

## TRANSFORMING WRITING INSTRUCTION: ENGAGING AND ACCESSIBLE STRATEGIES FOR UNIVERSITY-LEVEL BEGINNERS

Tiara Noviarini<sup>1)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Syari'ah Mitra Karya  
[Tiaranoviarini140315@gmail.com](mailto:Tiaranoviarini140315@gmail.com)

---

### Abstrak

Effective writing instruction remains a persistent challenge in higher education, particularly for students who are beginning to write in a foreign language. Many learners struggle with both linguistic competence and psychological barriers such as fear of making mistakes and lack of confidence. These challenges are often intensified by rigid, teacher-centered pedagogical approaches that fail to accommodate diverse student needs. This study aims to explore and analyze engaging and accessible writing instruction strategies for beginner university students. Writing in an academic context using a foreign language presents unique difficulties. Conventional, monotonous teaching methods often fall short in addressing psychological barriers such as anxiety and lack of motivation. Using a qualitative case study approach involving students at STIES Mitra Karya, this research identifies that interest-based strategies, the use of simple visual media, and collaborative learning can significantly enhance both student motivation and writing quality. The analysis reveals noticeable improvements in paragraph structure, sentence transitions, vocabulary, grammar, and writing fluency. Students also exhibited more positive attitudes toward writing activities. The findings highlight the importance of transforming writing instruction into an inclusive and enjoyable learning process and underscore the critical facilitative role of instructors in creating a supportive learning environment.

**Kata kunci:** writing instruction, engaging strategies, beginner students, writing learning, case study

---

©Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FKIP UM Palembang

### Introduction

In recent years, there has been growing attention toward the quality of academic writing among university students, particularly in non-native English-speaking countries like Indonesia. With the increasing emphasis on 21st-century skills, such as communication, creativity, and critical thinking, the ability to write effectively in English is no longer optional—it is essential. However, despite ongoing curriculum reforms and technological advancements in education, many students at the beginner university level continue to struggle with academic writing tasks.

Writing is one of the most complex and challenging language skills to master at the university level (Lama & Suhodolli, 2024). According to Christina (2021) and Yuliawati (2021), effective writing requires the mastery of various

linguistic components such as grammar, vocabulary, and paragraph structure, as well as the development of critical thinking skills to organize ideas logically. Unfortunately, many students demonstrate a lack of readiness to meet academic demands related to writing, especially in English as a foreign language (Noviarini, 2025). Writing skills are not only associated with technical ability but also with psychological factors such as confidence and motivation in writing (Song & Song, 2023). Many students experience anxiety when asked to write due to fear of making mistakes or feeling they lack sufficient ideas. This results in low-quality writing and reluctance to engage in sustained writing activities (Zhang et al., 2023). These challenges are exacerbated by monotonous and unresponsive writing instruction methods that often focus solely on

grammar rules without fostering creativity and contextual understanding (Ouafae Benzizoune & Mounir Chibi, 2024). This situation indicates that conventional approaches have yet to fully succeed in improving students' writing skills comprehensively.

The difficulty in writing is also observable in the broader context of Indonesian higher education (Bt Sharatol Ahmad Shah & Astrid, 2023), where writing is often regarded as a skill important only for final assignments such as theses or research reports. This perception leads students to undervalue the importance of writing skills early in their academic journey. When confronted with formal writing tasks, students tend to produce work with minimal logical structure and grammatical accuracy (Taye & Mengesha, 2024). This reveals a gap between academic expectations and the actual abilities of students. Furthermore, writing instruction that does not align with students' initial proficiency levels causes them to quickly feel frustrated and lose motivation. There is a need for teaching approaches that emphasize not only the final product but also a gradual and enjoyable learning process (Santiago Sanchez, 2024). It is crucial to integrate methods that support idea exploration, technology use, and student collaboration. A supportive and non-judgmental learning environment can boost students' confidence in expressing themselves through writing (Syahputra, 2024); Jaya et al (2025).

Previous studies have shown that writing instruction strategies involving creative activities, visual media, and active student engagement can significantly enhance learning motivation. Strategies such as free writing, reflective journals, and peer feedback provide opportunities for students to explore ideas without excessive pressure. Such activities create

an inclusive learning atmosphere and encourage students to be more open to the writing process. Additionally, the use of technology, including blogs, digital presentations, and grammar assistance tools, contributes to familiarizing students with writing activities. Through technology, students can write on platforms they know and enjoy, thereby reducing their reluctance to write. Nevertheless, the implementation of these strategies requires intensive guidance from instructors to maintain academic focus. Therefore, instructors need to adopt a facilitative approach that frames writing as a learning process rather than merely a task to be completed.

Transforming writing instruction is an essential step in addressing the challenges faced by beginner students in developing academic writing skills. This transformation involves not only replacing old teaching methods but also redesigning learning experiences to suit the needs and characteristics of today's students. In the context of an increasingly digital education landscape, it is vital for educators to design adaptive learning strategies oriented towards developing critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills. Writing instruction can no longer be separated from the social and technological dynamics influencing how students learn and communicate. Hence, a more humanistic and flexible approach is required to foster students' love for writing activities. This study aims to explore and analyze engaging and accessible writing instruction strategies and evaluate their impact on the motivation and writing quality of beginner university students.

### **Research Methodology**

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach through a case study design to investigate engaging and

accessible writing instruction strategies for beginner university students. The participants were 29 undergraduate students enrolled in an English writing course at STIES Mitra Karya during the 2024/2025 academic year. The research focused on observing the learning process and analyzing changes in students' writing performance before and after the implementation of the instructional strategy.

The data sources consist of primary data, including classroom observation, semi-structured interviews with the instructor, and students' writing samples; and secondary data such as syllabi, lesson plans (RPS), and references from previous journals and literature.

Observations were conducted participatively, with the researcher present directly during the teaching and learning process to record methods, interactions, and student responses. Interviews were carried out face-to-face, lasting 20–30 minutes, to explore the instructor's perspectives on the effectiveness of the applied strategy.

Student writing documents were analyzed in two phases: before and after the strategy implementation, to examine developments in structure, vocabulary, and idea fluency.

Data analysis was performed in three stages: data reduction, data presentation in the form of narratives and tables, and drawing conclusions. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and member checking with the instructor to confirm the researcher's interpretations.

This approach is expected to provide a holistic view of the effectiveness of experience-based writing teaching strategies. The results from this methodology form the basis for a deeper understanding of the challenges in writing and efforts to improve the

academic writing competence of beginner students.

## Results and Discussion

### *Engaging Writing Teaching Strategies for Beginner Students*

Based on interviews with the writing course instructor and student feedback, it was found that a writing teaching strategy employing an interest-based approach significantly fosters students' emotional and intellectual engagement. This strategy emphasizes the relevance between the writing topics and students' personal experiences, allowing them to feel more connected to the material they write about.

In implementing this strategy, the instructor used triggering questions such as, "Have you ever experienced an event that made you rethink something?" Such questions proved effective in evoking students' memories and feelings, making the writing process more reflective and meaningful. One instructor stated that these questions consistently encouraged students to be more open and honest in expressing their thoughts and experiences.

Interviews with students revealed positive responses toward this strategy. One student expressed, "*I feel that writing is not just a campus assignment, but a means to convey what's in my heart.*" This statement indicates that the teaching strategy not only increased learning motivation but also transformed students' perceptions of writing as an authentic form of self-expression.

Documentation of students' writing supports these findings. In narrative writings themed around personal experiences, improvements were observed in several aspects, including:

1. Significant increase in writing length. On average, student compositions grew from 300–400 words to 600–800 words per assignment, indicating

- high enthusiasm and fluency in expressing ideas.
2. Stronger emotional expression. Students' writings reflected deep feelings through the use of emotional diction and a reflective narrative style.
  3. Ownership of ideas. Students demonstrated personal involvement with their topics, evident in how they structured arguments and developed touching and coherent storylines.
  4. Creativity in language use. Students showed more courage in employing metaphors, idioms, and distinctive storytelling styles that were previously rare in their usual writing tasks.

For example, in one narrative assignment, a student wrote about losing a parent due to the pandemic. The piece not only contained a clear and structured storyline but also effectively conveyed grief and an inspiring process of recovery. Such writings illustrate students' ability to integrate life experiences into their work effectively.

In addition to improved writing quality, the classroom atmosphere also changed positively. Students became more open in discussions, provided constructive feedback to peers, and were willing to read their works aloud in front of the class. This fostered self-confidence and social skills that supported collaborative learning.

Overall, the study's results show that the interest-based writing teaching strategy can enhance both the process and product quality of beginner students' writing. This strategy is not only effective in improving technical writing skills but also plays a role in developing students' affective competencies such as empathy, self-reflection, and courage in self-expression. Therefore, this approach can be considered a relevant pedagogical alternative in teaching writing at the higher education level.

### *Accessible and Practical Teaching Strategies*

Interviews with the course instructor revealed that the teaching strategies used in the writing class do not rely on advanced technology or complex digital platforms. Instead, they utilize simple, easily accessible media that have proven effective in stimulating student interest and responses. This approach is designed to remain inclusive of students' facility limitations, especially in higher education environments with limited technological infrastructure.

Some of the media used in the learning process include:

1. Trigger images, such as illustrations of a person in a dilemma or symbolic illustrations, are used as stimuli to initiate initial discussions and encourage students to relate the images to their personal experiences. These images stimulate diverse interpretations from each student, which then serve as raw material for narrative or reflective writing.
2. Short infographics, such as statistical data about youth phenomena, student mental health, or popular social issues, are presented to raise students' awareness of real issues relevant to their lives. These infographics also encourage students to develop critical perspectives and sharpen their expository and argumentative writing skills.
3. Short videos lasting 1–2 minutes, covering themes like campus life, adolescent challenges, or inspirational stories, are used to build emotional connections before writing activities begin. These videos function not only as introductions but also evoke empathy and spontaneous ideas that enrich students' writing.

Additionally, documentation in the Semester Learning Plan (RPS) and learning activity notes show that the

instructor consistently applies collaborative learning methods such as peer review and collaborative writing. In practice, students are asked to exchange writings, read each other's work, and provide direct feedback. This process not only strengthens relationships among students but also improves the quality of writing through peer-based revision.

Student writing documents provide evidence of annotations or direct comments from classmates, including praise, suggestions for improvement, and critical questions. For example, one assignment document contains comments such as, "*Your story is interesting, but the conflict part could be made clearer to better engage the reader.*" Such comments encourage students to reconsider the structure and content of their writing more deeply.

Interviews also revealed that students felt significant benefits from this process. Most stated that they felt more confident and motivated to improve their writing after receiving peer feedback. The fear of evaluation diminished because they felt they were in a supportive and safe learning environment.

Furthermore, students reported that this collaborative strategy fostered a sense of ownership of their writing. They not only felt responsible for their own work but also felt valued when providing constructive feedback to others. This created an interactive, open, and participatory classroom atmosphere.

Overall, this accessible and practical teaching approach has proven effective in encouraging active student participation, improving writing quality, and building important social and emotional competencies in the writing learning process. The simplicity of the media used does not reduce the strategy's effectiveness; rather, it strengthens the closeness between the

teaching material and the realities faced by students in their daily lives.

### *Impact of the Strategy on Students' Motivation and Writing Outcomes*

Analysis of student writing documents before and after the implementation of interest-based and collaborative learning strategies showed significant improvements in both the quality of writing and students' attitudes toward writing activities. These improvements were evident quantitatively in linguistic aspects and qualitatively in students' motivation and engagement.

The following table 1 summarizes a comparison of several key aspects of students' writing:

Table 1. aspects of students' writing

Writing Aspect	Before Intervention	After Intervention
Paragraph Structure	Incoherent, ideas shift abruptly	More logical flow, each paragraph has a clear focus
Sentence Transitions	Weak or absent	Uses logical conjunctions such as "because," "however"
Vocabulary Choice	Limited, repetitive	Varied, contextually appropriate
Grammar	Many basic grammatical errors	Fewer errors, especially in tense usage
Length of Writing	100–150 words, minimal idea expansion	300–500 words, broader idea exploration

These changes did not occur instantly but resulted from a continuous process involving class discussions, personalized guidance, and intensive revision activities based on feedback from both instructors and peers. Students began to understand that writing is a gradual process involving idea

development, structuring, and language refinement.

Interviews with students revealed positive changes in their motivation and attitude toward writing. One student stated:

*“...more open to criticism and happy when my writing is read by others.”*

This statement reflects a shift from a passive and reluctant attitude to an active and enthusiastic approach to the writing process. Students no longer viewed writing merely as an academic task but as a form of self-expression with personal and social value.

Enthusiasm was also apparent in the reflective writings collected during the learning process. Several students wrote about their experiences with genuine emotion and honesty. One quote exemplifies this transformation:

*“At first, I didn’t like writing, but now I look forward to the next writing assignment.”*

This shows that the strategy implemented not only affected writing techniques but also changed students’ perceptions of writing into an enjoyable and meaningful activity. Confidence grew alongside their improving skills, especially when they received recognition for their work from instructors and peers.

## Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that a writing instruction strategy oriented toward students’ interests can enhance their engagement in the learning process. This approach provides students with the opportunity to express ideas relevant to their personal experiences, which indirectly increases their motivation to complete writing assignments. This aligns with Maspul, (2023) concept of interest-based learning, which emphasizes the importance of topic relevance in second

language acquisition . Furthermore, the use of visual media such as images and videos has proven effective in assisting students to generate ideas, construct narratives, and enhance the appeal of their writing. This strategy offers visual stimuli that facilitate students, particularly beginners, in initiating the writing process.

Collaborative writing activities, such as peer review and group writing, also foster a more interactive and supportive learning environment. This approach supports Vygotsky’s social constructivism theory, which posits that social interaction plays a crucial role in the development of cognitive skills, including language learning.

Improvements observed in students’ writing, particularly in terms of structure, vocabulary, and grammar, demonstrate that this strategy not only builds motivation but also enhances the quality of learning outcomes. Students who were initially reluctant to write began to show greater willingness to experiment with more complex sentence structures and diction. This suggests that appropriate instructional strategies can gradually promote the development of academic skills. In this context, instructors as facilitators play a key role by providing constructive feedback and creating a supportive learning atmosphere.

These findings corroborate previous studies by Aljuaid (2024) and Noviarini (2025), which assert that structured and responsive writing instruction tailored to student needs is highly effective in higher education contexts, especially in institutions with limited resources such as STIES Mitra Karya. Therefore, accessible, engaging, and collaborative teaching strategies can serve as a model for developing English writing curricula in private universities.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that writing instruction strategies centered on student interests significantly enhance learner engagement and motivation. By allowing students to connect writing topics to their personal experiences, the approach fosters deeper cognitive and emotional investment in the learning process. The use of simple yet effective visual media, such as images and short videos, facilitates idea generation and narrative development, especially for novice writers. Collaborative activities like peer review and group writing further contribute to a supportive and interactive classroom environment. These methods align well with established theories, including interest-based learning and Vygotsky's social constructivism. The improvement in students' writing quality, particularly in structure, vocabulary, and grammar, reflects the positive impact of these teaching strategies on academic skills development. Constructive feedback from instructors plays a pivotal role in guiding students through iterative revisions and skill refinement. These findings offer a practical and scalable model for English writing curriculum development in private universities. Future research is recommended to examine the long-term effects of interest-based and collaborative writing pedagogy on students' academic performance, writing autonomy, and self-confidence. Additionally, further studies could explore the integration of digital tools and multimedia resources to enhance engagement and writing proficiency, as well as investigate the applicability of these strategies across diverse cultural and institutional contexts.

## References

- Aljuaid, H. (2024). The Impact of Artificial Intelligence Tools on Academic Writing Instruction in Higher Education: A Systematic Review. *Arab World English Journal*, 1(1), 26–55. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/chatgpt.2>
- Bt Sharatol Ahmad Shah, S., & Astrid, A. (2023). | 868 Students' Levels and Challenges in Writing Discussion Sections of Theses. *JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, 11(4), 868–878. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v%vi%i.8699>
- Christina, F. (2021). Correlating Vocabulary and Sentence Structure Mastery towards Students' Writing Skill in Descriptive Text. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Cultural Studies*, 4(1), 47–56.
- Jaya, A., Hartono, R., Wahyuni, S., Yulianto (2025). Los efectos de la estrategia de aprendizaje basado en proyectos con actividad física en función del género sobre el rendimiento escolar y la confianza en sí mismos de los estudiantes. *Retos* (66). <https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v66.110067>
- Lama, A., & Suhodolli, M. (2024). Challenges in mastering academic writing: a case study of English language learners at the university for business and technology. *Edelweiss Applied Science and Technology*, 8(6), 84–99. <https://doi.org/10.55214/25768484.v8i6.1707>
- Maspul, K. A. (2023). Incorporating Student Interests and Project-Based Learning to Promote

- Engaging and Sustainable Educational Experiences in Indonesia. *Jurnal Pendidikan LLDIKTI Wilayah 1 (JUDIK)*, 03(02).
- Noviarini, T. (2025). ELT-Lectura: Studies and Perspectives in English Language Role of Theme-Rheme Analysis in Developing Academic Literacy Skills in Senior High School Students in Pringsewu. In *ELT-Lectura* (Vol. 12, Issue 1).
- Ouafae Benzizoune, & Mounir Chibi. (2024). The Effectiveness of Using Kahoot in Reinforcing Grammar and Writing for Ibn Tofail University EFL Students. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 6(4), 103–113. <https://doi.org/10.32996/jeltal.2024.6.4.11>
- Santiago Sanchez, H. (2024). Teacher-written feedback in L2 writing education: Insights into student tensions and responses. *Feedback Research in Second Language*, 2, 58–80. <https://doi.org/10.32038/frsl.2024.02.04>
- Song, C., & Song, Y. (2023). Enhancing academic writing skills and motivation: assessing the efficacy of ChatGPT in AI-assisted language learning for EFL students. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1260843>
- Syahputra, M. (2024). An Analysis Of Self-Concept In Students' Writing Performance Of English Department At Bbg University. *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Education, Science Technology and Health 2nd ICONESTH 2024 Universitas Bina Bangsa Getsempena*, 1339–1348.
- Taye, T., & Mengesha, M. (2024). Identifying and analyzing common English writing challenges among regular undergraduate students. *Heliyon*, 10(17). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e36876>
- Yuliawati, L. (2021). The Effects Of Vocabulary And Grammar Mastery On Students' Writing Skill. *Journal of English Language Learning (JELL)*, 5(2), 113–118. <https://doi.org/10.31949/jell.v5i2.3450>
- Zhang, Y., Darmi, R. H., Li, X., & Qian, J. (2023). An investigation of foreign language writing anxiety and its reasons among pre-service EFL teachers in Pakistan. *Frontiers Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.947867>