

Eighth-Grade Students' Interest in Writing Descriptive Texts: A Descriptive Quantitative Study

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Abstract	
Article History: Received: 23/06/2026 Accepted: 05/07/2026 Published: 10/07/2026 Keywords: <i>Students' Interest, Writing, Descriptive Text</i>	Writing is a crucial skill in English language learning, yet students often exhibit low interest in this activity. This study aimed to investigate eighth-grade students' interest in writing descriptive texts, focusing on five key indicators: feeling, attention, attraction, active involvement, and persistence. Employing a descriptive quantitative design, this study involved all 28 eighth-grade students at MTs Tarbiyah Islamiyah Sei Simbar selected through total sampling. Data were collected using a 15-item Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using percentage analysis. The findings revealed that the students' overall interest in writing descriptive texts was low, with an average score of 35.28%. Specifically, the percentage for each indicator was 37.85% for feeling, 35.47% for persistence, 34.52% for attraction, 34.52% for active involvement, and 34.04% for attention. These results indicate a general lack of engagement and focus during descriptive writing tasks. Consequently, English teachers are highly encouraged to implement more innovative, interactive, and visually engaging instructional strategies to foster students' motivation and active participation in writing activities.
Kata Kunci: <i>Keterampilan menulis, minat siswa, penelitian kuantitatif, teks deskriptif.</i>	Abstrak Menulis merupakan keterampilan krusial dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, namun siswa kerap menunjukkan minat yang rendah dalam aktivitas ini. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menginvestigasi minat siswa kelas delapan dalam menulis teks deskriptif berdasarkan lima indikator utama: perasaan, perhatian, ketertarikan, keterlibatan aktif, dan kegigihan. Menggunakan desain kuantitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini melibatkan seluruh 28 siswa kelas delapan di MTs Tarbiyah Islamiyah Sei Simbar yang dipilih melalui teknik total sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner skala Likert berisikan

15 pernyataan dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis persentase. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa minat keseluruhan siswa dalam menulis teks deskriptif berada pada kategori rendah, dengan skor rata-rata 35,28%. Secara spesifik, persentase untuk setiap indikator adalah 37,85% untuk perasaan, 35,47% untuk kegigihan, 34,52% untuk ketertarikan, 34,52% untuk keterlibatan aktif, dan 34,04% untuk perhatian. Hasil ini mengindikasikan kurangnya keterlibatan dan fokus siswa selama tugas menulis deskriptif. Oleh karena itu, guru bahasa Inggris sangat disarankan untuk menerapkan strategi pembelajaran yang lebih inovatif, interaktif, dan menarik secara visual demi menumbuhkan motivasi dan partisipasi aktif siswa dalam aktivitas menulis.

INTRODUCTION

English is one of the international languages that has an important role in communication, education, technology, and globalization. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language from junior high school until university level. In learning English, students are expected to master four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among those skills, writing is considered one of the most difficult productive skills because students must express ideas, thoughts, and feelings into written language (Hyland, 2003). It is a complex process that requires students to discover, organize ideas, apply grammar correctly, use vocabulary effectively, and develop sentences into meaningful and understandable paragraphs (Harmer, 2015; Hyland, 2019). Despite its difficulty, writing is an important part of language learning because it allows students to focus on language use, improves their ability to think critically, and helps them communicate their opinions and experiences clearly and systematically.

One type of writing text taught at the junior high school level is descriptive text. Descriptive text is a type of text used to specifically describe a person, place, animal, or object in detail. According to Knapp and Watkins (2005), descriptive text aims to describe particular things clearly so that readers can imagine the object being described. Gerot and Wignell (1994) also stated that descriptive text focuses on identifying and describing the characteristics of certain objects. The generic

structure of descriptive text usually consists of identification, which introduces the object being described, and description, which explains the characteristics or details of the object. Through descriptive writing, students can improve their vocabulary, imagination, and creativity while learning to give clear and detailed information about something (Anderson, 2017).

However, many students still face major problems in writing descriptive text. In the classroom context, some students feel bored, lack vocabulary, have difficulty developing ideas, and are not motivated during the writing process. As a result, students often show low interest in writing activities. Interest is an important factor in the learning process because it significantly influences students' motivation, attention, and participation in classroom activities. Slameto (2015) explained that interest is a feeling of preference, liking, and attraction toward an activity that encourages someone to participate willingly without being forced. Students who have an interest in learning tend to pay more attention, become more active during the lesson, and show better concentration (Schiefele, 2017). Furthermore, interest develops gradually through learning experiences and plays a vital role in improving students' engagement and persistence (Hidi & Renninger, 2016). Therefore, students who possess high interest usually demonstrate strong effort and commitment to completing learning tasks.

According to Slameto (2015:58), students' interest can be measured through several indicators. In the context of English language learning, five key indicators can be used to assess students' interest in writing descriptive text. The first indicator is feeling, which refers to students' sense of pleasure, enjoyment, or dislike toward writing descriptive text. The second indicator is attention, which relates to the degree of students' concentration and focus during writing and learning activities. The third indicator is attraction, which reflects students' curiosity, enthusiasm, and willingness to engage in writing activities. The fourth indicator is active involvement, which concerns students' participation and engagement in classroom activities related to writing. The fifth indicator is persistence, which refers to students' effort, commitment, and consistency in completing writing tasks despite encountering difficulties.

The importance of investigating this variable is further highlighted by the researcher's preliminary observation at MTs Tarbiyah Islamiyah Sei Simbar. During the observation, many students showed low enthusiasm during writing lessons. Some students did not pay attention to the teacher's explanation, were passive during classroom activities, and easily gave up when they found difficulties in writing descriptive text. This condition indicates that students' interest in writing descriptive text needs to be investigated deeply.

Several previous studies have examined students' interest in writing and its relationship with learning outcomes. Fitriani and Susanto (2020) found that students' interest significantly influenced their participation in writing activities. Lestari, Rahmawati, and Putra (2022) reported that motivation and interest played important roles in improving students' writing ability. Furthermore, Yuliana and Prasetyo (2021) revealed that teaching strategies affected students' interest in writing descriptive texts. However, most previous studies focused on the influence of interest on writing achievement or the specific factors affecting students' interest. Limited studies have specifically investigated the baseline level of students' interest in writing descriptive text in Islamic junior high school contexts, particularly at MTs Tarbiyah Islamiyah Sei Simbar.

In light of the issues identified during the preliminary observation and the need to fill this empirical gap, this study was conducted to describe the level of students' interest in writing descriptive text among the eighth-grade students of MTs Tarbiyah Islamiyah Sei Simbar based on the five indicators of interest, namely feeling, attention, attraction, active involvement, and persistence. The findings are expected to provide useful information for teachers in designing more effective, creative, and engaging writing instruction. Therefore, the research question guiding this study was: "What is the level of students' interest in writing descriptive text among the eighth-grade students of MTs Tarbiyah Islamiyah Sei Simbar?"

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design. According to Sugiyono (2021), quantitative research is a method used to systematically analyze numerical data in order to describe particular phenomena. The purpose of this study was to describe the level of students' interest in writing descriptive text among the eighth-grade students of MTs Tarbiyah Islamiyah Sei Simbar.

The research was conducted at MTs Tarbiyah Islamiyah Sei Simbar. The population of the study consisted of 28 eighth-grade students. Since the population was relatively small, a total sampling technique was employed. Consequently, all members of the population were included as the research sample.

Data were collected using a questionnaire as the primary research instrument. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2017), questionnaire is a list of written questions used to obtain information from respondents. The questionnaire consisted of 15 statements designed to measure students' interest in writing descriptive text. The items were developed based on five indicators of interest, namely feeling, attention, attraction, active involvement, and persistence. Each indicator was represented by three statements.

The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale consisting of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree. Since all questionnaire items were negatively worded, reverse scoring was applied during data analysis. The scores ranged from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating a higher level of interest in writing descriptive text.

Before being administered to the respondents, the questionnaire was validated through content validity. Content validity was conducted to ensure that the questionnaire items were relevant to the research objectives and adequately represented the indicators of students' interest in writing descriptive text. The validation process involved expert judgment from an English education lecturer with expertise in language teaching and educational research. The expert reviewed the questionnaire items in terms of clarity, relevance, language appropriateness, and their alignment with the indicators of interest, namely feeling, attention, attraction, active involvement, and persistence. Based on the expert's suggestions and

recommendations, several revisions were made to improve the quality and appropriateness of the instrument before it was distributed to the respondents. The reliability of the instrument was ensured by adapting a previously validated questionnaire framework / by conducting a Cronbach's Alpha reliability test.

The data were analysed by using percentage formula adapted from Sudijono (2011): $P = f / n \times 100\%$

Where:

P = The percentage score per response/indicator

f = The frequency of respondents choosing a specific criterion

n = The total number of respondents (sample)

To facilitate interpretation, the percentage scores were classified into four categories: Very High (80–100%), High (66–79%), Moderate (56–65%), and Low ($\leq 55\%$). The results were then used to determine the overall level of students' interest in writing descriptive text.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study regarding students' interest in writing descriptive text. The data were obtained through a questionnaire administered to 28 eighth-grade students of MTs Tarbiyah Islamiyah Sei Simbar. The analysis focused on five indicators of interest, namely feeling, attention, attraction, active involvement, and persistence, in order to provide a comprehensive description of students' interest in writing descriptive text.

Table 1 The Students' Interest Responses Percentages on Attention

No	Statements	Percentage (%)			
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
1	I do not pay attention when the teacher explains how to write a descriptive text.				75%
2	I often lose focus during descriptive writing lessons.				67,9%
3	I am not interested in listening to instructions about writing				67,9%

descriptive text.		
	Average	70,26% 27,73%

Table 1 presents the results of the attention indicator. The findings show that most students disagreed with the negative statements related to their attention during descriptive writing lessons. For Statement 1, “I do not pay attention when the teacher explains how to write a descriptive text,” 75% of the students selected Disagree and 25% selected Strongly Disagree. Similarly, for Statement 2, “I often lose focus during descriptive writing lessons,” 67.9% of the students chose Disagree, while 32.1% selected Strongly Disagree. In addition, for Statement 3, “I am not interested in listening to instructions about writing descriptive text,” 67.9% of the students selected Disagree and 32.1% selected Strongly Disagree.

These findings indicate that the majority of students paid attention to the teacher’s explanations, maintained their focus during learning activities, and showed willingness to listen to instructions related to descriptive text writing. Since all statements in this indicator were negatively worded, the high percentage of disagreement reflects a positive level of attention among the students. Therefore, it can be concluded that the students demonstrated a relatively good level of attention during descriptive writing lessons.

Table 2. The Students’ Interest Responses Percentages on Attraction

No	Statements	Percentage (%)				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I am not interested in learning how to write descriptive text.				82,1%	17,9%
2	Writing descriptive text does not attract my attention.				67,9%	32,1%
3	I do not feel curious about improving my descriptive writing.				67,9%	32,1%
	Average				72,63%	27,36%

Table 2 presents the students’ responses on the attraction indicator. The findings show that most students disagreed with the negative statements related to their attraction toward writing descriptive text. For Statement 1, “I am not interested in learning how to write descriptive text,” 82.1% of the students selected Disagree,

while 17.9% selected Strongly Disagree. For Statement 2, “Writing descriptive text does not attract my attention,” 67.9% of the students chose Disagree and 32.1% selected Strongly Disagree. Similarly, for Statement 3, “I do not feel curious about improving my descriptive writing,” 67.9% of the students selected Disagree and 32.1% selected Strongly Disagree.

Overall, the average percentage of students who selected Disagree was 72.63%, while 27.36% selected Strongly Disagree. Since all statements in this indicator were negatively worded, the high percentages of disagreement indicate that the students generally showed a positive attraction toward writing descriptive text. The findings suggest that most students were interested in learning descriptive writing, were attracted to writing activities, and had curiosity about improving their writing skills. Therefore, it can be concluded that the students demonstrated a relatively positive level of attraction toward writing descriptive text.

Table 3 The Students’ Interest Responses Percentages on Attention

No	Statements	Percentage (%)				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I do not pay attention when the teacher explains how to write a descriptive text.				75%	25%
2	I often lose focus during descriptive writing lessons.				67,9%	32,1%
3	I am not interested in listening to instructions about writing descriptive text.				67,9%	32,1%
Average					70,26%	27,73%

Table 3 presents the students’ responses on the attention indicator. The findings reveal that most students disagreed with the negative statements related to their attention during descriptive writing lessons. For Statement 1, “I do not pay attention when the teacher explains how to write a descriptive text,” 75% of the students selected Disagree, while 25% selected Strongly Disagree. For Statement 2, “I often lose focus during descriptive writing lessons,” 67.9% of the students chose Disagree and 32.1% selected Strongly Disagree. Likewise, for Statement 3, “I am not interested in listening to instructions about writing descriptive text,”

67.9% of the students selected Disagree, whereas 32.1% selected Strongly Disagree.

In general, the results indicate that most students responded negatively to the unfavorable statements related to attention. On average, 70.26% of the students selected Disagree, while 27.73% selected Strongly Disagree. As all items in this indicator were negatively phrased, these responses reflect a positive tendency in students' attention toward descriptive writing lessons. The findings imply that students generally paid attention to the teacher's explanations, remained focused during classroom activities, and were willing to follow instructions related to descriptive text writing. Thus, it can be inferred that the students showed a good level of attention in learning descriptive writing.

Table 4. The Students' Interest Responses Percentages on Active

No	Statements	Percentage (%)			
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
1	I rarely participate in descriptive writing activities in class.				75%
2	I do not try to share my ideas when writing descriptive texts.				64,3%
3	I prefer to stay silent rather than engage in descriptive writing tasks.				78,6%
Average					72,63%

Table 4 shows the students' responses on the active involvement indicator. The results indicate that most students disagreed with the negative statements about their participation in descriptive writing activities. For Statement 1, "I rarely participate in descriptive writing activities in class," 75% of the students chose Disagree, while 25% chose Strongly Disagree. For Statement 2, "I do not try to share my ideas when writing descriptive texts," 64.3% of the students selected Disagree and 35.7% selected Strongly Disagree. Likewise, for Statement 3, "I prefer to stay silent rather than engage in descriptive writing tasks," 78.6% of the students chose Disagree, while 21.4% selected Strongly Disagree.

In general, the students tended to disagree with all negative statements related to active involvement. On average, 72.63% of the students selected Disagree and 27.36% selected Strongly Disagree. Since all statements were negatively worded, these responses indicate that the students showed positive involvement in descriptive writing activities. The results suggest that most students actively participated in class, were willing to share their ideas, and took part in descriptive writing tasks. Therefore, it can be concluded that the students had a good level of active involvement in learning descriptive writing.

Table 5 The Students' Interest Responses Percentages on Persistence

No	Statements	Percentage (%)				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I easily give up when I find difficulties in writing descriptive text.				75%	25%
2	I do not try hard to finish my descriptive writing assignments.				75%	25%
3	When writing descriptive text is difficult, I prefer to stop working on it.				82,1%	17,9%
Average					77,36%	22,63%

Table 5 presents the students' responses on the persistence indicator. The results show that most students disagreed with the negative statements related to their persistence in writing descriptive text. For Statement 1, "I easily give up when I find difficulties in writing descriptive text," 75% of the students selected Disagree, while 25% selected Strongly Disagree. For Statement 2, "I do not try hard to finish my descriptive writing assignments," 75% of the students chose Disagree and 25% chose Strongly Disagree. Meanwhile, for Statement 3, "When writing descriptive text is difficult, I prefer to stop working on it," 82.1% of the students selected Disagree, while 17.9% selected Strongly Disagree.

Overall, the students tended to disagree with all negative statements related to persistence. On average, 77.36% of the students selected Disagree and 22.63% selected Strongly Disagree. Since all statements in this indicator were negatively worded, these responses indicate that the students generally demonstrated positive

persistence in writing descriptive text. The findings suggest that most students did not easily give up when facing difficulties, made efforts to complete their writing assignments, and continued working on descriptive writing tasks even when they encountered challenges. Therefore, it can be concluded that the students showed a good level of persistence in learning descriptive writing.

Table 6. The Students' Interest in Writing Descriptive Text

No	Indicators	Percentages (%)	Classification	Overall Mean Score	Criteria
1	Feeling	37,85%	Low	35,28%	Low
2	Attention	34,04%	Low		
3	Attraction	34,52%	Low		
4	Active	34,52%	Low		
5	Persistence	35,47%	Low		

Table 6 presents the overall results of students' interest in writing descriptive text based on five indicators: feeling, attention, attraction, active involvement, and persistence. The findings show that all indicators were classified into the low category. The overall mean score of students' interest was 35.28%, indicating that the students generally had a low level of interest in writing descriptive text.

Among the five indicators, the highest percentage was found in the feeling indicator, which reached 37.85%. Although this indicator obtained the highest score, it was still categorized as low. This finding suggests that many students had not yet developed positive feelings or enjoyment toward writing descriptive text. Meanwhile, the lowest percentage was found in the attention indicator, with a score of 34.04%. This result indicates that students tended to show limited attention and concentration during descriptive writing activities.

The attraction and active involvement indicators obtained the same percentage, namely 34.52%, and were both categorized as low. These findings imply that students had limited interest in engaging with descriptive writing activities and were not actively involved in the learning process. Similarly, the persistence indicator achieved a percentage of 35.47%, which was also categorized as low. This result suggests that students tended to demonstrate limited perseverance when facing difficulties in writing descriptive text.

In summary, the findings indicate that students' interest in writing descriptive text remains relatively low across all measured indicators. The low percentages in feeling, attention, attraction, active involvement, and persistence suggest that students may not yet perceive descriptive writing as an engaging and meaningful learning activity. This condition may affect their participation and performance in writing tasks. Therefore, teachers need to implement more creative, interactive, and motivating instructional strategies to enhance students' interest and encourage greater engagement in descriptive writing activities.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that the overall interest of eighth-grade students in writing descriptive texts at MTs Tarbiyah Islamiyah Sei Simbar falls into the low category, with an aggregate mean score of 35.28%. This empirical evidence indicates a substantial gap between instructional expectations and students' actual engagement in writing activities. Interest is a fundamental psychological driver in the learning process; it dictates how students allocate their attention, participate in classroom discourse, and persist when encountering academic hurdles. Hidi and Renninger (2006), through their Four-Phase Model of Interest Development, postulated that early-stage situational interest must be nurtured continuously to evolve into sustained individual interest. Unfortunately, the data suggests this evolution is stagnant among the observed students. The absence of this interest poses a severe challenge, as recent literature consistently affirms that students' intrinsic interest is deeply intertwined with their behavioral engagement, academic motivation, and ultimate learning achievement (Harackiewicz et al., 2016; Schiefele et al., 2019).

When analyzing the specific indicators, 'feeling' achieved the highest score (37.85%), yet it remained categorized as low. This suggests that a vast majority of students at MTs Tarbiyah Islamiyah Sei Simbar do not associate descriptive writing with enjoyment or positive emotional fulfillment. The 'attention' indicator, critically, recorded the lowest score (34.04%). Contextually, this lack of focus may stem from conventional, teacher-centered instructional delivery that fails to capture

the cognitive attention of junior high school students. Pekrun et al. (2017), via the Control-Value Theory of Achievement Emotions, elucidate those negative affective states such as boredom or anxiety during difficult writing tasks, deplete students' cognitive resources, directly impairing their motivation and focus. Without positive emotional reinforcement, students naturally disengage from the learning material.

Furthermore, the indicators of 'attraction' and 'active involvement' (both at 34.52%), along with 'persistence' (35.47%), uniformly exhibit low results. In the reality of the classroom, this manifests as passive behavior where students are reluctant to share ideas and are quick to surrender when facing writing blockages. This passivity is detrimental because writing is an active, iterative process requiring continuous effort. Teng and Zhang (2020), as well as Lee and Hannafin (2016), emphasize that active learner engagement is a prerequisite for achieving robust writing performance and high self-efficacy. The current findings align seamlessly with Fitriani and Susanto (2020), who asserted that students with elevated interest naturally exhibit proactive participation. Similarly, Lestari, Rahmawati, and Putra (2022) concluded that motivation and interest act as the primary catalysts in honing students' writing abilities.

The root cause of this prevalent low interest can be traced to the inherent complexities of writing in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. As highlighted by Hyland (2019), writing demands the simultaneous orchestration of vocabulary selection, grammatical accuracy, and coherent text organization. For the eighth graders at MTs Tarbiyah Islamiyah Sei Simbar, limited vocabulary and difficulties in idea generation transform descriptive writing into an intimidating chore rather than a creative outlet. When students repeatedly face these cognitive barriers without adequate scaffolding or engaging instructional media, their motivation naturally plummets.

To reverse this trajectory, English educators must strategically redesign their pedagogical approaches. Drawing upon the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), teachers can foster intrinsic motivation by fulfilling students' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. By integrating collaborative writing exercises, project-based digital storytelling, or visually

stimulating media into the curriculum, teachers at MTs Tarbiyah Islamiyah Sei Simbar can create a more dynamic, supportive, and enjoyable learning environment. Such interactive strategies are essential to incrementally elevate students' interest, thereby transforming passive learners into active, enthusiastic writers.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to investigate the level of eighth-grade students' interest in writing descriptive texts at MTs Tarbiyah Islamiyah Sei Simbar. Based on the comprehensive data analysis, it can be concluded that the students' interest in writing descriptive texts falls into the low category across all measured indicators. The findings explicitly demonstrate that the students generally struggled with maintaining attention and focus during the writing process, displayed a lack of enjoyment, exhibited low attraction, and were reluctant to participate actively. Furthermore, they tended to easily give up when encountering linguistic and structural difficulties in descriptive writing tasks.

Based on these conclusions, several practical and pedagogical suggestions are formulated. First, English teachers are highly encouraged to transition from conventional teacher-centered methods to more innovative, interactive, and motivating teaching strategies, such as collaborative writing, digital storytelling, or the use of localized visual media. These approaches are vital to fostering a more enjoyable classroom atmosphere that can enhance students' active involvement and persistence.

Second, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations of this study. This research was restricted to a relatively small sample size consisting of only 28 students within a specific Islamic junior high school context, and it focused exclusively on descriptive texts. Therefore, future researchers are suggested to expand the scope of investigation by involving larger and more diverse samples across multiple school contexts. Additionally, future studies could explore the implementation of specific action-based interventions or mixed-method designs to

provide deeper insights into how to effectively resolve low student interest in various English writing genres.

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