



## Analyzing Parts of Speech Mastery of Students of Grade 10 at SMA

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### Abstract

Mastery of parts of speech is a fundamental aspect of English grammar that supports students' ability to construct accurate and meaningful sentences. Despite its importance, many senior high school students still struggle to differentiate word functions and apply them correctly in writing, which creates a gap between the theoretical knowledge of grammar and its practical use in classroom learning. This study aims to analyze the mastery of the eight parts of speech—noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection—among Grade 10 students of SMA Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar. The research employed a descriptive quantitative design with 35 students from class X-3 as participants, selected purposively because they had received basic grammar instruction. Data were collected through a 24-item essay test requiring students to identify and analyze words within sentences. The findings revealed that the overall mean score was 68.14, which falls into the Good category. The highest mastery was found in Adjectives (91.4), Prepositions (88.6), and Nouns (81.4), while the lowest mastery occurred in Verbs (50.0) and Adverbs (50.0). Furthermore, frequency distribution indicated that 42.86% of the students still performed poorly. These results suggest that while some students have strong mastery, many continue to face difficulties, particularly in functional categories such as verbs and adverbs. The study concludes that more contextual and practice-oriented teaching strategies are required to strengthen students' grammar skills and overall English proficiency.

**Keyword:** Parts of Speech; Grammar Mastery; English Learning

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## INTRODUCTION

Language is a central element of human life because it functions as the primary medium of communication, knowledge transfer, and social interaction. Through language, individuals are able to express ideas, convey emotions, and build relationships with others. In the modern era, which is marked by rapid globalization, the ability to communicate across cultures has become increasingly important. Among the many languages used worldwide, English occupies a dominant position as the global lingua franca. It is widely recognized as the language of international communication, business, science, and technology. Because of this status, English is taught as a compulsory subject in most countries, including Indonesia, starting from the lower secondary school level.

In the Indonesian context, English is a core subject in both junior and senior high schools. The curriculum is designed to equip students with the ability to understand and use English effectively, not only in academic settings but also in real-life situations. Senior high school students are expected to develop the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) while simultaneously building their grammatical knowledge as the foundation for these skills. Grammar, which provides the rules governing how words are arranged into meaningful sentences, is therefore an inseparable part of language learning. Without a good understanding of grammar, students will face difficulties in expressing their ideas clearly and accurately, both in spoken and written communication.

One of the most fundamental components of grammar is the parts of speech, which categorize words according to their functions and roles in sentences. According to Mills (2019), there are eight traditional

categories of parts of speech: nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections. These categories help students understand how words interact to form phrases and sentences, thereby enabling them to use the language more effectively. Mulyana (2013) further explains that nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs alone account for more than 99% of the entries in the English dictionary, highlighting their importance in achieving language proficiency. Mastery of parts of speech is not only essential for grammatical accuracy but also supports broader skills such as reading comprehension and writing fluency.

Nevertheless, many senior high school students in Indonesia still encounter difficulties in mastering the parts of speech. At SMA Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar, based on my preliminary observations and teacher reports indicate that Grade 10 students frequently face problems in understanding basic grammatical concepts. Common difficulties include: (1) confusion in distinguishing the functions of words within sentences, (2) frequent errors in word placement within sentence structures, and (3) difficulties in writing English texts due to weak grammatical understanding (Sulastrri, Subroto, & Murni, 2022). These weaknesses affect not only students' performance in grammar-based tasks but also hinder their overall English language proficiency.

Previous studies have also highlighted similar issues. Fitriyana (2011) found that students' ability to use parts of speech in constructing sentences was relatively low, indicating weak mastery of basic grammar. Similarly, Mardhatillah (2020) reported that students' writing skills in using nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs were categorized at a low level. In the same vein, Sulastrri, Subroto, and Murni (2022) revealed that senior high school students faced difficulties in distinguishing word functions, particularly in the categories of verbs and adverbs, which negatively affected their ability to write coherent English texts. Furthermore, Mulyadi (2018) showed that although students were able to recognize nouns and adjectives fairly well, they frequently made errors in the use of prepositions and conjunctions. In addition, Putri (2019) emphasized that weak mastery of parts of speech was correlated with students' poor performance in essay writing, as the sentence structures they produced often failed to follow grammatical rules.

These findings suggest that the mastery of parts of speech remains a persistent challenge for students of SMA Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar, with only limited progress over time. The gap between the expectations of the curriculum and students' actual performance indicates the need for further research, particularly to identify which categories of parts of speech are most mastered and which are the weakest, so that more effective teaching strategies can be designed.

Based on this background, the present study aims to examine the extent to which Grade 10 students of SMA Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar have mastered the eight parts of speech. Specifically, this research seeks to answer two questions: (1) To what extent do the students master the parts of speech? and (2) Which parts of speech are most mastered and which are the weakest? By analyzing students' responses through sentence-based essay tests, this study intends to provide empirical evidence of their strengths and weaknesses in grammar. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights for teachers in designing more targeted instructional strategies, particularly in addressing the categories that students find most difficult, such as verbs and adverbs. Ultimately, improving students' mastery of the parts of speech will positively contribute to their grammatical competence and overall achievement in English language learning.

## METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research design to analyze the mastery of the eight parts of speech among Grade 10 students of SMA Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar. The focus of this study was to determine students' ability to identify and apply parts of speech in English sentences, as well as to find out which categories were most and least mastered. Descriptive quantitative research was chosen because it is suitable for describing students' abilities and presenting them in numerical form (Creswell, 2014).

### Research Design

This study applied a descriptive quantitative research design. A descriptive approach was chosen because the purpose of the research was not to test a hypothesis or establish cause-and-effect relationships, but rather to describe and analyze the current condition of students' mastery of parts of speech. According to Creswell (2014), descriptive quantitative research is appropriate when researchers aim to present facts systematically and accurately using numerical data.

In this study, the descriptive design was used to analyze students' ability in identifying and applying the eight categories of parts of speech (noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection). The design was also suitable because it allowed the researcher to measure the level of mastery for each category and to compare which parts of speech were most and least mastered by the students.

The research process was carried out in several steps. First, the researcher prepared an essay test consisting of 24 items based on the Grade 10 English syllabus. Second, the test was administered to a sample of students at SMA Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar. Third, students' answers were collected, scored, and tabulated. Finally, the results were analyzed quantitatively to determine the students' overall ability level and their performance in each *categories of parts of speech*.

Thus, the chosen research design provided a clear framework for describing students' strengths and weaknesses in grammar learning, particularly in mastering the parts of speech.

### Research Participants or Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of Grade 10 students of SMA Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar in the academic year 2025/2026. The sample of the study was class X-3, which consisted of 35 students. This class was selected using purposive sampling, with the consideration that these students had already received basic grammar instruction, including parts of speech, in their English classes. According to Jakni (2016), purposive sampling is appropriate when participants are selected based on specific criteria related to the research purpose.

### Instruments

The research instrument was an essay test consisting of 24 items. Each item contained an English sentence, and students were instructed to analyze words within the sentence by identifying their parts of speech. In each sentence, a specific word was underlined, and students were required to determine which part of speech the underlined word belonged to. The test was designed to cover all eight grammatical categories—noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection—with each category represented by three items to ensure equal distribution and balanced measurement.

The test items were adapted from the English syllabus for Grade 10 and constructed to ensure balance across categories, thereby supporting content validity. To further establish validity, the instrument was reviewed by two English language experts, who evaluated the relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of the items in relation to the research objectives. Revisions were made based on their feedback to improve item quality.

Regarding reliability, a pilot test was administered to a group of students with similar characteristics to the research participants. The students' responses were scored using a consistent scoring rubric, and the reliability of the instrument was analyzed using internal consistency measures. The results indicated that the instrument had an acceptable level of reliability, suggesting that it consistently measured students' understanding of parts of speech.

Essay tests are commonly used to measure students' understanding of grammar because they allow deeper analysis of sentence structure and grammatical knowledge (Arikunto, 2006).

### Data Analysis

The students' responses were scored individually by awarding one point for each correct answer. The total score was calculated using the following formula (Arikunto, 2006):

$$\text{Score} = \frac{\text{Correct Answers}}{\text{Total Items}} \times 100$$

The scores of all students were then averaged to determine the overall mastery level. Additionally, the average scores for each category of *part of speech* were calculated to identify strengths and weaknesses. The ability levels were categorized based on Arikunto's classification: Very Good (76–100), Good (55–75), Fair (40–54), Poor (0–39).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Findings

The data collected from 35 students of class X-3 at SMA Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar were analyzed to determine their mastery of the eight parts of speech. Each correct answer was awarded one point, and the total score was calculated using the formula from Arikunto (2006):

$$\text{Score} = \frac{\text{Correct Answers}}{\text{Total Items}} \times 100$$

#### Overall Students' Mastery

The individual scores ranged from 35 to 95. The total score of the 35 students was 2385, with an average of 68,14. Based on Arikunto's classification this result falls into the good category (55-75).

**Table 1.** Overall Students' Test Scores

| Indicator     | Value        |
|---------------|--------------|
| Highest Score | 95           |
| Lowest Score  | 35           |
| Total Score   | 2385         |
| Mean Score    | 68,14 (Good) |

**Table 2.** Frequency Distribution

| No. | Interval | Frequency | %       | Category  |
|-----|----------|-----------|---------|-----------|
| 1.  | 85-100   | 12        | 34.29%  | Very Good |
| 2.  | 75-84    | 2         | 5.71%   | Good      |
| 3.  | 55-74    | 6         | 17.14%  | Good      |
| 5.  | ≤ 54     | 15        | 42.86%  | Poor      |
|     | Total    | 35        | 100.00% | -         |

#### Students' Mastery per Part of Speech

To identify strengths and weaknesses, the average scores for each part of speech were calculated. The results are presented in the following table:

**Table 3.** Students' Mastery of Parts of Speech

| Part of Speech | Mean Score | Category  |
|----------------|------------|-----------|
| Noun           | 81.42      | Very Good |
| Pronoun        | 70.95      | Good      |
| Verb           | 50.0       | Fair      |
| Adjective      | 91.42      | Very Good |
| Adverb         | 50.0       | Fair      |
| Preposition    | 88.57      | Very good |
| Conjunction    | 72.85      | Good      |
| Interjection   | 74.28      | Good      |

### Discussion

The results of the study provide a clear picture of the Grade 10 students' mastery of the eight parts of speech at SMA Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar. The overall mean score of the 35 students was 68.14, which falls into the *Good* category according to Arikunto's (2006) classification. This finding indicates that the students generally possess a moderate understanding of the parts of speech, but there remain significant gaps that hinder their consistent application in English grammar and writing.

In terms of the specific categories, the analysis revealed varying levels of mastery. The highest mean scores were obtained in Adjective (91.4), Preposition (88.6), and Noun (81.4), all of which fall into the *Very Good* category. This suggests that students are more comfortable dealing with concrete word classes that often appear

in simple sentences and are frequently emphasized in English lessons. Similarly, the mastery of Pronouns (71.0), Conjunctions (72.9), and Interjections (74.3) was in the *Good* category, indicating a sufficient, though not excellent, understanding. On the other hand, the weakest performance was found in Verbs (50.0) and Adverbs (50.0), both categorized as *Fair*. This finding shows that students struggle most with words that require them to understand function, tense, and sentence variety, which are often considered more abstract and complex.

The frequency distribution of the overall scores further supports these results. A total of 12 students (34.29%) achieved *Very Good* scores, 2 students (5.71%) were in the *Good* category, and 6 students (17.14%) were classified as *Fair*. Alarmingly, the largest proportion, 15 students (42.86%), fell into the *Poor* category with scores  $\leq 54$ . This distribution highlights that although a portion of the class has excelled, nearly half of the students still face serious challenges in mastering the basic grammar of English, particularly with verbs and adverbs.

These findings directly answer the research questions posed at the beginning of the study. First, the students' overall ability to master the parts of speech is in the *Good* category, but with uneven achievement across categories. Second, the parts of speech most successfully mastered are Adjectives, Prepositions, and Nouns, while the weakest mastery lies in Verbs and Adverbs. This finding is consistent with research by Fitriyana (2011) and Mardhatillah (2020), which reported similar weaknesses among high school students in handling functional words.

The discussion suggests that the gaps in students' mastery are likely linked to instructional emphasis and the nature of the parts of speech themselves. Teachers often prioritize nouns and adjectives in vocabulary lessons, while verbs and adverbs, despite being crucial for accurate sentence construction, receive less focused practice. In addition, students' difficulties in using verbs may stem from the complexity of tense, aspect, and irregular forms, while their struggles with adverbs may be related to limited exposure to authentic usage in reading and writing tasks.

Therefore, it is essential that English teachers at SMA Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar implement more targeted strategies to reinforce the teaching of verbs and adverbs. Classroom activities such as sentence reconstruction, contextual writing exercises, and communicative drills could help students gain better functional control of these categories. By addressing these weaknesses, students' overall grammar mastery and writing skills can be significantly improved.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study on the mastery of parts of speech among Grade X-3 students of SMA Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar, it can be concluded that the students' overall ability falls into the *Good* category with an average score of 68.14. This indicates that the students already possess a fairly good basic understanding, although weaknesses remain in several specific categories. Further analysis shows that the parts of speech most mastered by the students are Adjectives (91.4), Prepositions (88.6), and Nouns (81.4), all of which are classified as *Very Good*. Conversely, the weakest categories are Verbs (50.0) and Adverbs (50.0), which are both classified as *Fair*. These difficulties are likely influenced by the complexity of verb usage, particularly related to tenses, as well as the limited understanding of the functions of adverbs within sentences.

The frequency distribution of scores further supports these findings, where 12 students (34.29%) achieved the *Very Good* category, while 15 students (42.86%) fell into the *Poor* category. This condition demonstrates that although some students have mastered parts of speech very well, a considerable number still face challenges in grasping basic grammar, especially in the use of verbs and adverbs.

This study contributes important empirical evidence regarding students' grammatical mastery and may serve as a valuable reference for English teachers in evaluating and improving instructional strategies. The findings suggest that teaching practices should place greater emphasis on contextualized grammar instruction, particularly in teaching verbs and adverbs through meaningful sentence construction, communicative activities, and real-life language use. Furthermore, this research can be used as a diagnostic basis for designing remedial programs and targeted exercises to address specific grammatical weaknesses. Overall, the study highlights the need for more effective and focused grammar instruction to enhance students' functional understanding of parts of speech within sentence contexts.

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