

TOPIC RELEVANCE AND RESEARCHABILITY IN EFL WRITING: A REVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES

Arinda Syarani¹, Naura Naziva², Pratiara Amalya Fasa³, Aszri Musdhafid⁴, Aswadi Jaya⁵, Min-Jae Park⁶

^{1,2,3,4,5}Universitas PGRI Palembang, Indonesia

⁶Seoul Global University, South Korea

*Corresponding author: arindaarin3@email.com

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji relevansi topik dan kelayakan penelitian (researchability) dalam pembelajaran EFL writing melalui metode studi literatur. Data diperoleh dari berbagai jurnal ilmiah terbaru yang membahas isu-isu terkini dalam penulisan bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemilihan topik yang relevan berperan penting dalam meningkatkan motivasi, keterlibatan, dan kemampuan menulis peserta didik. Selain itu, aspek researchability menentukan keberhasilan penelitian melalui kejelasan fokus, ketersediaan data, dan kesesuaian metode. Temuan juga menunjukkan bahwa integrasi teknologi dan penggunaan konteks dunia nyata menjadi tren utama dalam pengembangan pembelajaran EFL writing. Dengan demikian, pemahaman mengenai relevansi topik dan researchability sangat penting bagi peneliti dan pendidik dalam menghasilkan penelitian dan praktik pembelajaran yang efektif.

Kata kunci: EFL writing, topic relevance, researchability, current issues

Abstract

This study aimed to examine topic relevance and researchability in EFL writing through a literature review method. The data were collected from recent scholarly journals discussing current issues in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing. The findings revealed that selecting relevant topics played a significant role in enhancing students' motivation, engagement, and writing performance. In addition, researchability determined the feasibility of research through clear focus, data availability, and appropriate research methods. The study also found that technology integration and real-world contexts were major trends in current EFL writing instruction. Therefore, understanding topic relevance and researchability was essential for both researchers and educators in producing effective research and instructional practices.

Keywords: EFL writing, topic relevance, researchability, current issues

1. INTRODUCTION

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing refers to the process through which non-native speakers produce written texts in English across various genres, including academic essays, reports, emails, and creative compositions (Militansina, 2020; Al-Inbari et al., 2023; Arochman et al., 2024). As a core component of language learning, EFL writing is not only concerned with linguistic accuracy such as grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure but

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also with the ability to organize ideas, construct arguments, and communicate meaning effectively. In this sense, writing serves as both a productive language skill and a cognitive activity that supports learners' overall language development and communicative competence (Hyland, 2019; Clark, 2020; Dewi, 2023).

In contemporary educational contexts, the relevance of EFL writing has become increasingly significant. Effective written communication is essential for academic success, professional advancement, and global participation (Zheng, 2024; Ouyang et al., 2024). Consequently, EFL writing is widely recognized as a critical skill that enables learners to express ideas, engage in academic discourse, and participate in international communication. Beyond linguistic development, writing activities also foster higher-order thinking skills, including critical analysis, reflection, and problem-solving, making it a valuable area for both pedagogical practice and academic research (Rahimi & Zhang, 2022; Fadhilah et al., 2023; Moonma, 2021).

Given its importance, EFL writing has emerged as a highly researchable domain with diverse and evolving areas of inquiry. One major focus of recent research is the integration of technology in writing instruction. The increasing use of digital tools such as online writing platforms, automated feedback systems, and collaborative applications has transformed how students learn and practice writing (Azamatova et al., 2023; Dash, 2022; Masita et al., 2024). These technologies provide opportunities for immediate feedback, increased writing exposure, and interactive learning experiences, all of which contribute to improved writing performance (Zhang & Zou, 2023; Sun & Wang, 2023). Moreover, technology-mediated environments enable collaborative writing practices, allowing learners to co-construct knowledge and develop social aspects of writing competence (Anggraini, 2020; Miftah & Cahyono, 2024; Syarifudin, 2023).

In addition to technological developments, current research also highlights the importance of social and cultural dimensions in EFL writing. Peer feedback, collaborative learning, and classroom interaction have been shown to significantly influence students' writing development by promoting engagement and reflective learning. Furthermore, cultural background plays a crucial role in shaping learners' writing styles, rhetorical preferences, and identity expression, indicating that EFL writing is not merely a technical skill but also a socially situated practice.

Despite the growing body of research, challenges remain in fully understanding and addressing the complexities of EFL writing. Issues such as unequal access to technology, varying learner proficiency levels, and differences in instructional approaches continue to affect writing outcomes. Therefore, examining the relevance and researchability of EFL writing is essential to identify current gaps, emerging trends, and future directions in the field.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to review current issues in EFL writing by exploring its relevance in modern educational contexts and identifying key research areas that contribute to its development. By synthesizing existing literature, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how EFL writing continues to evolve as both a pedagogical practice and a research domain.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative literature review design to examine current issues related to topic relevance and researchability in EFL writing (Neuman, 2019; Tisdell et al., 2025; Patton, 2020). The data were derived from recent peer-reviewed journal articles, books,

and scholarly publications focusing on EFL writing, student engagement, language acquisition, and research-based writing practices. The selection of sources prioritized publications from the last decade to ensure the relevance and timeliness of the analysis.

The data collection process involved systematic identification, screening, and selection of literature based on specific inclusion criteria (Mauliddiyah, 2021; Daruhadi & Sopiati, 2024; Anufia, 2019). The selected studies were required to (1) address EFL writing in educational contexts, (2) discuss aspects of topic relevance, student engagement, or research-based writing, and (3) provide empirical or theoretical insights into writing pedagogy. Sources that lacked clear academic relevance or methodological rigor were excluded.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, which involved organizing the literature into key thematic categories related to the focus of the study. These themes included: (1) the impact of topic relevance on student engagement and motivation, (2) the influence of meaningful topics on language acquisition, (3) the connection between EFL writing and real-world applications, (4) the role of researchability in enhancing writing instruction, (5) the contribution of research-based writing to language education, and (6) the influence of researchability on pedagogical practices.

Through this analytical process, patterns, similarities, and differences across studies were identified and synthesized to provide a comprehensive understanding of how relevance and researchability shape EFL writing practices. This approach allows the study to move beyond isolated findings and develop an integrated perspective on current issues in EFL writing.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied source triangulation by comparing multiple scholarly perspectives and cross-referencing key concepts across different studies. This methodological approach aligns with qualitative research principles that emphasize depth of analysis, contextual understanding, and interpretive rigor (Creswell, 2018).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study, derived from the analysis of recent literature on EFL writing, reveal a strong interconnection between topic relevance and researchability as key factors influencing both instructional effectiveness and research quality. One of the most significant findings is that topic relevance plays a crucial role in enhancing students' engagement and motivation. When learners are given writing tasks that relate to their personal experiences, interests, or real-life contexts, they tend to participate more actively and show greater enthusiasm in the writing process. This heightened engagement contributes to improved writing performance, particularly in terms of idea development, coherence, and overall communicative clarity (Hyland, 2020). These findings suggest that emotional and cognitive connection to a topic is essential for meaningful learning in EFL writing contexts.

In addition to motivation, topic relevance also has a direct impact on language acquisition. The literature indicates that students who engage with meaningful and contextually rich topics are more likely to use vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structures in authentic ways. This natural and contextualized language use supports deeper learning and leads to more effective language development compared to tasks that rely on abstract or less meaningful content (Brown, 2021). In this sense, relevant topics function not only as motivational tools but also as pedagogical strategies that facilitate language acquisition.

Furthermore, the integration of real-world applications in EFL writing instruction strengthens the connection between classroom learning and practical language use. The use of authentic materials such as articles, digital media, and real-life scenarios—enables students

to understand how English is used beyond the classroom. This approach enhances the meaningfulness of learning and aligns with contemporary educational practices that emphasize contextualized and applied knowledge (Creswell, 2018). As a result, students are better prepared to use English in academic, professional, and social settings.

Alongside topic relevance, researchability emerges as a critical dimension in determining the success of EFL research topics. The findings indicate that well-defined, focused, and methodologically feasible topics are more manageable and produce more reliable outcomes. In contrast, topics that are too broad often create challenges in data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Zhang & Zou, 2023; Li, 2024). This highlights the importance of balancing relevance with feasibility, as a topic must not only be interesting but also practically researchable within given constraints such as time, data access, and methodological suitability.

The role of technology also appears as a dominant trend in both EFL writing instruction and research. Digital tools and platforms provide opportunities for interactive learning, peer collaboration, and immediate feedback, all of which contribute to improved writing skills. In addition, technology expands the scope of researchable topics by introducing new areas such as online writing environments, AI-assisted writing, and digital literacy. However, this advancement also brings challenges related to unequal access to technological resources, which may affect both teaching practices and research outcomes (Lee, 2021).

Moreover, incorporating researchability into writing instruction contributes significantly to the development of students' critical thinking skills. Through research-based writing tasks, students learn how to analyze information, evaluate sources, and construct evidence-based arguments. These competencies are essential not only for academic success but also for future professional contexts where analytical and communicative skills are highly valued.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that topic relevance and researchability are interconnected and mutually reinforcing components in EFL writing. Relevant topics enhance engagement and language learning, while researchability ensures that writing and research processes are systematic, feasible, and meaningful. Therefore, both educators and student researchers need to carefully consider these aspects in designing writing tasks and selecting research topics. By doing so, they can create more effective learning environments and produce higher-quality academic work that is both meaningful and methodologically sound.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights that EFL writing remains a significant area of research with both ongoing challenges and promising opportunities. The findings indicate that issues such as the lack of consensus on effective teaching methods and limited focus on specific writing skills continue to affect the quality of EFL writing instruction. However, these challenges also open opportunities for further innovation and improvement in teaching practices.

The study also emphasizes the importance of topic relevance and researchability in shaping meaningful and effective EFL research. Relevant topics enhance student engagement and motivation, while researchable topics ensure the feasibility and validity of the study. Therefore, both aspects must be carefully considered by researchers and educators.

In terms of pedagogical implications, EFL writing instruction should incorporate personalized feedback, collaborative learning, and the integration of technology to support students' writing development. The use of real-world writing tasks and diverse genres can also enhance students' ability to apply their language skills in practical contexts. Furthermore, peer feedback and revision activities can foster a supportive learning environment and improve students' critical thinking and writing abilities.

Finally, further research is needed to explore innovative teaching strategies, the impact of digital tools, and cross-cultural aspects of writing development. By continuously improving research and instructional practices, educators can better prepare students to become proficient and confident writers who are able to communicate effectively in a globalized world.

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