

Applying Constructivist: Authentic Project-Based Learning for Increasing Performance in Writing Outcomes

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ABSTRACT

Writing is a complex and essential skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning that requires not only linguistic accuracy but also cognitive engagement, interaction, and reflection. This study aims to examine the relationship between constructivist writing instructional practices implemented through Authentic Project-Based Learning (A-PBL) and students' writing performance outcomes. Employing a quantitative quasi-experimental one-group pre-test-post-test design, the study involved 35 first-semester undergraduate students enrolled in a Writing course at Universitas Islam Syekh Yusuf. Data were collected through writing performance tests assessing contextual, interactive, and reflective writing, as well as a questionnaire measuring students' engagement in constructivist practices, including brainstorming, collaborative writing, peer feedback, real-world writing tasks, and instructional scaffolding. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, multiple regression analysis, and Canonical Correlation Analysis (CCA). The findings reveal a statistically significant multivariate relationship between constructivist learning practices and writing performance outcomes, with interactive and reflective writing emerging as the most strongly influenced dimensions. Although contextual writing did not show a direct significant effect, it functioned as a foundational component supporting higher-level writing engagement. The study concludes that constructivist-oriented writing instruction, particularly through A-PBL, effectively promotes interactive and reflective writing development and provides a theoretically grounded approach for enhancing EFL writing performance in higher education contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Writing skills are widely acknowledged as a crucial component of English language learning, particularly in

higher education contexts where writing functions as a primary medium for knowledge construction and academic communication. Writing is not merely a

linguistic product but a cognitively demanding process that enables learners to generate, organize, and transform ideas into coherent academic discourse. According to (Bitchener & Storch, 2016), writing integrates linguistic competence with higher-order cognitive processes, making it central to the development of academic reasoning and meaning-making. In this sense, writing serves as both a learning tool and an indicator of students' intellectual engagement.

Recent research emphasizes that writing plays a significant role in fostering critical thinking and conceptual understanding. (Manchón, 2017) argues that writing acts as a cognitive tool that promotes deeper processing of information, allowing learners to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate ideas more effectively. Similarly, (Galbraith, 2019) highlights that writing is an exploratory process through which new knowledge emerges as writers reflect on and reorganize their thoughts. In academic settings, writing proficiency is therefore essential, as most forms of assessment such as essays, reports, and research papers depend heavily on students' ability to communicate ideas clearly and logically (Bailey, 2018).

In EFL contexts, the importance of writing skills becomes even more pronounced due to limited exposure to the target language. (Lee, 2020) notes that EFL learners often struggle to bridge the gap between language knowledge and academic writing performance. Furthermore, research indicates that effective writing development requires metacognitive awareness and reflective revision. (Negretti & McGrath, 2018) demonstrate that students who

consciously regulate their writing processes and respond critically to feedback tend to produce higher-quality academic texts. Overall, these studies suggest that writing skills are essential not only for linguistic accuracy but also for academic literacy, critical thinking, and meaningful participation in higher education. Similarly, (Tardy et al., 2021) highlight that academic writing requires students to negotiate content knowledge, rhetorical awareness, and audience expectations, making writing one of the most complex skills in higher education. From a learning perspective, (O'Neill & Grabe, 2020) suggest that writing development is best understood as a recursive and meaning-oriented process, where performance outcomes emerge from sustained engagement with planning, drafting, and revising activities. Therefore, recognizing writing as both an essential and complex skill provides a coherent foundation for examining how writing performance develops in English language learning, particularly in EFL higher education settings.

Thus, Writing is widely recognized as one of the most essential yet complex skills in English language learning, particularly for second or foreign language learners (Jiang & Kalyuga, 2022). Beyond producing grammatically correct sentences, effective writing requires learners to generate ideas, organize them logically, select appropriate vocabulary, and apply linguistic rules to communicate meaning clearly to readers (Graham & Harris, 2018; Hyland, 2019). In academic contexts, writing is considered an advanced skill because it integrates linguistic knowledge with higher-order

thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and argumentation (Schunk, 2020; Teng & Zhang, 2020). Despite extensive research on writing complexity, many studies continue to emphasize accuracy and final products, while giving limited attention to writing as a contextual, interactive, and reflective learning process in EFL higher education (Mulyani et al., 2025).

Studies in EFL contexts consistently report that students experience difficulties in generating ideas, organizing content, using appropriate language, and maintaining coherence and mechanics (Indah et al., 2022; Ruegg, 2018; Widodo, 2016). Similar challenges are observed among students enrolled in Writing courses at Universitas Islam Syekh Yusuf (UNIS). Classroom observations indicate that students often show low engagement, rely heavily on lecturer explanations, and rarely revise their work independently. Writing tasks are frequently perceived as mechanical grammar exercises rather than meaningful communicative activities, which negatively affects students' writing performance and motivation. However, empirical studies that address these challenges within specific institutional contexts, particularly Indonesian private universities, remain limited.

From an instructional perspective, these issues are closely related to the continued dominance of teacher-centered and product-oriented approaches in writing instruction. Such approaches prioritize final texts over the recursive processes of planning, drafting, revising, and reflecting, thereby limiting students' opportunities to actively construct knowledge and develop writing

strategies (Isgiarno et al., 2020). As a result, students often struggle to think critically and to connect factual information with personal interpretation when constructing academic arguments (Sari et al., 2019). Although process-based writing has been widely advocated, its integration with constructivist theory and authentic learning models remains underexplored.

Theoretically, writing aligns closely with constructivist learning theory, which views learning as an active process shaped by learners' interaction with content, peers, and real-world contexts (Fosnot, 2016; Schunk, 2020). In writing instruction, constructivism emphasizes learner-centered activities, collaboration, reflection, and contextualized tasks as key elements of effective learning (Kim & Kim, 2017). Research has shown that constructivist strategies such as brainstorming, collaborative writing, peer feedback, real-world writing tasks, and instructional scaffolding can improve writing performance by supporting idea development, social interaction, and reflective revision (Jiang & Kalyuga, 2022; Storch, 2019; Yu & Lee, 2016). Nevertheless, most studies examine these strategies separately, offering limited insight into how they function collectively to enhance writing performance.

To address this gap, the present study adopts Authentic Project-Based Learning (A-PBL) as a pedagogical model that operationalizes constructivist principles in writing instruction. A-PBL integrates authentic tasks, collaborative inquiry, continuous feedback, and reflective activities, creating meaningful learning experiences that mirror real-world writing practices (Bell, 2015; Guo

et al., 2020; Kokotsaki et al., 2016). Previous studies indicate that A-PBL can enhance writing performance by fostering learner engagement and promoting contextual, interactive, and reflective writing (Guo et al., 2020). However, empirical research that explicitly links A-PBL with constructivist theory and writing performance through a coherent analytical framework remains limited, particularly in EFL higher education contexts.

To clarify the theoretical relationship underlying this instructional approach, the present study visually synthesizes the proposed constructs into a conceptual model. Figure 1 presents the canonical analytical framework of the study, illustrating how constructivist learning practices are operationalized through Authentic Project-Based Learning and how these practices are hypothesized to influence writing performance outcomes.

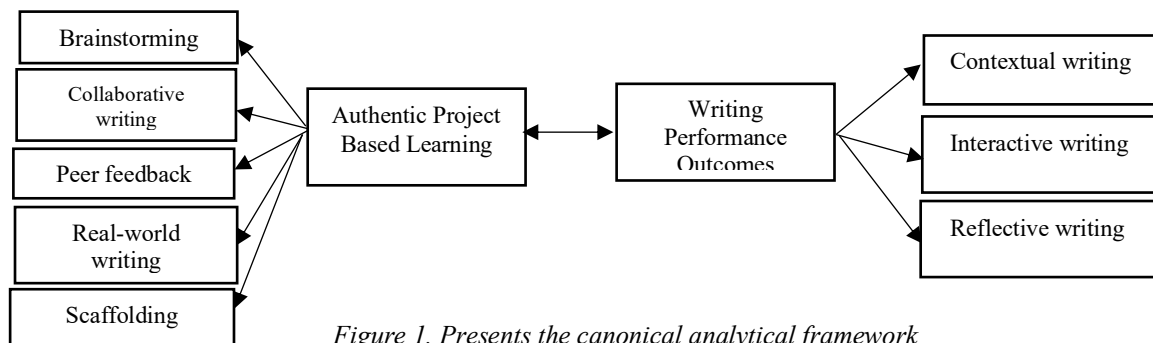


Figure 1. Presents the canonical analytical framework

Accordingly, this study proposes a conceptual framework (Figure 1) that illustrates a canonical relationship between constructivist learning practices including brainstorming, collaborative writing, peer feedback, real-world writing, and appropriate scaffolding and writing performance outcomes, conceptualized as the benefits of contextual, interactive, and reflective writing. The framework highlights that writing development is a dynamic process shaped by cognitive engagement, social interaction, and contextual relevance rather than a linear accumulation of linguistic skills. By grounding writing instruction in constructivist principles through

Authentic Project-Based Learning, this study seeks to provide a theoretically grounded and contextually relevant approach to improving EFL students' writing performance at Universitas Islam Syekh Yusuf.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative quasi-experimental research design with a one-group pre-test–post-test model. The design aimed to examine the effect of constructivist writing instructional practices on students' writing performance over the course of one academic semester. The instructional treatment was grounded in constructivist

learning theory and implemented through Authentic Project-Based Learning, emphasizing active knowledge construction, social interaction, and contextualized writing tasks. The effectiveness of the treatment was analyzed by examining the canonical relationship between instructional practices and writing performance outcomes using Canonical Correlation Analysis (CCA). This design was selected because CCA allows researchers to analyze the relationships between two sets of variables simultaneously without conducting multiple separate correlation tests that may increase the risk of Type 1 error (Nuwan, 2019).

2.2. Participants

The participants consisted of 35 first-semester undergraduate students enrolled in a Writing course at Universitas Islam Syekh Yusuf. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, based on the following criteria: (1) students were officially registered in the Writing course, (2) they had limited prior experience with academic writing in English, and (3) they participated fully in the constructivist-based instructional treatment throughout the semester. First-semester students were considered appropriate participants, as they typically face foundational challenges in writing and therefore provide a relevant context for examining writing development

2.3. Research Instruments

Two main instruments were employed in this study:

1. *Writing performance test*

A pre-test and post-test writing task were administered to measure students'

writing performance. The tasks required students to produce written texts reflecting authentic communicative purposes. Students' writing was assessed using an analytic rubric covering three dimensions: contextual writing, interactive writing, and reflective writing.

2. *Constructivist writing practices questionnaire*

A structured questionnaire was used to capture students' engagement with constructivist instructional practices, including brainstorming, collaborative writing, peer feedback, real-world writing tasks, and instructional scaffolding. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale.

Both instruments were reviewed by experts in EFL writing and educational research to ensure content validity and were pilot-tested prior to implementation.

2.4. Data Collection Procedures

The research was conducted over one academic semester. At the beginning of the semester, students completed a writing pre-test to establish baseline writing performance. Subsequently, students received instructional treatment based on constructivist writing instruction practices, which included:

- 1) Brainstorming activities to activate prior knowledge and support idea generation;
- 2) Collaborative writing tasks to encourage peer interaction and shared meaning-making;
- 3) Peer feedback sessions to promote reflection and revision;
- 4) Real-world writing tasks that connected classroom writing to

- authentic communicative contexts; and
- 5) Instructional scaffolding provided by the lecturer to support students during planning, drafting, and revising stages.

At the end of the semester, a writing post-test was administered using tasks comparable in difficulty and structure to the pre-test. The questionnaire was also distributed to collect data on students' learning experiences during the treatment.

2.5. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. First, descriptive statistics were used to summarize students' pre-test and post-test writing scores. Assumption tests—including normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity—were performed to ensure the suitability of the data for multivariate analysis.

Next, Canonical Correlation Analysis (CCA) was applied to examine the relationship between two variable sets: (1) constructivist writing instructional practices (brainstorming, collaborative writing, peer feedback, real-world writing tasks, and instructional scaffolding) and (2) writing performance outcomes (contextual writing, interactive writing, and reflective writing). The analysis focused on the canonical functions derived from post-test scores, while pre-test scores were used as a baseline reference to interpret writing development following the instructional treatment. Only statistically significant canonical functions were interpreted to explain the multivariate relationship between

instructional practices and writing performance.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Assumption Testing Results

3.1.1. Regression model summary of constructivist learning practices on writing performance outcomes

To examine the overall strength of the relationship between constructivist learning practices—including brainstorming, collaborative writing, peer feedback, real-world writing, and appropriate scaffolding—and writing performance outcomes, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. The summary of the regression model is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Model Summary

Model R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.412	0.170	10.626

Table 1 indicates that the multiple correlation coefficient (R) is 0.412, showing a moderate relationship between the combined constructivist learning practices and writing performance outcomes. The coefficient of determination (R²) of 0.170 suggests that approximately 17.0% of the variance in writing performance outcomes is explained by the five instructional practices included in the model. However, the adjusted R² value decreases to 0.027, indicating that when adjusted for the number of predictors and sample size, the explanatory power of the model becomes relatively weak. The standard error of the estimate (10.626) reflects the average deviation of

observed writing scores from the predicted values.

3.1.2. Overall significance of the regression model

To determine whether the regression model provides a statistically significant prediction of writing performance outcomes, an ANOVA test was conducted. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. ANOVA Results

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	670.241	5	134.048	1.187	0.340
Residual	3274.444	29	112.912		
Total	3944.686	34			

Table 2 shows that the regression model

yields an F value of 1.187 with a significance level of 0.340. This indicates that, collectively, the five constructivist learning practices do not significantly predict writing performance outcomes at the conventional significance level. The residual sum of squares is substantially larger than the regression sum of squares, suggesting that a considerable portion of variance in writing outcomes remains unexplained by the model.

3.1.3. Residual statistics of the regression model

To further assess the distribution and dispersion of prediction errors, residual statistics were analyzed. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Residual Statistics

Statistic	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Predicted Value	66.81	82.47	73.46	4.440
Residual	-24.21	23.96	0.00	9.814
Std. Predicted Value	-1.496	2.030	0.00	1.000
Std. Residual	-2.278	2.255	0.00	0.924

Table 3 demonstrates that predicted writing scores range from 66.81 to 82.47, with a mean of 73.46. The residual values are symmetrically distributed around zero, indicating no systematic overestimation or underestimation by the regression model. Standardized residuals fall within the acceptable range of approximately ± 2.3 , suggesting that extreme outliers are not present in the data.

3.1.4. Descriptive statistics of residual distribution

To provide a more detailed overview of the shape and spread of the residual distribution, descriptive statistics were calculated. These results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Residuals

Statistic	Value
Mean	0.00
Std. Dev.	9.814
Skewness	-0.256
Kurtosis	0.900
Range	48

Table 4 indicates that the residuals have a mean close to zero, confirming the absence of systematic bias. The skewness value (-0.256) suggests a slight negative skew, while the kurtosis value (0.900) indicates a moderately peaked distribution. Overall, the residual distribution appears reasonably balanced, supporting the assumption of normality.

3.1.5. Linearity between scaffolding and writing outcome dimensions

To examine whether the relationship between scaffolding and each writing outcome dimension is linear, a linearity test was conducted. The results are presented in Table 5. Table 5 shows that the significance values for deviation from linearity are all well above 0.05.

This indicates that the relationships between scaffolding and each dimension of writing performance outcomes follow a linear pattern, and no significant nonlinear trends are detected.

Table 5. Linearity Test Results

Writing Outcome Dimension	Deviation from Linearity (Sig.)
Contextual Writing	0.944
Interactive Writing	0.676
Reflective Writing	0.530

3.1.6. Correlations among constructivist learning practices

To examine interrelationships among constructivist learning practices and detect potential multicollinearity, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Correlation Matrix

Practice	Brainstorming	Collaborative Writing	Peer Feedback	Real-World Writing	Scaffolding
Brainstorming	1.000	-0.125	-0.180	0.020	0.088
Collaborative Writing	-0.125	1.000	0.364*	0.094	-0.084
Peer Feedback	-0.180	0.364*	1.000	0.166	-0.081
Real-World Writing	0.020	0.094	0.166	1.000	0.147
Scaffolding	0.088	-0.084	-0.081	0.147	1.000

Table 6 indicates generally low to moderate correlations among the constructivist learning practices. The strongest correlation is observed between collaborative writing and peer feedback ($r = 0.364$), while most other correlations remain weak. This pattern suggests that each instructional practice contributes

distinctively and that multicollinearity is unlikely to be a serious concern.

3.2. Canonical Correlation Analysis Results

3.2.1. Multivariate tests of canonical effects

To evaluate the overall multivariate relationship between constructivist

learning practices and writing performance outcomes, canonical correlation analysis was performed. The

Table 7. Multivariate Tests

Test Statistic	Value	F	Sig.
Pillai's Trace	0.741	1.903	0.033
Wilks' Lambda	0.389	2.040	0.023
Hotelling's Trace	1.244	2.129	0.017

Table 7 demonstrates that all three multivariate test statistics yield significance values below 0.05, indicating a statistically significant multivariate relationship between the set of constructivist learning practices and the set of writing performance outcome dimensions.

3.2.2. Eigenvalues and canonical correlations

To assess the strength of each canonical function, eigenvalues and canonical correlations were examined. The results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Canonical Functions

Function	Eigenvalue	Canonical Correlation	Squared Correlation
1	0.884	0.685	0.469
2	0.345	0.507	0.257
3	0.016	0.124	0.015

Table 8 shows that the first canonical function explains the largest proportion of shared variance, with a canonical correlation of 0.685. The second function contributes moderately, while the third function explains a negligible amount of shared variance.

3.2.3. Dimension reduction analysis

multivariate test results are shown in Table 7.

To determine which canonical functions contribute meaningfully to the model, a dimension reduction analysis was conducted. The results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Dimension Reduction Analysis

Functions Tested	Wilks' Lambda	Sig.
1-3	0.389	0.023
2-3	0.732	0.327
3	0.985	0.929

Table 9 indicates that only the first canonical function significantly contributes to the multivariate relationship, while the second and third functions do not reach statistical significance.

3.2.4. Univariate effects on writing outcome dimensions

To examine the individual effects of constructivist learning practices on each writing outcome dimension, univariate F-tests were conducted. The results are shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Univariate F-Tests

Writing Dimension	Outcome F	Sig.
Contextual Writing	1.187	0.340
Interactive Writing	2.592	0.047
Reflective Writing	3.176	0.021

Table 10 shows that constructivist learning practices significantly influence interactive and reflective writing outcomes, while their effect on contextual writing is not statistically significant.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that constructivist learning practices—including brainstorming, collaborative writing, peer feedback, real-world writing, and appropriate scaffolding—are meaningfully associated with students' writing performance outcomes when examined from a multivariate perspective. While the combined practices do not uniformly predict all writing dimensions at the univariate level, canonical correlation analysis reveals a significant overall relationship, with interactive and reflective writing emerging as the most strongly influenced outcomes.

The findings suggest that writing development is most effectively

supported through instructional practices that emphasize interaction, feedback, and reflection. Peer feedback and collaborative writing play a central role in fostering reflective writing abilities, highlighting writing as a socially mediated and iterative process. Contextual writing tasks, although not showing a direct significant effect, appear to function as a complementary foundation that supports higher-level writing engagement. These results underscore the pedagogical value of constructivist-oriented writing instruction in promoting deeper, more interactive, and reflective writing performance in EFL contexts.

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