underscore a hierarchy of influence among the predictor variables, with vocabulary knowledge emerging as the most dominant contributor to descriptive writing ability, followed by grammar mastery, and lastly, reading interest. Each variable plays a complementary role, but the magnitude of their influence differs. The statistical significance of all three variables affirms the multidimensional nature of writing proficiency and validates the hypothesis that grammar, vocabulary, and reading interest together shape students' academic writing performance. These findings provide strong empirical support for the integration of targeted grammar instruction, robust vocabulary development, and reading engagement strategies into English language curricula—particularly in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs within Islamic higher education institutions.

### Correlation Analysis

**Table 3.** Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between Variables

Variables	r-value	p-value	Strength and Direction of Relationship
Grammar Mastery ↔ Vocabulary Knowledge	0.72	$p < 0.001$	Strong positive correlation

Grammar Mastery ↔ Reading Interest	0.43	$p < 0.01$	Moderate positive correlation
Vocabulary Knowledge ↔ Reading Interest	0.39	$p < 0.01$	Moderate positive correlation
Descriptive Writing Ability ↔ Grammar Mastery	0.62	$p < 0.001$	Strong positive correlation
Descriptive Writing Ability ↔ Vocabulary Knowledge	0.74	$p < 0.001$	Very strong positive correlation
Descriptive Writing Ability ↔ Reading Interest	0.42	$p < 0.01$	Moderate positive correlation

Source: Processed data (2025)

The Pearson correlation analysis offers deeper insights into the strength and direction of the relationships among the study variables, providing empirical evidence that supports the interconnectedness of grammar mastery, vocabulary knowledge, reading interest, and students' descriptive writing ability. Notably, the strongest correlation observed was between vocabulary knowledge and descriptive writing ability ( $r = 0.74$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating a very strong and statistically significant positive relationship. This finding highlights the critical role that vocabulary plays in shaping students' ability to construct rich, detailed, and contextually appropriate descriptive texts. Students who command a broader vocabulary are evidently more capable of articulating ideas vividly and with precision, underscoring lexical competence as a central pillar in writing proficiency.

Additionally, a strong positive correlation was found between grammar mastery and vocabulary knowledge ( $r = 0.72$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that students who excel in grammar tend to also possess stronger lexical resources. This relationship reflects the inherent interdependence between structural and semantic aspects of language learning—where mastery of syntax often enhances learners' ability to understand and use vocabulary accurately in varied contexts. Moreover, grammar mastery was also strongly correlated with descriptive writing ability ( $r = 0.62$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), reinforcing its importance as a foundation for organizing information coherently and producing grammatically accurate texts.

In terms of reading interest, the correlations were moderate but statistically significant. The relationship between reading interest and descriptive writing ability was  $r = 0.42$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that students who engage more frequently with English reading materials tend to perform better in writing tasks. Although not as strong as the correlation with grammar or

vocabulary, this finding confirms that reading plays a supportive role in enhancing writing proficiency by exposing learners to models of good writing, diverse vocabulary, and varied syntactic patterns. Likewise, the correlation between grammar mastery and reading interest ( $r = 0.43$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and between vocabulary knowledge and reading interest ( $r = 0.39$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) further support the idea that reading interest fosters both structural and lexical development, albeit to a more moderate extent.

Collectively, these correlation coefficients validate the hypothesis that grammar mastery, vocabulary knowledge, and reading interest are mutually reinforcing language skills, each contributing uniquely to students' ability to write descriptive texts. However, the strength of the correlations varies, with vocabulary knowledge emerging as the most dominant predictor and reading interest playing a complementary, though meaningful, role. These findings emphasize the need for a pedagogical approach that addresses all three dimensions in an integrated manner—developing vocabulary and grammar through explicit instruction while nurturing students' engagement with reading to further support and enrich their writing skills.

## **Discussion**

The results of this study provide significant insights into the relationships between grammar mastery, vocabulary knowledge, and reading interest and their impact on students' ability to write descriptive texts in English. By analyzing the effects of these three variables, the research contributes to the understanding of how language skills interact to influence writing proficiency, specifically in descriptive writing tasks. This section discusses the key findings in relation to the existing literature, providing a more in-depth interpretation of the results.

### **1. Grammar Mastery**

The findings of this study affirm that grammar mastery plays a pivotal and irreplaceable role in shaping students' ability to write effective descriptive texts, supporting the conclusions drawn in previous studies by Aryad (2018) and Haryadi et al. (2021). Both scholars emphasized that grammar proficiency serves as the bedrock of coherent and accurate written communication. In this study, grammar mastery demonstrated a moderate yet statistically significant positive effect on students' writing performance, indicating that improvements in grammatical understanding are reliably associated with increased writing quality. Specifically, students with stronger grammar skills were more capable of constructing well-structured sentences, applying correct verb tenses, maintaining subject-verb agreement, and adhering to proper sentence mechanics. These elements are especially crucial in descriptive writing, where precision, clarity, and logical sequencing of ideas directly impact the effectiveness of the text.

This outcome aligns with Creswell (2014), who asserts that grammar is the foundation of clear and effective communication, serving as the structural framework upon which ideas are logically developed and conveyed. In descriptive writing, grammar is not merely a set of rules but a tool for meaning-making. A robust command of grammatical structures enables students to organize their observations systematically, describe characteristics accurately, and present their thoughts in a way that is both comprehensible and stylistically refined. The proper use of grammar supports the flow of information and ensures that readers can follow the writer's intent without confusion or ambiguity.

Moreover, the ability to manipulate grammatical structures empowers students to express complex and abstract ideas—qualities that are essential in academic and professional writing contexts. Therefore, grammar should not be perceived as a secondary or mechanical component of language instruction, but rather as a strategic competence that must be intentionally developed through consistent, contextualized, and explicit instruction. In light of these findings, educators and curriculum designers are strongly encouraged to prioritize grammar instruction within English language programs, especially in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts such as Islamic Economics. By focusing not only on basic sentence formation but also on more advanced grammatical structures—such as compound-complex sentences, passive voice, and cohesive devices—educators can significantly enhance students' ability to produce well-formed, expressive, and academically appropriate written texts.

Ultimately, grammar mastery is not only a predictor of writing accuracy but also a catalyst for higher-order writing development, enabling students to move beyond simple expression toward more nuanced, persuasive, and descriptive writing. As such, grammar instruction should be seen as a central pillar of any effort to improve students' academic writing performance.

## **2. Vocabulary Knowledge**

The results of this study clearly indicate that vocabulary knowledge is the most influential factor affecting students' ability to write descriptive texts, as evidenced by its highest coefficient in the regression model. This finding corroborates the conclusions of Soenardjati (2021) and Zhang et al. (2021), both of whom assert that vocabulary is not merely a supporting linguistic element, but a central pillar of written expression. In the context of descriptive writing—where precision, imagery, and lexical variety are essential—students' ability to access and apply a wide range of vocabulary directly influences the clarity, depth, and vividness of their descriptions. A student with rich lexical knowledge is better equipped to select precise and contextually appropriate words, construct more nuanced sentences, and evoke imagery that

captures the reader's attention. This allows them to move beyond vague or generic phrasing and instead articulate detailed, expressive, and context-rich accounts of people, places, or events.

Moreover, students with strong vocabulary knowledge demonstrate greater lexical flexibility, enabling them to vary their language, avoid repetition, and tailor their diction to suit academic or descriptive purposes. This lexical richness not only improves readability but also reflects higher-order cognitive processing in written language. Haryadi et al. (2021) further reinforce this argument by noting that a well-developed vocabulary empowers students to express complex and abstract ideas more effectively and creatively—qualities that are essential for advanced academic writing. When students lack sufficient vocabulary, their writing tends to become repetitive, overly simplistic, or ambiguous. Conversely, those with extensive vocabulary resources exhibit greater control over meaning, tone, and stylistic choices, which elevates the overall quality of their writing.

In descriptive writing in particular, where the objective is to create mental imagery and communicate sensory detail, vocabulary functions as the primary tool of expression. It allows students to "paint with words"—providing specificity in describing textures, colors, emotions, and movements. Without an adequate lexicon, even students with sound grammar may fail to convey the intended message vividly or persuasively. Thus, vocabulary knowledge is not just a linguistic competence; it is a strategic asset that enables students to make rhetorical decisions and engage their audience more effectively.

Given the empirical weight of this finding, it is imperative that English language education programs embed intensive vocabulary-building strategies within their instructional design. Rather than relying solely on incidental acquisition, educators should implement explicit vocabulary instruction that emphasizes academic word lists, collocations, semantic clusters, and context-based word usage. Techniques such as reading across genres, word-mapping, morphological analysis, and frequent usage in writing tasks can significantly expand students' lexical repertoire. Furthermore, curriculum designers in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts—such as Islamic Economics—must ensure that domain-specific vocabulary is integrated into the learning process, allowing students to apply the language of their discipline accurately and confidently in academic writing.

In conclusion, the findings of this study strongly support the position that vocabulary knowledge is a non-negotiable component of writing proficiency, particularly in descriptive tasks. Strengthening students' vocabulary is not only essential for achieving linguistic accuracy but also for enabling expressive depth, creative articulation, and reader engagement. This



reaffirms the central role of vocabulary development in any pedagogical approach aimed at improving academic writing competence.

### **3. Reading Interest**

The present study reveals that reading interest, although statistically significant, exerts a comparatively weaker influence on students' descriptive writing ability when contrasted with grammar mastery and vocabulary knowledge. This finding is consistent with prior research, particularly that of Kurniawati et al. (2022), who emphasized that reading interest contributes to writing development by exposing learners to diverse linguistic styles, syntactic structures, and discursive patterns. Students who engage in regular reading activities are more likely to internalize the conventions of effective writing, including paragraph organization, cohesive devices, and rhetorical techniques. However, the impact of reading interest, as observed in this study, is moderate at best, suggesting that mere exposure through reading is insufficient to produce substantial improvements in writing proficiency unless accompanied by explicit instruction in grammar and vocabulary. While reading helps students absorb language intuitively, the ability to transfer this input into productive skills like writing depends heavily on foundational linguistic competence.

This observation is supported by Zhang et al. (2021), who contend that reading can only enhance writing if students possess the grammatical and lexical tools necessary to decode, comprehend, and apply what they encounter in texts. Thus, although reading can inspire creativity and expose learners to rich language input, its effectiveness is conditional—reading interest must function synergistically with structured grammar instruction and systematic vocabulary development to have a meaningful impact on writing outcomes. In other words, reading by itself offers limited benefits in writing unless it is embedded within a pedagogical framework that enables students to analyze language use, reflect on structure, and practice writing in guided contexts.

Nevertheless, the role of reading interest should not be undervalued. This study confirms that it remains a critical complementary factor in the language learning process. By immersing students in authentic language use, reading nurtures their intuitive sense of flow, tone, and stylistic variation—elements that contribute to the refinement of written expression. Reading interest also fosters autonomous learning habits, encourages lifelong language engagement, and enhances critical thinking skills, all of which are beneficial for academic writing. As such, the relatively lower statistical impact of reading interest observed in this study should not diminish its pedagogical importance. Rather, it should signal to educators that reading must be

integrated purposefully with writing activities, vocabulary-building exercises, and grammar-based feedback.

In light of these findings, it is recommended that English language curricula, particularly within English for Specific Purposes (ESP) settings such as Islamic Economics, adopt a holistic instructional model that gives balanced attention to grammar mastery, vocabulary enrichment, and reading engagement. Reading should be positioned as a supportive learning strategy that complements direct instruction, offering students opportunities to observe how language functions in context and to apply those patterns in their own writing. Encouraging students to read widely—especially materials relevant to their field of study—not only builds linguistic familiarity but also promotes cognitive engagement with disciplinary content. This dual benefit is crucial in preparing students for the kinds of writing tasks they will encounter in both academic and professional domains.

The implications of this study are significant for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers. A well-designed language program should not isolate grammar, vocabulary, and reading as separate components but should integrate them into a coherent and interdependent system of instruction. As Creswell (2014) emphasizes, the most effective language learning occurs when multiple skills are developed concurrently, allowing learners to make connections across domains and apply knowledge flexibly. Grammar mastery equips students with the structural scaffolding needed for clarity and correctness; vocabulary knowledge enables precision, richness, and depth of expression; and reading interest enhances exposure, contextual learning, and stylistic awareness.

In conclusion, while grammar and vocabulary remain the strongest direct predictors of writing ability, reading interest plays an indispensable supporting role. Its value lies in its capacity to sustain language exposure, stimulate intellectual curiosity, and provide models of well-formed discourse. Therefore, to cultivate students' descriptive writing skills comprehensively, educators must prioritize an integrative pedagogical approach that combines the technical rigor of grammar and vocabulary instruction with the motivational and contextual benefits of sustained reading. Such an approach not only improves writing performance in the short term but also prepares students to navigate the complex communicative demands of academic and professional life in an increasingly globalized world.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

This study aimed to explore the effects of grammar mastery, vocabulary knowledge, and reading interest on students' ability to write descriptive texts at Islamic Higher Education Institutions. The findings of this study demonstrate that all three factors—grammar mastery, vocabulary knowledge, and reading interest—positively influence students' ability to write descriptive texts. Among these variables, vocabulary knowledge emerged as the most significant factor, followed by grammar mastery, with reading interest showing the least but still noteworthy effect. The results indicate that students who possess stronger grammar skills and a broader vocabulary tend to write more coherent and effective descriptive texts. Grammar mastery ensures that students can construct grammatically correct sentences, while a rich vocabulary allows them to express ideas in a detailed and precise manner. Reading interest, although a contributing factor, showed a relatively smaller influence on writing ability compared to grammar and vocabulary. However, fostering a higher level of reading interest is still important, as it encourages exposure to diverse language structures and ideas, which can indirectly improve writing skills. Based on these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions place a greater emphasis on enhancing grammar and vocabulary development in their language curricula. Since vocabulary knowledge was found to be the strongest predictor of writing ability, integrating vocabulary-building exercises and focusing on academic language use could further support students in becoming more proficient writers. Additionally, reading engagement should be promoted by providing students with relevant and engaging reading materials, as reading remains an essential part of language learning, even if its direct impact on writing ability is more modest. For future research, it would be beneficial to conduct longitudinal studies to track how changes in grammar mastery, vocabulary knowledge, and reading interest over time impact students' writing abilities. Expanding the study to include a larger, more diverse sample would also improve the generalizability of the results. Furthermore, exploring other factors such as writing practice, peer feedback, and individual motivation could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the elements that contribute to writing success. In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the interplay of language skills and how they contribute to improving descriptive writing ability. The findings underscore the importance of focusing on both grammar and vocabulary in writing instruction while promoting reading habits to enhance overall writing proficiency. These recommendations can inform future curriculum development and teaching practices in Islamic higher education institutions, helping to equip students with the essential skills needed for academic and professional success.

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