

**Language Exposure and Writing Ability:  
A Correlational Study in English Learning Context**  
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**Abstract**

*This research investigated the correlation between students' language exposure and their writing ability. It was motivated by several issues identified among students, such as difficulties in expressing ideas effectively, inconsistencies in writing styles possibly influenced by different levels of language exposure, and a lack of familiarity with proper writing structures. The objective of this research was to determine whether there is a significant correlation between students' language exposure and their writing ability among eighth-grade students. A correlational research design was employed in this research. The population consisted of 80 eighth-grade students, and total sampling was used to include all participants. The instruments used were a questionnaire and a writing test. The questionnaire contained 23 items to measure students' language exposure, while the writing test required students to write a recount text based on one of four given topics. The data were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment correlation through SPSS. The findings revealed a correlation coefficient of 0.755, indicating a strong and positive relationship between students' language exposure and their writing ability. The results suggest that greater exposure to the English language significantly contributes to the improvement of students' writing ability. It can be concluded that enhancing students' engagement with English through various forms of exposure plays an important role in developing their writing proficiency.*

**Keywords:** Language exposure; writing ability; English learning; correlation research; junior high school students

**INTRODUCTION**

Writing is a productive language skill that holds a significant role in English learning. Through writing, students can express their ideas, feelings, and thoughts in a structured and comprehensible manner. According to Harmer (2004) writing is a process that engages the writer's cognitive ability, creativity, and linguistic competence. This indicates that writing is not merely the act of copying words but involves deep cognitive processing and strong command of the target language. Recent studies also emphasize writing as a complex, recursive process that requires planning, drafting, revising, and editing (Graham, 2018). Writing is not only about transferring ideas into written form, but also about how those ideas are organized effectively. It requires mastery from students because expressing thoughts through writing involves selecting and arranging information in a coherent way, which includes drafting, revising, and refining the text (Ningsih & Syafitri, 2023). Furthermore, the writing process demands attention to essential elements such as grammar, vocabulary, coherence,

and organization, which must work together to produce meaningful compositions. As emphasized by Brown & Lee (2015) writing is not naturally acquired but learned through guided instruction and practice. Research in the last decade also highlights that feedback, scaffolding, and sustained exposure significantly contribute to learners' improvement in writing performance (Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Teng, 2020). In line with this view, writing is one of the language skills that should be mastered by students to achieve communicative competence in English (Sastri & Anwar, 2019). This means that writing plays a central role in helping learners communicate effectively in both academic and real-life contexts.

Despite its importance, mastering writing remains a significant challenge for many learners. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts such as Indonesia, writing is often considered one of the most difficult skills to master. This is because it requires learners to generate ideas, organize them logically, and transform them into grammatically correct sentences using appropriate vocabulary. Hyland (2019) emphasizes that writing is a meaning-making process that reflects not only linguistic knowledge but also the writer's awareness of audience, purpose, and context. Therefore, writing ability is a strong indicator of a learner's overall language proficiency. However, Indonesian junior high school students frequently experience difficulties in writing, such as limited vocabulary, poor grammar control, and lack of idea organization. These problems are often linked to the limited amount of English exposure they receive both inside and outside the classroom. Writing also requires students to express their ideas accurately using appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures (Anjayani et al., 2016, as cited in Hanifa & Safitri 2024). As a result, when students have not yet mastered these linguistic components, their writing often becomes unclear, less coherent, and difficult to understand.

English has been taught as a compulsory subject from elementary to tertiary levels in Indonesia, yet many students fail to meet the expected writing standards. They often produce writing that lacks coherence, contains grammatical errors, and shows limited vocabulary use. One important factor influencing this issue is the level of language exposure that students experience. Nation (2001) explains that language exposure refers to the frequency and intensity of learners' engagement with the target language in different contexts. The more learners are exposed to English through reading, listening, and interaction, the greater their opportunity to internalize linguistic features and develop communicative competence. Krashen (1985) also emphasizes that comprehensible input is the foundation of language acquisition. When students frequently encounter meaningful language input slightly above their current ability, they gradually acquire new structures and vocabulary naturally. Similarly, research in Indonesia has shown that students' writing difficulties are commonly related to grammar, vocabulary, cohesion, and first language interference (Kardena et al. 2020). These persistent challenges demonstrate the crucial need to enhance students' language exposure to support better writing development.

In modern learning environments, language exposure can be obtained from diverse sources. Students may interact with English through books, songs, films, online videos, games, and social media. Brown & Lee

(2015) note that consistent engagement with the target language helps learners acquire not only vocabulary and grammar but also an intuitive sense of language flow and style. However, the quantity and quality of exposure vary among learners. Lightbown & Spada (2006) highlight that these differences significantly influence learning outcomes, as students who receive more authentic exposure generally perform better than those who rely solely on classroom instruction. Some students actively seek additional input through online learning, English media, or communication with peers, while others depend entirely on teachers' explanations in class.

Therefore, increasing students' exposure to English plays a crucial role in overcoming these writing challenges. The role of the social and technological environment is also critical in shaping learners' exposure. Richards (2015) states that the digital world provides abundant opportunities for students to interact with authentic English materials, including movies, podcasts, and digital texts. The availability of online media allows learners to experience the language in real-life contexts, which increases motivation and linguistic awareness. However, this potential benefit depends largely on how learners use digital platforms. Passive exposure, such as watching entertainment content without reflection, may not lead to meaningful learning. In contrast, active exposure where learners analyze, summarize, or reproduce input can significantly improve language performance. This argument is supported by Hyland (2019) who explains that writing development occurs when learners process and respond to authentic input in ways that encourage self-expression and creativity.

Empirical studies have provided strong evidence supporting the positive impact of language exposure on writing skills. Arfah & Zam (2017) in their study published in *Voices of English Language Education Society*, found that students who frequently interacted with English through reading and media activities performed significantly better in writing tasks compared to those with limited exposure. The findings indicate that continuous involvement with English input contributes to better accuracy, vocabulary development, and organization in students' writing. This implies that the more students engage with English in authentic contexts, the more likely they are to improve their overall writing performance (Resta et al., 2023). The research demonstrated a clear correlation between the frequency of English input and improvement in students' writing organization, vocabulary, and accuracy.

Further evidence comes from international research. Olagbaju & Jimoh (2020) examined Nigerian secondary school students and found that those with greater exposure to English achieved higher scores in writing and demonstrated greater confidence in expressing ideas. Meanwhile, Parina & de Leon (2013) explored the relationship between English exposure, writing anxiety, and self-confidence among Filipino university students. Their study revealed that increased exposure reduced writing anxiety and improved clarity in written expression. In Indonesia, Bing et al., (2022) found that consistent exposure through English reading and multimedia activities enhanced language accuracy and idea organization in secondary students' writing. Alcón (2024) also reported that exposure to English outside

the classroom, such as through digital interaction, positively influenced students' writing fluency and creativity.

Despite the evidence from these studies, most previous research was conducted at the university level or in urban educational contexts where students have greater access to English materials and technology. There is still limited investigation into how language exposure influences writing ability among junior high school students in rural or semi-rural settings. Moreover, existing studies often focus on oral communication skills such as speaking or listening rather than writing, which requires deeper cognitive processing. As Hyland (2019) notes, writing is a skill that reflects advanced language knowledge because it demands control of grammar, vocabulary, organization, and coherence simultaneously. Therefore, the relationship between students' language exposure and their writing ability, particularly at the junior high school level in Indonesia, remains a research gap worth exploring.

In the Indonesian context, where English exposure is relatively limited, differences in writing performance are often noticeable among students from various backgrounds. Some students are more familiar with English because they encounter it in daily life through social media, songs, and films. Others, however, rarely use or hear English outside the classroom, leading to slower progress. This disparity reflects what Richards (2015) describes as the unequal distribution of exposure opportunities, which can result in varied language achievement. In addition to exposure frequency, students' attitudes toward English also play an indirect role in shaping their language use. Learners who enjoy engaging with English tend to seek additional opportunities to read, listen, or communicate in the language, thereby increasing their exposure. In contrast, those with negative attitudes or low motivation often avoid such experiences, which limits their linguistic development.

While previous research has acknowledged the influence of language exposure, there remains a lack of studies focusing specifically on its correlation with students' writing performance in Indonesian junior high schools. Many investigations have emphasized higher education students or urban learners who already possess greater English proficiency and access to resources. As a result, little is known about how varying levels of English exposure among younger learners influence their writing abilities in rural settings. This research aims to fill this gap by focusing on eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 V Koto Timur, a junior high school located in a semi-rural area where English input outside the classroom is relatively limited.

The preliminary observation conducted in May 2025 showed that students in this school exhibited different levels of writing proficiency. Some were able to organize their ideas coherently and apply grammar accurately, while others struggled with vocabulary use, sentence formation, and idea development. Informal interviews with students also revealed that those who frequently encountered English through social media, music, and online content tended to perform better in writing than those who rarely engaged with the language. This indicates that language exposure may significantly affect students' ability to write effectively in English.

In conclusion, there are both similarities and differences between this research and previous studies. The similarity lies in the focus on examining

the relationship between language exposure and writing ability, as seen in studies by Alcón (2024), Bing et al. (2022), Olagbaju & Jimoh (2020), and Parina & de Leon (2013) which all found a positive effect of exposure on students' writing competence. The differences, however, are found in the research setting and specific population. Previous studies often examined university or urban students, while this research focuses on eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 V Koto Timur to provide a more localized and contextual understanding of the issue. Therefore, based on these similarities and differences, this research aims to analyze the correlation between students' language exposure and their writing ability among eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 V Koto Timur. This study contributes to the understanding of how English exposure influences writing development among Indonesian EFL learners and provides insights that can help teachers design strategies to enhance student engagement and performance in writing.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research employed a correlational research design to investigate the relationship between students' language exposure and their writing ability. The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 V Koto Timur in July 2025 during the academic year 2024/2025. Correlational research was chosen because the purpose of the study was to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable without manipulating any variables. According to Sugiyono (2016), correlational research is a type of research with problem characteristics in the form of correlational relationships between two or more variables. This design is appropriate for identifying the degree and direction of the relationship between naturally occurring variables in an educational setting. Therefore, the researcher did not provide any treatment but focused on measuring and analyzing the existing relationship between the variables.

The population of this research consisted of all eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 1 V Koto Timur in the academic year 2024/2025. There were three classes in the eighth grade, namely class VIII.A, VIII.B, and VIII.C. Each class consisted of students with relatively similar academic backgrounds and learning experiences. Since the total number of students was manageable, the researcher used a total sampling technique. Therefore, all students of class VIII.A, VIII.B, and VIII.C were involved as the sample of this research. By using total sampling, the researcher ensured that the findings represent the entire population of the eighth-grade students in the school and minimized sampling bias.

This research involved two variables: the independent variable and the dependent variable. The independent variable was students' language exposure, which includes several aspects such as exposure at home, with friends, at school, and through media. Language exposure refers to the extent to which students are exposed to English in their daily lives, both inside and outside the classroom, including listening to English songs, watching English videos, reading English texts, or interacting in English with teachers and peers. The dependent variable was students' writing ability. This ability includes students' competence in organizing ideas coherently,

using appropriate vocabulary and grammar, and conveying ideas clearly in written form. In this study, writing ability specifically focused on students' performance in producing a simple recount text based on a given topic.

To collect the data, the researcher used two instruments. The first instrument was a closed-ended questionnaire designed to measure students' language exposure. The questionnaire consisted of several statements related to students' English exposure in different contexts and used a four-point Likert scale consisting of "Always," "Often," "Rarely," and "Never." The use of a four-point scale was intended to avoid neutral answers and encourage students to choose responses that best represented their real experiences. The questionnaire was used to obtain quantitative data related to the independent variable. The second instrument was a writing test to measure students' writing ability. In this test, students were asked to write a simple recount text based on a predetermined theme relevant to their daily experiences. The students' writing was assessed using a writing rubric that evaluated organization, vocabulary, grammar, and clarity of ideas to ensure objective and consistent scoring. The data obtained from both instruments were analyzed using statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the level of students' language exposure and writing ability, including the calculation of mean scores and the distribution of students' performance. Before conducting further analysis, the data were checked, coded, and tabulated carefully to ensure accuracy and completeness. Furthermore, correlational analysis was employed to determine the relationship between the two variables. The researcher calculated the correlation coefficient to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between students' language exposure and their writing ability. The result of this analysis was expected to provide empirical evidence regarding whether higher levels of language exposure are associated with better writing performance among the eighth-grade students.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **FINDING**

In this research, the data were collected through a questionnaire and writing test. To analyze the data, the researcher used SPSS by applying the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. This analysis was conducted to determine whether there is a significant correlation between students' language exposure and their writing ability. The results of the correlation analysis can be seen in the table below:

**Table 1.1 Correlation Analysis Correlations**

		Students' Language Exposure	Students Writing Ability
Students' Language Exposure	Pearson Correlation	1	.755**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	80	80
Students Writing Ability	Pearson Correlation	.755**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	80	80

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

a. *The result of correlation between students' language exposure and their writing ability*

Based on the correlation table 4.5 above, the Pearson correlation coefficient between students' language exposure and their writing ability is 0.755. The degree of freedom (df) is calculated as  $n-2 = 80-2 = 78$ , with a significance level ( $\alpha$ ) = 0.05. From the r table, the critical value is 0.219. Since  $r_{obtained} (0.755) > r_{table} (0.219)$ . The hypotheses tested in this research are as follows:

Ho	:	There is no a significant correlation between the students' language exposure and their writing ability at the eight grade students of SMPN 1 V Koto Timur
Ha	:	There is a significant correlation between the students' language exposure and their writing ability at the eight grade students of SMPN 1 V Koto Timur

The result of the hypothesis testing showed that the correlation value was  $r_{obtained} = 0.755 > r_{table} = 0.219$ . Based on this result, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) was accepted, indicating a statistically significant correlation between students' language exposure and their writing ability at the eighth grade of SMPN 1 V Koto Timur.

b. *The direction of correlation between students' language exposure and their writing ability*

The direction of the correlation between students' language exposure and their writing ability was then analyzed to identify whether it was positive or negative. Based on Table 4.5, the correlation coefficient of +0.755 showed that the correlation was in a positive direction. This means that students who had higher exposure to English tended to achieve higher writing scores, while those with lower exposure tended to obtain lower scores. In other words, an increase in students' language exposure was followed by an improvement in their writing ability at the eighth grade of SMPN 1 V Koto Timur.

c. *The significant of correlation between students' language exposure and their writing ability*

The result of the correlation analysis showed that the coefficient obtained was 0.755. The interpretation of the magnitude of this coefficient can be seen in Table 4.6 below:

**Table 2 Interpretation of Correlation**

Interval Coefficient	Interpretation
0.00 – 0.199	Very Weak
0.20 – 0.399	Weak
0.40 – 0.699	Moderate
0.70 – 0.899	Strong
0.90 – 1.000	Very Strong

**Source : Jaya (2019)**

Based on the analysis, the correlation coefficient obtained was 0.755, which is in the range of 0.70–0.899 and therefore categorized as a strong correlation. This indicates that the relationship between students' language exposure and their writing skills among eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 V Koto Timur can be considered strong in magnitude. A strong correlation in this case indicates that the two variables are closely related, where differences in students' language exposure are consistently accompanied by differences in their writing performance.

In summary, the results of the research show a significant correlation between students' exposure to language and their writing skills. As a result, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), which states that there is no correlation between the two variables, is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ), which proposes a significant relationship between language exposure and writing skills, is accepted. The direction of this correlation is positive, indicating that students with higher exposure to English tend to have better writing skills, while those with lower exposure tend to perform less effectively in writing. The magnitude of this correlation is strong, suggesting that language exposure plays a significant role in improving students' writing skills. Overall, these findings confirm a strong and positive relationship between students' language exposure and their writing skills among eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 V Koto Timur.

## **DISCUSSION**

In this research, two variables were examined: students' language exposure as the independent variable (X) and students' writing ability as the dependent variable (Y). The aim of this research was to determine whether there was a significant correlation between these two variables among eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 V Koto Timur. To obtain the necessary data, the researcher utilized two research instruments. The first instrument, a questionnaire consisting of 23 items with a four-point Likert scale (always, often, sometimes, never), was designed to measure the level of students' language exposure. The second instrument, a writing test in the form of a recount text, was used to evaluate students' writing performance.

The collected data were analyzed through the Pearson Product Moment correlation technique using SPSS software. The results revealed that the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) between students' language exposure and their writing ability was 0.755, signifying a strong and positive correlation. This indicates that students who are more frequently exposed to English tend to demonstrate better writing performance. As stated by Jaya, (2019) correlation values ranging from 0.70 to 0.899 are categorized as strong. Therefore, the results of this research confirm that the relationship between the two variables is not only statistically significant but also substantial in strength.

To further verify the statistical outcome, hypothesis testing was conducted. The findings showed that the obtained correlation coefficient (0.755) exceeded the  $r$ -table value (0.219), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), which stated that there is no significant relationship between students' language exposure and their writing ability. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) was accepted, affirming that a significant

correlation exists between the two variables. This suggests that greater exposure to English is associated with better writing performance among students.

Lightbown & Spada (2006) define language exposure as the extent to which learners have opportunities to hear and read the target language, both in formal learning environments and in natural contexts. Such exposure may occur through classroom instruction, interaction with teachers or peers, reading materials, and informal activities outside of class, such as watching movies, communicating with native speakers, or engaging with digital media. The more frequent and varied the exposure students experience, the higher their potential to acquire linguistic structures, vocabulary, and communicative competence. This concept is supported by Parina & de Leon (2013) whose research demonstrated that language exposure has a significant impact on students' writing ability. Similar results were also found by Alcón (2024), Bing et al. (2022), Olagbaju & Jimoh (2020) which align with the findings of the present study.

The outcomes of this research reinforce the theory proposed by Lightbown & Spada (2006) emphasizing that opportunities to engage with the target language in both formal and informal settings play a vital role in language development. Their theory suggests that more frequent and diverse exposure enables learners to acquire grammatical patterns and vocabulary more effectively. Consistent with this framework, the results of this study reveal a positive correlation between students' language exposure and their writing ability among eighth-grade students of SMPN 1 V Koto Timur. Students who are more frequently exposed to English show better writing performance. These findings also support Parina & de Leon (2013) research, which highlighted that language exposure significantly enhances writing confidence and reduces writing anxiety, both contributing to improved writing outcomes.

Based on these findings, the research questions can be addressed as follows. First, there is a significant relationship between students' language exposure and their writing ability among eighth-grade students of SMPN 1 V Koto Timur, as evidenced by a correlation coefficient of 0.755. Second, the correlation between the two variables is positive, meaning that students with higher levels of English exposure tend to exhibit stronger writing ability. Third, the magnitude of the correlation is strong, implying that increased language exposure is closely related to improved writing performance. Finally, the results showed a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.755$ ) between students' exposure to English and their writing skills, which means that the higher the level of exposure to English, the better their writing skills in grade VIII students at SMPN 1 V Koto Timur.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the data analysis and discussion presented, this research concluded that there was a significant, positive, and strong correlation between students' exposure to English and their writing ability among eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 V Koto Timur. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.755 indicated that the higher the level of exposure to English that students received, the better their writing ability. This finding clearly

answered the research question and confirmed that language exposure was a crucial factor contributing to the improvement of students' writing ability.

The implications of this research highlight the importance for English teachers to create a language-rich learning environment. Teachers are advised to integrate various activities that encourage student interaction with English, such as reading authentic texts, watching English-language videos, and assigning writing tasks that are relevant to students' daily lives. In addition, schools and parents also play an important role in supporting language exposure outside the classroom, for example by providing access to English language materials or encouraging simple everyday conversations in English at home.

Although this research provides important insights, there are several limitations. The limited time available to conduct the research and the challenges in controlling the seriousness of students during the completion of questionnaires or tests may have affected the depth and accuracy of the data. Therefore, future research should use a larger and more diverse sample size, consider other factors such as learning motivation or reading habits, and adopt a qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of the interaction between language exposure and writing ability.

### **SUGGESTION**

This research is expected to be beneficial in several ways. For English teachers, this research emphasizes the importance of language exposure in helping students develop their writing skills. It is recommended that teachers create a classroom environment that supports meaningful and interesting exposure to English through activities such as journal writing, reading and responding to texts, vocabulary enrichment, peer feedback, and integrated writing tasks based on real-life communication. Additionally, providing exposure through both spoken and written language via digital media, storytelling, and interactive writing activities can help enhance students' language awareness and writing fluency. For students, this research encourages them to recognize the positive impact of language exposure on their writing skills and to actively engage in English-related activities such as reading English texts, watching English media, practicing writing, and using English in everyday conversations. Through consistent exposure, students can gradually improve their vocabulary, sentence structure, and overall writing performance. In addition, maintaining a regular practice routine and cultivating strong motivation to learn can help students become more confident and competent writers. For future researchers, the results of this research can be used as a reference in examining the relationship between language input and language skills, particularly in writing, and they are advised to explore other factors that may influence this relationship, such as student motivation, reading habits, or the use of digital media, as well as how these factors interact with language exposure. It is also recommended to use a larger and more diverse sample size, compare results across schools or educational levels, and apply qualitative approaches.

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