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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

A. Review of the Related Theories

1. Students' Understanding

a. Definition of Understanding

Students' understanding was the ability possessed by learners to grasp, interpret, and explain the learning material they had received, so that they did not merely memorize, but were also able to apply the knowledge in various situations. This understanding reflected the extent to which students truly comprehended the concepts being learned, as demonstrated through their ability to answer questions, solve problems, and relate the material to their prior knowledge or experiences.

According to Hodsay et al. (2025: 1–2), students' understanding acts as the basis for acquiring a comprehensive understanding of learning materials and solving problems accurately. Similarly, Yufentya et al. (2019: 1–2) defines students' understanding as learners' ability to comprehend concepts, as evidenced by their ability to explain and apply them in appropriate situations. Therefore, students' understanding not only functioned as the basis of the learning process but also reflected their ability to master and apply the concepts they had learned.



In conclusion, students' understanding could be defined as a fundamental cognitive ability that enabled learners to grasp, interpret, and explain learning materials, while also applying the acquired knowledge in various contexts. It went beyond mere memorization, as it reflected the depth of students' comprehension through their ability to solve problems, answer questions, and connect new information with prior knowledge. Supported by the views of Hodsay et al. (2025) and Yufentya et al. (2019), students' understanding functions as a foundation for meaningful learning while reflecting students' mastery in understanding and applying concepts effectively.

b. Kinds of Students' Understanding

According to Salmento (2021: 67) the kinds of students' understanding divided into 3, that are:

1) Declarative Understanding

Declarative understanding referred to students' basic knowledge of concepts or rules. At this level, students were able to recognize, recall, and state information, but they did not fully understand how to apply it in practice. This type of understanding was often associated with memorization of facts or grammatical rules. For example, students knew that verbs in the simple present tense required the addition of -s/-es/-ies for third person singular subjects, but they still made errors when using them in sentences.

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2) Procedural Understanding

Procedural understanding referred to students' ability to apply their knowledge in performing tasks or solving problems. At this level, students were not only able to recall rules but also used them correctly in practice. This meant that students could construct sentences using appropriate grammatical structures based on their understanding. For instance, students were able to use the correct verb forms in simple present tense sentences, such as adding -s or -es for third person singular subjects.

3) Epistemic Understanding

Epistemic understanding referred to a deeper level of understanding in which students were able to explain, analyze, and evaluate their knowledge. At this level, students understood not only how to use rules but also why those rules were applied in certain contexts. They were able to identify errors, justify their answers, and make corrections when necessary. For example, students could explain why a verb must change form in a particular sentence and could correct incorrect usage.

c. Indicators of Students' Understanding

The indicators in this research were developed based on the theory proposed by Freeman (2015: 28–31), which states that grammar consists of three aspects, namely form, meaning, and use. In this





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research, the focus was limited to the form aspect, particularly the use of verbs in the simple present tense on descriptive texts. Therefore, the indicators were designed to measure students' understanding in using correct verb forms in constructing descriptive sentences. The indicators were as follows:

1) Accuracy in Using Base Verb Forms (V1)

This indicator referred to students' ability to use base verb forms (V1) correctly in simple present tense sentences on descriptive texts. Students were expected to recognize and apply the correct base form of verbs when constructing sentences. This indicated that students understood the basic structure of verbs before applying more complex grammatical rules. According to Parrott (2010: 188–190), the present simple distinguishes between verbs used with third person singular subjects and those used with other subjects. For subjects other than the third person singular, the verb remains in its base form.

Similarly, Carter and McCarthy (2017: 219) explain that the present simple is formed using the base form of a lexical verb for all persons except the third person singular. Therefore, the base verb form is appropriately used with subjects such as I, you, we, and they, as well as plural noun subjects. In this research, students' accuracy in using base verb forms refers to their ability to select and apply the correct uninflected verb

form when constructing simple present tense sentences in descriptive texts.

2) Accuracy in Using Verbs with -s/-es/-ies (Third Person Singular)

This indicator measured students' ability to add the suffixes -s/-es/-ies to verbs when they were used with third person singular subjects such as he, she, and it. Students had to understand when and how this rule was applied in simple present tense sentences. Errors in this aspect usually indicated a lack of understanding of basic grammatical rules. Parrott (2010: 194–196) explains that verbs used with third person singular subjects, such as he, she, it, and singular nouns, take the third-person singular form in the present simple. In general, this form is produced by adding -s to the base verb, while certain verbs require spelling changes.

Similarly, Carter and McCarthy (2017: 219) state that the third person singular form of the present simple is formed by adding -s or -es to the base form, with specific spelling changes for particular verb endings. For example, verbs ending in a consonant followed by -y change the -y to -i before adding -es, as in study → studies. Therefore, students need to understand both the grammatical condition requiring the third-person singular form and the spelling rules involved in forming -s, -es,



and -ies verbs. In this research, this indicator measures students' accuracy in applying these verb-form changes when using third person singular subjects in descriptive texts.

2. Tense in English

Tense was a grammatical category in English that referred to the form of a verb used to indicate the time of an event or activity, such as past, present, and future. Tense was not only related to time, but also described the relationship between the time of the event and the time of speaking. In its use, tense was very important in communication because it helped speakers and listeners understand when an event occurred clearly and accurately. Therefore, mastering tense was one of the fundamental aspects of learning English grammar.

According to Napratilora & Siagian (2019: 23) tense is a grammatical category that modifies verb forms to indicate when an action or event occurs, especially in everyday communication. This meant that tense helped speakers express whether an action happened regularly, was happening at the moment, or had already happened in the past.

Furthermore, tense had been widely discussed in linguistic studies. According to Jabbari (2013: 244), tense is a grammatical category that expresses the time of an event or situation within a language. More recent studies also emphasized that tense played an essential role in conveying meaning accurately in context.





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Based on the discussion above, tense was a fundamental grammatical category in English that indicated the time of an event or action and reflected the relationship between the occurrence of the event and the moment of speaking. It played a significant role in communication by helping speakers and listeners identify when an action occurred. Therefore, a solid understanding of tense was essential for learners to use English accurately, effectively, and appropriately in both spoken and written communication.

3. Simple Present Tense

a. The Definition of Simple Present tense

Simple present tense was a basic grammatical form in English used to express actions or situations that happen regularly, repeatedly, or are generally true. It was commonly used to describe daily activities, habits, and facts that do not change over time. In addition, the simple present tense showed that an action occurred in the present time and was not limited to a specific moment. Therefore, it was widely used in everyday communication to convey clear and simple information about routines and general conditions.

According to Napratilora and Siagian (2019: 29), the simple present tense is used to indicate actions, events, or conditions that occur at the present time. It is considered as one of the most commonly used tenses in daily communication because it helps

speaker express actions that occur regularly or habitually. In addition, Gumelar and Bangkit (2023: 1) emphasizes that the simple present tense is a fundamental grammatical tense that students need to master in order to write descriptive texts effectively. This indicated that understanding the simple present tense was essential for learners to communicate effectively.

Furthermore, several studies highlighted the importance of simple present tense in English learning. Lase and Laoli (2023: 2) points out that the simple present tense plays an important role in writing, particularly in descriptive texts, where accurate and clear descriptions are required. Similarly, Napratilora and Sarah (2025: 299) highlights that the simple present tense is an essential grammatical form used in both spoken and written communication, requiring students to have a good understanding of its forms and correct usage. Therefore, mastering simple present tense was crucial for students to avoid errors and to convey meaning clearly in communication.

Taken together, the simple present tense was a fundamental element of English grammar that served to express habitual actions, general truths, and situations taking place in the present. It played an important role in both spoken and written communication, especially in describing daily activities and general facts. Various studies also emphasize that the simple





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present tense is a fundamental tense that must be mastered by learners, particularly in writing descriptive texts. Therefore, a good understanding of the simple present tense was essential for students to use English accurately, avoid errors, and communicate their ideas clearly and effectively.

b. Kinds of Sentences in Simple Present Tense

Simple present tense was expressed through different sentence forms to show meaning in communication. It could be classified into three kinds of sentences, namely affirmative, negative, and interrogative, as follows:

1) Affirmative Sentences

According to Azar and Hagen (2017: 3–6), an affirmative sentence is a sentence that conveys positive information or expresses a statement without negation.

The following presented the formula of affirmative sentences in the simple present tense along with their examples to clarify their structure and usage in English.

- S + V1 (for I, You, We, They)
- S + V1 + s/es (for He, She, It)

Examples:

- I eat rice every day.
- She eats rice every day.

2) Negative Sentences

According to Murphy (2019: 126), a negative sentence is a type of sentence that expresses the denial or negation of an event or piece of information.

The following presented the formula of negative sentences in the simple present tense along with their examples to clarify their structure and usage in English.

- S + do not + V1 (for I, You, We, They)
- S + does not + V1 (for He, She, It)

Examples:

- I do not eat rice every day.
- She does not eat rice every day.

3) Interrogative Sentences

According to Swan (2016: 2–3), an interrogative sentence can be defined as a sentence that functions to ask questions and follows a particular grammatical structure, such as the yes/no question form.

The following presented the formula of interrogative sentences in the simple present tense along with their examples to clarify their structure and usage in English.

- Do + S + V1? (for I, You, We, They)
- Does + S + V1? (for He, She, It)



Examples:

- Do you eat rice every day?
- Does she eat rice every day?

c. Rules in Simple Present Tense

Rules in the simple present tense were grammatical guidelines that regulated how sentences were formed, including subject-verb agreement and the use of auxiliary verbs. These rules were important to ensure that sentences were grammatically correct and clearly conveyed meaning. According to Swan (2016: 25) accurate construction of the simple present tense requires the correct use of verb forms and auxiliary verbs. Based on Swan's explanation, the main rules of the simple present tense could be explained as follows:

1) Subject-Verb Agreement

In the simple present tense, the verb must agree with the subject. For third person singular subject such as he, she, and it, the verb takes the suffix -s/-es/-ies.

Example:

- She works every day.
- He goes to school by bus.

2) Use of Verb Agreement

The verb generally remains in its base form (V1) for subjects I, you, we, and they.





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Example:

- I study English every day.
- They play football on weekends.

3) Use of Auxiliary Verbs (Do/Does)

Auxiliary verbs do and does are used to form negative and interrogative sentences.

- Do (I, you, we, they)
- Does (he, she, it)

Example:

- Negative: She does not like coffee.
- Interrogative: Does she like coffee?

4) Functions of Simple Present Tense

The simple present tense is used to express:

- Habitual actions (I wake up at 5 a.m.)
- General truths (The sun rises in the east.)
- Scheduled events (The class starts at 8 a.m.)

d. Adverbs in Simple Present Tense

Adverbs of frequency were one of the important grammatical elements in the simple present tense because they indicated how frequently an action or event took place. Common examples, such as always, often, sometimes, and never, enabled speakers and writers to express habits, routines, and repeated activities more precisely. In terms of sentence structure, these adverbs were

generally placed before the main verb, whereas they followed the verb to be. Solihin et al. (2023: 154–155) explained that learners needed to understand adverbs of frequency because their correct use supported mastery of the simple present tense, particularly when describing routine actions and everyday activities.

Likewise, Mahmud (2025: 11) pointed out that adverbs of frequency, including *always*, *often*, and *never*, were closely connected with the simple present tense since they strengthened its function in expressing habitual actions and general facts. A proper understanding of both their meaning and placement therefore helped learners produce grammatically accurate and meaningful sentences.

Taken together, the previous studies indicated that adverbs of frequency formed an essential part of the simple present tense because they enabled speakers and writers to express the frequency of actions clearly and accurately. Their appropriate use also contributed to the construction of well-formed sentences. Accordingly, this study considered students' understanding of adverbs of frequency as one of the aspects to be examined, particularly in relation to their ability to use correct verb forms when writing descriptive texts.



4. Descriptive Text

Descriptive text is one of the text types used to present information about a particular person, animal, place, object, or other specific entity. Rather than explaining an event or telling a sequence of experiences, this type of text directs the reader's attention to the features of the subject being described. The information may include physical appearance, qualities, characteristics, parts, location, or other details that help readers understand the subject. In other words, descriptive text enables a writer to present a subject through carefully selected details so that the reader can develop a clear picture of it. Siregar and Dongoran (2020: 81–90) identify descriptive writing through its generic structure and language features, including identification, description, the use of simple present tense, specific participants, adjectives, and other grammatical elements.

The main purpose of descriptive text is to give readers a detailed representation of a particular subject. The writer does not merely mention the name of the subject but provides information that distinguishes it from other subjects. For example, when describing a school, the writer may explain its location, physical appearance, facilities, teachers, and learning environment. Through these details, readers can gain a more complete understanding of the subject even though they do not directly observe it. Thus, the effectiveness of a descriptive text depends on the writer's ability to select relevant characteristics and organize them in a clear manner.



a. Generic Structure of Descriptive Text

Descriptive text generally has two major structural components, namely identification and description. Siregar and Dongoran (2020: 81–90) use these two components as indicators in assessing students' descriptive writing.

1. Identification

Identification serves as the introductory part of the text. In this section, the writer introduces the particular person, animal, place, object, or other entity that will become the subject of the description. The information presented at this stage is generally brief because its main function is to establish the topic before the writer provides more detailed information.

2. Description

Description constitutes the main part of the text because it elaborates on the subject introduced in the identification section. This section may contain information about the subject's appearance, characteristics, qualities, parts, behavior, location, or other relevant aspects. The details should be related to the subject and arranged in a way that allows readers to understand the object more clearly.

b. Language Features of Descriptive Text

Apart from its organization, descriptive text has particular linguistic characteristics. Siregar and Dongoran (2020: 81–90)



identify several language features associated with descriptive writing, including the use of specific participants, simple present tense, attributive and identifying processes, adjectives, and classifiers in nominal groups. Based on these characteristics, the major language features relevant to descriptive text can be explained as follows.

1. Specific participants

Descriptive text normally focuses on a particular participant rather than referring to people, animals, places, or objects in a general sense. The participant may be a specific person, a particular place, a certain animal, or an identifiable object. For instance, Borobudur Temple, my cat, and my English teacher refer to particular entities.

2. Simple present tense

The simple present tense is commonly employed to state characteristics, conditions, habits, and general facts concerning the subject. This tense is particularly suitable for descriptive writing because the information being presented often describes qualities or conditions that are considered generally true. Pratiwi, Susilawati, and Wardah (2020: 76) identify the simple present tense as one of the language features of descriptive text. This linguistic feature is especially relevant to the present study



because the research focuses on students' understanding of simple present tense verb forms in descriptive texts.

3. Adjectives

Adjectives are important in descriptive writing because they provide information about the qualities or characteristics of the subject. Words such as beautiful, large, friendly, clean, tall, and comfortable can be used to make a description more specific. Through the use of appropriate adjectives, writers can communicate the physical or personal characteristics of the subject more clearly.

4. Linking or relational verbs

Descriptive texts frequently use linking or relational verbs to connect a subject with information about its characteristics, identity, or possession. Examples include is, am, are, has, and have. For example, in the sentence The classroom is clean, the verb is connects the subject with its characteristic. Similarly, The school has a large library provides information about one of the school's facilities.

5. Action verbs

Action verbs may be used when the writer needs to describe activities, habits, or behaviors associated with the subject. Examples include study, work, play, live, and teach. When these verbs are used in the simple present tense, their form



must agree with the subject. This aspect is relevant to the present research because incorrect verb forms may affect the grammatical accuracy of descriptive sentences.

6. Detailed noun phrases

Descriptive writing can employ noun phrases containing additional information to make the subject more specific. For example, a large school building, long black hair, and a clean and comfortable classroom provide more information than a single noun. The use of detailed noun phrases therefore contributes to the completeness of a description.

7. Adverbs

Adverbs can provide additional information about the subject's behavior, activities, location, or frequency. For example, expressions such as usually, often, carefully, and there can add contextual information to a description. Their use can make the description more precise and informative.

c. The Use of Simple Present Tense in Descriptive Text

The simple present tense has an important role in descriptive writing because descriptions frequently concern facts, characteristics, conditions, and habitual information about a particular subject. Pratiwi, Susilawati, and Wardah (2020: 76) include the simple present tense among the language features of descriptive text. In addition, research conducted by Fauzi (2020:



120) specifically examined students' use of the simple present tense in descriptive texts and found that students produced various errors in using this tense.

In relation to verb forms, the use of the simple present tense requires attention to the relationship between the subject and the verb. With plural subjects or subjects such as I, you, we, and they, the verb generally appears in its base form, for example, They live in Bekasi. With a third-person singular subject such as he, she, it, or a singular noun, the verb generally takes the appropriate third-person singular form, for example, She lives in Bekasi. Therefore, understanding the relationship between subjects and verb forms is essential for producing grammatically accurate descriptive sentences.

This aspect is directly connected to the present research, which focuses on students' understanding of two forms of simple present tense verbs: the use of base verbs (V1) and the addition of **-s/-es/-ies** with third-person singular subjects. The focus is therefore not on all grammatical aspects of descriptive writing but specifically on students' ability to select the appropriate verb form in accordance with the subject.



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d. Example of Descriptive Text

My Lush Hometown

My hometown is a small and peaceful village. It is surrounded by green trees, rice fields, and beautiful gardens. The village has a fresh atmosphere and a quiet environment. Many people in my hometown know each other and live together peacefully.

My hometown has wide rice fields that look green during the planting season. Several trees grow along the roads and make the village feel cool and shady. There is also a small river that flows near the village. The water is clear, and some people use the river for their daily activities. The people in my hometown are friendly and helpful. They often work together to clean the village and help their neighbors.

In the morning, farmers usually work in the rice fields, while some residents take care of their gardens. The village becomes more peaceful in the afternoon when people return home from their activities. I love my hometown because it has a beautiful natural environment and a warm community. Its green surroundings, fresh air, and peaceful atmosphere make it a comfortable place to live.



B. Review of Related Findings

Several previous studies have investigated the use of the simple present tense in English language learning from different perspectives, including students' ability, understanding, and grammatical errors. One of these studies was conducted by Andriani (2019) in a study entitled *An Analysis on Students' Ability in Using Simple Present Tense at XI Grade of SMA N 1 Kampar*. The purpose of the study was to examine students' ability to use the simple present tense. The findings indicated that the students' overall ability was still at a low level. Specifically, Andriani (2019: 74–75) reported that the average score for using the simple present tense of the verb *be* was only 33.89%, whereas the average score for using verbs reached 57.04%. The study also found that students frequently encountered problems with subject–verb agreement and the use of auxiliary verbs in negative and interrogative sentences. Although both studies employed written tests to investigate the simple present tense, Andriani's research focused on students' ability, whereas the present study examined students' understanding of simple present tense verbs in descriptive texts, particularly in relation to the correct use of verb forms.

Another relevant study was carried out by Sernawawi and Maharani (2022) under the title *The Analysis of Students' Error in Using Simple Present Tense in Writing Descriptive Text*. Their research sought to identify both the types and causes of students' errors in using the simple present tense when writing descriptive texts. The results showed that grammatical errors remained common among students. In particular, Sernawawi and Maharani (2022: 154–



155) found that omission errors occurred most frequently, especially in the use of -s/-es endings for third-person singular subjects as well as the auxiliary verbs *do* and *does*. These findings supported the present study by suggesting that students' grammatical errors reflected insufficient understanding of simple present tense rules. Nevertheless, unlike the previous study, which concentrated on error analysis in writing, the current research focused on students' understanding of verb forms in the simple present tense within descriptive texts.

A further study conducted by Marantika et al. (2022), entitled *An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Understanding Simple Present Tense at Tenth Grade Students of SMK*, explored the difficulties experienced by students in learning the simple present tense. The researchers reported that students encountered problems in several areas, including concepts, functions, sentence patterns, and time signals. Among these aspects, sentence patterns were identified as the greatest challenge, particularly with regard to correct verb forms and subject–verb agreement (Marantika et al., 2022: 245–247). This study shared similarities with the present research because both investigated vocational high school students' understanding of the simple present tense. However, while Marantika et al. focused on identifying learning difficulties, the present research specifically examined students' understanding of verb forms used in descriptive texts.

Taken together, the previous studies demonstrated that many students continued to experience difficulties in mastering the simple present tense,



particularly in applying appropriate verb forms, maintaining subject–verb agreement, and using auxiliary verbs correctly. Although earlier research had investigated students' ability, errors, and learning difficulties, studies that specifically examined students' understanding of simple present tense verb forms in descriptive texts remained limited, particularly in vocational high schools. For this reason, the present study was conducted to enrich previous research by analysing the understanding of tenth-grade students at SMK Negeri 1 Tembilahan in using simple present tense verbs in descriptive texts.

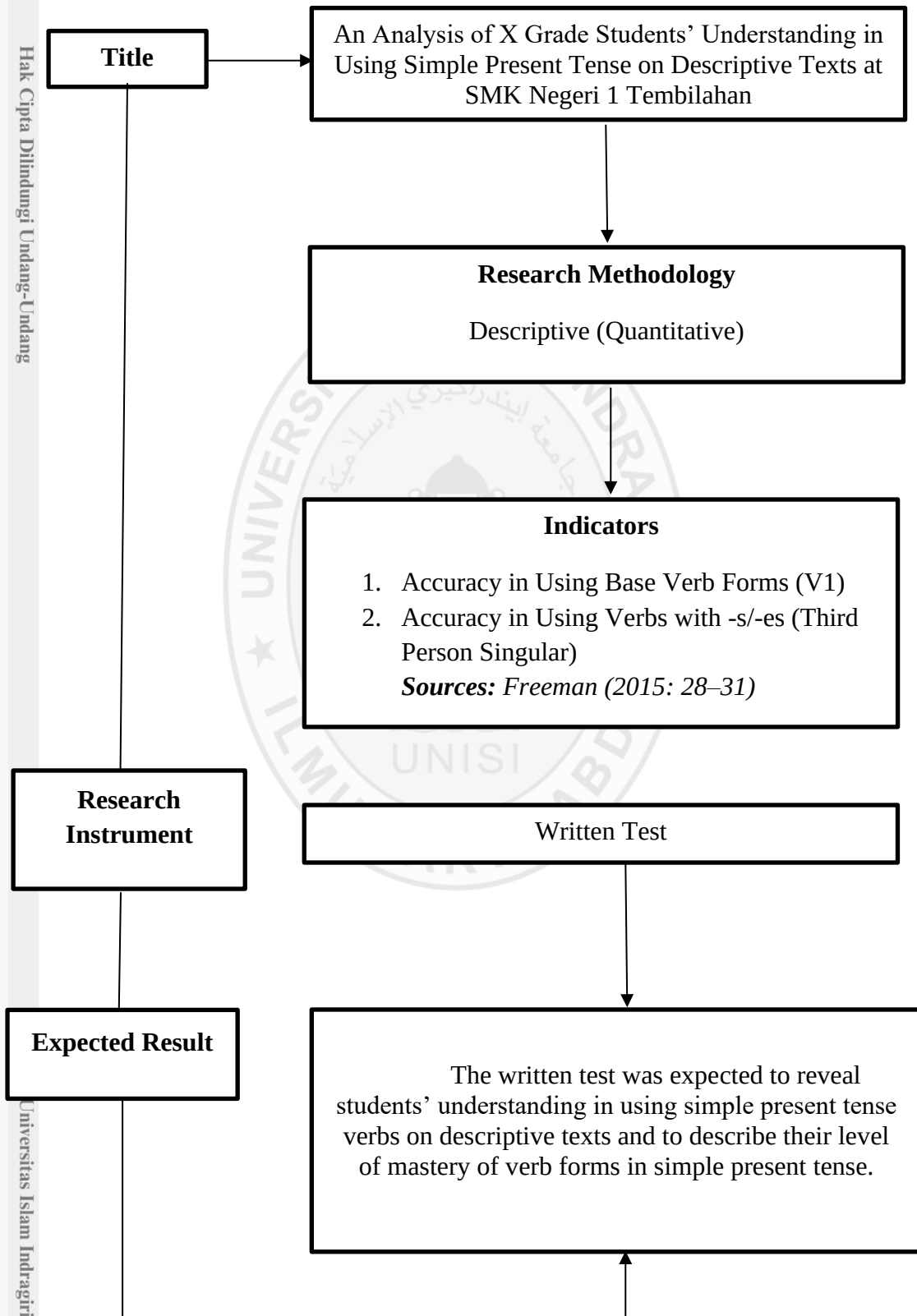


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C. Conceptual Framework



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The conceptual framework of this research illustrates that students' understanding of the use of simple present tense verbs was examined through two main indicators. The first indicator assessed students' ability to use base verb forms (V1) accurately in simple present tense sentences, while the second indicator evaluated their ability to apply the -s/-es/-ies verb endings correctly for third-person singular subjects, such as he, she, and it. Both indicators were derived from the form aspect of grammar, with particular emphasis on the use of verbs in the simple present tense. Accordingly, this study sought to analyze the understanding of tenth-grade students at SMK Negeri 1 Tembilahan in using simple present tense verbs in descriptive texts.



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