



DESCRIPTIVE WRITING PEDAGOGY THROUGH THE LENS OF LEARNING TO LEARN

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ABSTRACT

This study examines descriptive writing pedagogy through the lens of learning-to-learn, focusing on higher education students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. The research aims to explore how reflective learning, learner autonomy, and metacognitive strategies contribute to more creative and student-centered writing instruction. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) guided by the PRISMA framework. Fifteen peer-reviewed articles published between 2019 and 2025 were analyzed and thematically categorized into four domains: reflective learning, writing pedagogy, creative writing, and online writing. The findings reveal that integrating learning-to-learn principles fosters critical thinking, reflective practice, and writing fluency while enhancing engagement through digital and multimodal tools. These results highlight the relevance of holistic, adaptive, and inclusive writing pedagogy that empowers students to become autonomous and reflective learners. This study contributes to the field of Indonesian Language and Literature Education by offering conceptual insights into how writing instruction can evolve to support long-term learning awareness, creativity, and educational equity in language classrooms.

Keywords: descriptive writing; learning-to-learn; reflective learning; student autonomy; writing pedagogy

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a fundamental skill in language learning, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Among various types of texts, descriptive writing is frequently taught as it requires learners to observe, select, and organize information in a structured and meaningful way. However, writing descriptively presents challenges beyond linguistic knowledge; it demands logical reasoning, organization, and reflective thinking (Kaharuddin, 2022). Therefore, effective pedagogy must bridge linguistic proficiency with cognitive and metacognitive strategies to support learners' development. To address the challenges of descriptive writing, several pedagogical strategies have been explored. One effective technique is the use of mind mapping, which helps learners visually organize their ideas, facilitating the construction of coherent descriptive paragraphs (Le, 2023). Similarly, the use of digital tools like Canva has been shown to enhance creativity in the writing process through visual planning (Hernandez-Maza, 2023). Meanwhile, the integration of paraphrasing tools such as QuillBot is perceived positively by both students and teachers, as it supports idea reformulation and strengthens writing autonomy (Mohammad, 2024).

Beyond these visual and technological aids, the metacognitive dimension in writing instruction has gained increasing attention. The *learning to learn* approach offers a framework where learners are seen as active agents of their learning, emphasizing self-awareness, planning, and reflection (Supiani, 2023; Wilson, 2024). Through this lens, writing is not merely about producing text, but also about developing one's learning strategies and monitoring the process. The practice of self-assessment, for example, has proven effective in improving language accuracy and fostering reflective habits (Suciati, 2023).

Collaborative strategies, particularly peer feedback, have also contributed significantly to students' writing development and metacognitive engagement. By engaging in giving and receiving feedback, learners are prompted to evaluate both their own work and that of their peers, leading to more thorough revision processes and greater responsibility in learning (Xhafaj, 2023; Illana-Mahiques, 2021). Additionally, the use of rubrics in peer and self-assessment clarifies learning expectations and supports goal-oriented writing behaviors.

In conjunction with reflective and collaborative practices, technology-enhanced learning environments have also emerged as powerful platforms for writing pedagogy. Social media, particularly Facebook, has been utilized as a space for meaningful written interaction among EFL learners. Prior research demonstrates that online group discussions can foster an informal but constructive writing community, where learners share, revise, and develop ideas collectively (Rahman, 2019; Qunayeer, 2020; Herrera, 2024). This digital interaction not only enhances writing fluency but also builds learner confidence and engagement.

Despite the growing array of pedagogical innovations in writing instruction, there remains a lack of systematic integration between descriptive writing pedagogy and the principles of *learning to learn*. This gap is significant, considering that the combination of effective writing strategies with self-directed learning habits holds the potential for more meaningful and sustained learning (Pastora, 2023). The absence of this integrated focus calls for deeper inquiry into how metacognitive and reflective practices can be embedded within descriptive writing instruction.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate how descriptive writing pedagogy can be developed through the lens of learning to learn. It focuses on exploring instructional strategies that support reflective, collaborative, and technology-enhanced learning environments in the context of EFL classrooms. The findings are expected to contribute to a more holistic model of writing instruction that not only emphasizes written outcomes but also promotes learners' awareness and autonomy in the learning process.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to explore how learning-to-learn principles can be integrated into descriptive writing pedagogy for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The review process followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework to ensure methodological transparency and replicability (Haddaway et al., 2022). The search was conducted across academic databases including Google Scholar, ERIC, ResearchGate, and ScienceDirect, using combinations of keywords such as “descriptive writing,” “learning to learn,” “EFL writing,” “metacognitive awareness,” “learner autonomy,” “reflective practice,” “peer feedback,” “creative writing,” and “digital tools for writing instruction.”



A total of 558 articles were initially identified, comprising 500 from Google Scholar and 58 from Scopus-indexed journals. The inclusion criteria were: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles, (2) published between 2019 and 2025, (3) written in English or Bahasa Indonesia, (4) directly related to descriptive writing pedagogy or reflective and autonomous learning in EFL contexts, and (5) available in full-text. Exclusion criteria included articles that did not focus on writing instruction, were not pedagogically relevant, or lacked conceptual alignment with the learning-to-learn framework. After removing duplicates, screening abstracts, and evaluating full texts for relevance, a total of 15 articles were included in the final review. This selection process is visualized in a PRISMA flow diagram.

The 15 selected articles were organized into a matrix to record the authors, research focus, method, main findings, and thematic categorization. Thematic analysis was conducted manually by grouping studies into four core categories: Reflective Learning, Writing Pedagogy, Creative Writing, and Online Writing. Each article was examined based on its emphasis on metacognitive awareness, learner autonomy, and reflective practices, as well as the specific writing techniques or tools discussed, such as peer feedback, storytelling, visual planning, and digital platforms. The analysis emphasized conceptual synthesis, highlighting emerging instructional trends and theoretical intersections relevant to EFL writing pedagogy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The systematic literature review yielded 15 studies that met the inclusion criteria, encompassing diverse methods, focuses, and findings relevant to the integration of learning-to-learn principles into descriptive writing pedagogy for EFL learners. The selected studies spanned publication years from 2019 to 2025 and reflected global scholarly interest in reflective, creative, and technology-enhanced writing instruction. The thematic analysis grouped the studies into four main categories: Reflective Learning, Writing Pedagogy, Creative Writing, and Online Writing. These categories emerged from a close reading of the stated research objectives, methodological approaches, and reported outcomes.

Of the 15 articles, four were categorized under Reflective Learning. Artioli (2021) conducted a qualitative meta-synthesis and found that reflective writing enhances metacognition and critical thinking. Markkanen (2020) used a theoretical and qualitative approach to examine reflective cycles in education, revealing how cyclical reflection helps students manage learning challenges. Melvina (2021) employed a mixed-methods design and demonstrated that promoting learner autonomy encourages independent learning. Supiani (2023), through qualitative interviews, found that self-assessment improves accuracy and promotes deeper reflection in EFL writing classrooms.

Four articles were categorized under Writing Pedagogy. Khasawneh (2024) used a survey-based method to examine automated writing assessment, finding it useful in evaluating writing despite some limitations. Mohammad (2024) explored the use of paraphrasing tools like QuillBot in a qualitative study, concluding that AI can support writing development among EFL learners. Suciati (2023) conducted a pilot study on rubric-based peer feedback, which was shown to enhance writing competence and reflection. Nasir (2019) provided a descriptive study on the alignment between EFL teaching and learning, emphasizing how integrative models strengthen literacy instruction.

Six articles focused on Creative Writing. Ramírez (2024), through a comparative study, found that story-based writing increased students' creativity and comprehension. Le (2023) used a quasi-experimental method and demonstrated the effectiveness of mind mapping in improving idea organization and clarity. Kong (2023) adopted a design-based research approach using Scratch animation to stimulate creative thinking in writing. Hernandez-Maza (2023) conducted an experimental study using Canva, which motivated students to express themselves more creatively in writing. Mottaghizadeh (2020) applied statistical analysis to investigate vocabulary interference, showing its impact on writing fluency and coherence. Kusumawardhani (2023) showed through a qualitative study that incorporating short stories via YouTube improved students' descriptive writing skills.

Only one study was classified under Online Writing. Qunayeer (2020), through a case study, found that online peer writing on Facebook increased students' engagement and reflection during the writing process.

Table 1. Summary of Reviewed Articles Based on Focus, Method, Result, and Thematic Category

| No | Author | Focus | Method | Result | Categorization |
|----|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1 | Artioli, G. (2021) | Reflective writing in learning | Qualitative meta-synthesis | Enhances metacognition and critical thinking | Reflective Learning |
| 2 | Markkanen, P. (2020) | Reflective cycle in education | Theoretical & qualitative | Helps students manage learning challenges through cyclical reflection | Reflective Learning |
| 3 | Melvina, M. (2021) | Autonomy in EFL learning | Mixed methods | Encourages independent learning and autonomy | Reflective Learning |
| 4 | Supiani, S. (2023) | Self-assessment in EFL writing | Qualitative interview | Improves accuracy and reflection in writing | Reflective Learning |
| 5 | Khasawneh, M.A.S. (2024) | Automated writing assessment | Survey-based | Assists the writing assessment process despite its limitations | Writing Pedagogy |
| 6 | Mohammad, T. (2024) | Paraphrasing with QuillBot | Qualitative study | AI supports the development of EFL students' writing | Writing Pedagogy |
| 7 | Suciati, S. (2023) | Rubric-based peer feedback | Pilot study | Enhances writing competence and reflection | Writing Pedagogy |
| 8 | Nasir (2019) | EFL teaching and learning alignment | Descriptive study | The integrative model strengthens literacy instruction | Writing Pedagogy |



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|----|---------------------------|------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|------------------|
| 9 | Ramírez, (2024) | N.B. | Story-based creative writing | Comparative study | Increases creativity and text comprehension | Creative Writing |
| 10 | Le, L.A.T. (2023) | | Mind mapping for descriptive writing | Quasi-experimental | Improves idea organization and writing clarity | Creative Writing |
| 11 | Kong, S.C. (2023) | | Scratch animation for writing | Design-based research | Stimulates creative thinking in writing | Creative Writing |
| 12 | Hernandez-Maza, B. (2023) | | Using Canva in writing | Experimental | Motivates creative written expression | Creative Writing |
| 13 | Mottaghizadeh, I. (2020) | | Vocabulary interference in writing | Statistical analysis | Vocabulary interference affects writing fluency and coherence | Creative Writing |
| 14 | Kusumawardhani, P. (2023) | | Short stories via YouTube | Qualitative | Short stories via digital media enhance writing skills | Creative Writing |
| 15 | Qunayeer, H.S. Al (2020) | | Online peer writing on Facebook | Case study | Increases engagement and reflection in online writing | Online Writing |

Discussion

The analysis of the selected studies shows a strong alignment between current research in EFL writing instruction and the core principles of the learning-to-learn paradigm, particularly in the development of reflective, autonomous, and creative writing practices. The most prominent theme, Reflective Learning, underlines the significance of metacognition and self-regulated strategies. Artioli (2021) and Markkanen (2020) provide compelling evidence that structured reflective cycles enhance critical thinking and assist learners in managing challenges independently. These findings echo the broader literature, which views reflection as not merely a supportive strategy but a foundational aspect of effective writing instruction (Le, 2023; Hernandez-Maza, 2023). The concept of learner autonomy, as emphasized by Melvina (2021), aligns with the learning-to-learn model by promoting student agency in the writing process. Similarly, Supiani (2023) shows that self-assessment not only improves writing performance but also encourages learners to think metacognitively about their linguistic choices. This confirms previous research asserting that autonomy and reflection function symbiotically in developing long-term writing competence (Kaharuddin, 2022; Mohammad, 2024).

In the Writing Pedagogy category, the findings reveal a growing interest in the integration of technological tools and feedback mechanisms. Studies by Khasawneh (2024) and Mohammad (2024) show how automated writing assessment and paraphrasing tools can support writing instruction, especially when combined with human-guided reflection. However, they also caution against overreliance on such tools without adequate scaffolding. Suciati (2023) and Nasir (2019) reinforce the value of rubric-based feedback and curriculum alignment, respectively, highlighting the

importance of structure in enabling students to internalize writing strategies notion supported by previous studies (Wilson, 2024; Supiani, 2023).

The Creative Writing studies reveal that engagement and expressive freedom play vital roles in the development of writing skills. Ramírez (2024), Le (2023), and Kong (2023) highlight that story-based tasks and visual thinking strategies (such as mind mapping and animation) can significantly improve writing clarity and stimulate creativity. These findings are supported by Illana-Mahiques (2021) and Xhafaj (2023), who advocate for imaginative writing as a means to bridge cognitive development with emotional engagement. Furthermore, Hernandez-Maza (2023) and Kusumawardhani (2023) show that digital media like Canva and YouTube can foster creative expression, which aligns with the holistic learning-to-learn goal of empowering learners to find personal voice and meaning in their writing.

Finally, the Online Writing study by Qunayeer (2020) contributes to an emerging perspective that digital platforms can provide effective environments for collaborative writing and feedback exchange. By engaging students in social writing contexts such as Facebook groups, learners develop not only technical skills but also interpersonal and reflective competencies. This aligns with Pastora (2023) and Herrera (2024), who emphasize the intersection between digital literacy and reflective language learning.

Taken together, these findings suggest that integrating learning-to-learn principles into descriptive writing pedagogy supports the development of adaptable, critical, and expressive writers. The diverse methodological approaches across the studies, ranging from experimental and quasi-experimental to design-based and theoretical, underscore the multifaceted nature of writing instruction in EFL settings. Furthermore, the balance between reflection, creativity, and digital engagement points to a pedagogical shift that values student agency and contextual relevance in language learning.

This review not only supports the theoretical importance of the learning-to-learn framework in writing pedagogy but also provides practical examples of its implementation across different tools, techniques, and instructional designs. Future studies may benefit from expanding these insights into classroom-based interventions that measure long-term learner outcomes, particularly in multilingual and digitally mediated environments.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that integrating the learning-to-learn framework, especially through reflective learning, learner autonomy, and creative engagement, has strong potential to enhance the effectiveness of descriptive writing instruction in EFL contexts. The thematic synthesis of 15 recent articles revealed that metacognitive strategies such as self-assessment, reflective cycles, and independent learning foster critical thinking and long-term learning awareness. Furthermore, the incorporation of digital tools and multimodal techniques (such as peer feedback, AI-based paraphrasing, mind mapping, and creative storytelling) significantly supports both the cognitive and expressive dimensions of writing.

These findings highlight the importance of adopting pedagogical approaches that are student-centered, adaptive, and inclusive. By promoting agency, creativity, and reflection, the learning-to-learn paradigm contributes not only to the improvement of writing competence but also to the holistic development of learners as autonomous, critical, and reflective individuals. Therefore, educators and curriculum developers are encouraged to embed these principles systematically in writing instruction, particularly



in higher education settings where lifelong learning skills are essential. Future applied research is needed to operationalize these conceptual insights into classroom practices and to measure their long-term impact across diverse educational and linguistic contexts.

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