



Available online at:
<https://dergipark.org.tr/eltri/>
*International Association of Research
in Foreign Language Education and
Applied Linguistics*
ELT Research Journal
2023, 12(2), 174-192
e- ISSN: 2146-9814

Assessing Writing in EFL Context

Saliha TOSCU^{a 1} 

^a Çankaya University, Ankara, Türkiye

Review Article

Received: 13/09/2023 Accepted: 14/12/2023

To cite: Toscu, S. (2023). Assessing writing in EFL context. *ELT Research Journal*, 12(2), 174-192.

Abstract

This paper aims to present an overview of the research studies investigating writing assessment in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts, specifically at the university level. The studies published from 2013 to 2023 were encapsulated in the review. The papers were scrutinized to display the participant and context features, methodologies adopted, and the research purposes together with their results. Findings were synthesized and discussed in the present review. The paper offers a review of the studies in the field of writing assessment and gives future researchers an understanding of what has been done in the realm.

© 2023 ELT-RJ & the Authors. Published by *ELT Research Journal (ELT-RJ)*. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (CC BY-NC-ND) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Keywords: Assessing writing; Disciplinary writing; EFL; University

Introduction

In contexts where English is learned as a foreign language, developing writing is vital for learners since it primarily enables them to establish effective communication in academic and professional environments. Weigle (2009) specifies that as transportation and technology enable people to interact with each other, communication has also become indispensable in the globalized world. This increased the substantiality of writing skills. As a result of its increasing importance and requirement in the world as a way of communication, a search for effective and trustworthy ways to assess writing skills has emerged.

Writing is considered as an essential component of academic disciplines, and developing writing skills is essential to succeed academically. Besides academic areas,

¹ Corresponding author.

E-mail address: salihatoscu@cankaya.edu.tr

language users are required to possess strong writing skills in their professional areas, as English has been used as a language of business, as well. Writing embraces skills which learners need to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the information to convey their thoughts. Thus, it also helps to ameliorate critical thinking skills. Weigle (2002) denotes that there is a connection between writing and critical thinking since having a skill in writing suggests that a learner owns the cognitive skills necessary for pursuing one's education. Writing is a means to express ideas and views or to convey information in a written form so as to communicate with others. It is a cognitive ability and comprises 'comprehension, application, and synthesis of new knowledge' (Defazio, Jones, Tennant, & Hook, 2010, p. 34). It can take diverse forms, such as letters, emails, reports, research papers, essays, and poetry.

Writing is vital at all education levels, but it has a central role in higher education and fulfills various purposes. Curry and Lillis (2005) explain that one of these purposes is assessment. To master disciplinary course content, learners are assigned written exams, essays, and laboratory reports. Lecturers pay attention to the content and the writing form (Curry & Lillis, 2005). Writing assessment is crucial because it supports developing and expanding writing skills. Through writing assessment, educators can ascertain the parts where a learner is proficient and the parts which a learner needs to renovate. Thus, learners can be supported in developing the weak points by following their progress. In this way, they can get feedback on their achievement in writing skills and become more equipped with the skills they use to communicate in the written way for their future academic and professional life. Another purpose is learning (Curry & Lillis, 2005; Westhuizen, 2009). Learners write texts to describe what they have absorbed from the learning process. During university education, learners produce texts which adhere to their disciplines' conventions (Curry & Lillis, 2005). At the university level, according to Curry and Hewings (2005), writing is a tool to demonstrate disciplinary understanding at the university, and it has specific conventional structures in distinct contexts. Developing skills in disciplinary writing demands specialized word knowledge and formatting necessities for learners. Therefore, disciplinary writing can be deemed to be challenging for learners in EFL contexts, but it is essential for them to develop to succeed in their academic and professional life, so students in various disciplines are required to cultivate acceptable writing skills.

The Significance and Purpose of the Study

Weigle (2014) remarks that writing has not been considered just a skill to strengthen learning other skills such as reading, listening, and grammar. It has gained importance in

language education as a natural outcome of globalization and technology. From the standpoint of effective teaching of writing, it is crucial to look at writing in a second or foreign language from cognitive and socio-cultural perspectives (Weigle, 2014). From the cognitive perspective, writing skills and language proficiency should be taken into consideration because second language writing is a combination of both. From socio-cultural perspective, a mere focus on language proficiency would not yield effective writing when the context in which writing will be used is not considered, so it is understood that “writing is done for a purpose, is directed at a specific audience, and is a part of a broader set of literacy practices that are shaped by a particular culture and setting” (Weigle, 2014, p. 224). By underscoring the significance of writing, Weigle (2014) explains that writing assessment is a vital part of writing instruction and learning. Thus, teachers can assess students’ learning effectively and obtain data to shape and improve their teaching practices, which in turn enhances learning.

Through literature, review studies have presented close scrutiny of the research involving writing. The recent reviews indicate that various authors provided data regarding writing development. When the literature on the review studies of writing skills was examined, it showed that some studies are aiming to give an overview of the topic. To illustrate, Perumal and Ajit (2020) investigated the studies published between 2010 and 2019 and reviewed them to show techniques and approaches to developing writing skills and eliminating problems with writing. In a recent paper by Damanik (2022), the author presented a literature review on peer feedback in writing skill development. The study context incorporated investigating the use of peer feedback among Indonesian adult learners to develop their writing. In a discrete study, Anna, Qianyi, Ying, and Yanli (2023) systematically reviewed experimental and quasi-experimental research studies and investigated teaching writing. Their review involved the analysis of studies published between 2010 and 2020, focusing on writing instruction, especially in kindergarten. In a different systematic review, Franco, Franco, Severo, Ferreira, and Karnieli-Miller (2022) investigated using a reflective writing style to improve medical students’ communication skills. The authors based their synthesis on thematic analysis and provided an understanding related to the effectiveness of reflective writing for medical educators and students. Patiñoa, Calixto, Chiappe, and Almenarez (2020) reviewed the research on using information and communication technologies (ICT) to upgrade children’s writing and motor skills by suggesting the positive influence of using ICT to support those skills. Ruffini, Osmani, Martini, Giera, and Pecini (2023) also provided a systematic review to analyze the connection between executive functions, for example, cognitive flexibility, attention, working memory, and children’s writing skills.

When the recent review studies are considered, it is clear that there are reviews done in the field of writing skills, and they provide data with regard to specific research domains. The studies give an understanding of the literature related to the development of writing in childhood, or they provide data in connection with writing at the university level but focus on a specific domain. Different from the previous reviews, the present one aims to give a systematic review of studies on assessing writing in EFL. The study concentrates on assessing writing skills at higher education levels and limits its scope to the EFL contexts and the research studies published from 2013 to 2023. The central questions which the study addresses are presented below.

- What are the research contexts in the selected studies?
- Who are the participants in the selected studies?
- What are the methodologies employed in the selected studies?
- What are the research purposes of the studies?

With its modest scope, the study aims to present an overview of the studies under scrutiny and help researchers to get insights to search for in further studies in the field.

Method

The present study was based on a systematic analysis. Primarily, a set of criteria was specified for the selection of research to be encapsulated in the present study. The criteria comprised selecting studies in academic journals. Based on the research aims of the review, the topic assessing writing in EFL was searched in an academic search engine, EBSCOhost, and the databases Eric and Academic Search Ultimate were used to search the topic by considering the relevance of the databases to the scope of the present research. The publication year of the studies was limited to the last ten years (from 2013 to 2023). As subject, only the articles administered in higher education were selected. The articles which were theoretical, not written in English, and not in the time covering a 10-year-long-research period were not included in the review.

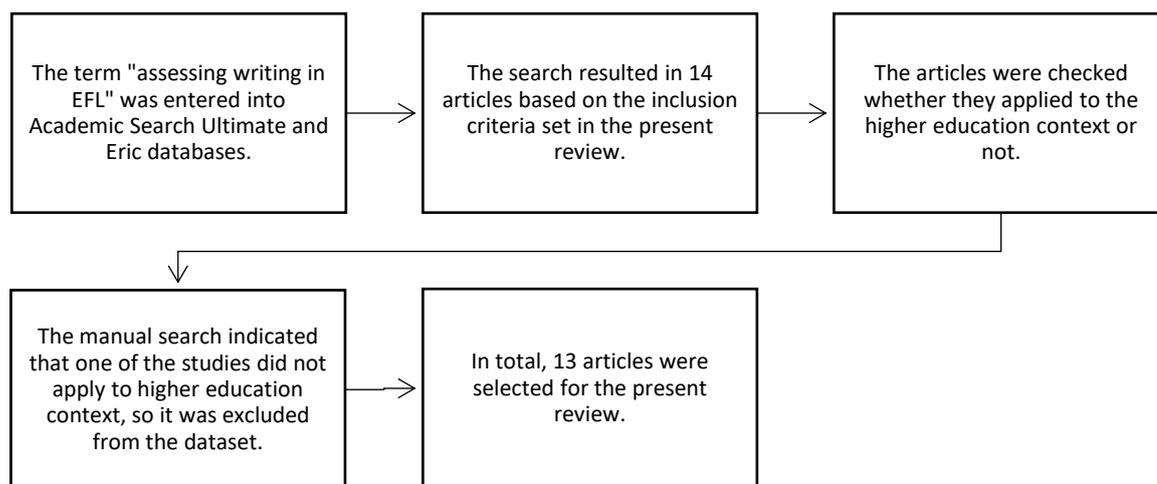


Figure 1. The Flowchart of the Selection of Studies

The search of the studies in the realm of assessing writing in EFL contexts revealed 14 records of full texts. One of the selected studies was excluded from the dataset because it investigated assessing writing in secondary or high school education contexts. The studies were analyzed based on their research purposes, participants, research contexts, methodology, and findings. Findings were presented below based on the questions addressed in the review.

The analysis was primarily materialized based on a search of the selected studies by following the determined exclusion and inclusion criteria. Later, all the relevant studies were extracted from the databases and analyzed in detail manually. All the extracted studies were carefully read first. Then, an Excel sheet was prepared to picture the title, keywords, abstract, participants, methodologies, research purposes, and their findings clearly. The required information was entered into the Excel sheet for detailed analysis. This process was generated with two researchers. The data from the studies were coded depending on the research questions the present review aimed to reveal. Precisely, the research contexts, participants, and methodologies employed in the studies were aimed to be depicted. Later, a more detailed look for the research purposes, together with the findings were explored through coding. Two researchers (one of whom was the researcher of the present review, and the other one was a researcher holding a Ph.D. degree from the language teaching department) worked separately from each other to ensure inter-coder reliability. Later, when they compared their findings, they preferred to discuss their findings to agree if there was a contradiction between the results of the two analyses.

Findings

All the selected studies were analyzed in detail, and the findings were presented by the research questions aimed to be answered through the present review.

What are the Research Contexts and Who are the Participants in the Selected Studies?

The selected studies were analyzed with respect to their research contexts and participants. In the selected studies, the researchers' participant groups are introduced in Figure 2 below.

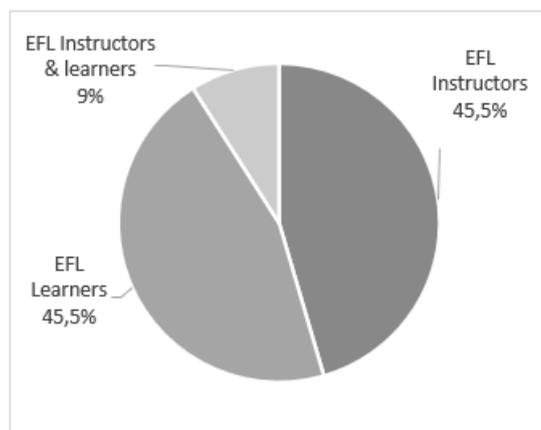


Figure 2. Participants

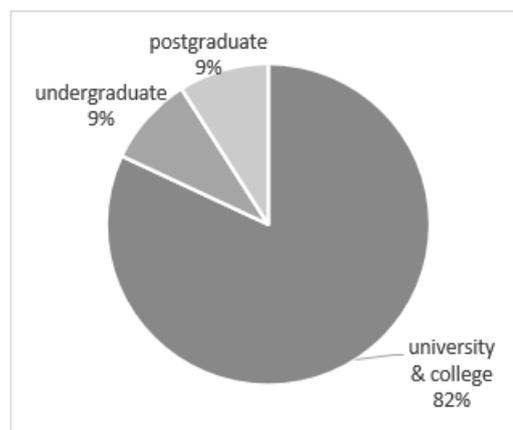


Figure 3. Education Levels

The determined set of criteria in the review included examining the EFL context. Therefore, the participant groups were from EFL contexts. Precisely, the researchers in the selected studies recruited mostly instructors and learners with an equal percentage (45.5% each). In a small percentage (9%), the selected studies involved the research of participants both as instructors and learners. The studies in the review were selected with reference to the criteria encompassing the research in higher education. In the selected studies, the writers defined the degrees of the participants specifically as undergraduate, postgraduate, and university or college learners or instructors. Of these, Figure 3 displays that the participants were mostly at universities and colleges (82%).

All the studies were relevant to the EFL context. The detailed analysis indicated that 27% of the selected studies were performed in China, which was followed by Turkey, with a percentage of 18. The remaining contexts incorporated Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, Mexico, Korea, and Thailand (Each has a percentage of 9.). Also, in one study, the context of the university was not specified clearly. The participants' nationalities were pointed as Chinese, French, and Spanish, though.

What are the Methodologies Employed in the Studies?

The procedures followed to collect and analyze the data in the selected studies have been investigated. The results specify that 23.07% of the studies (Obeid, 2017; Ölmezer-Öztürk & Aydın, 2018; Sarı & Han, 2022) involved a scale development or the use of a questionnaire to reveal participants' beliefs and attitudes towards writing. On the other hand, most (76.92%) of the studies selected for the review (Abdelrahim & Abdelrahim, 2020; Devadera, 2018; Farahian, 2015; González, Trejo, & Roux, 2017; Jeong, 2015; Li, 2022; Ma, 2013; Pu et al., 2022; Qin & Uccelli, 2020; Worathumrong, 2021) included an analysis of the writing papers assigned to the learners. The writing types assigned to the learners in these studies varied. Namely, in most of the selected studies (e.g., Devananadera, 2018; Jeong, 2015), learners were assigned to write essays, and their types were specified as argumentative, descriptive, cause and effect, and expository. In a few studies, the authors specified that the learners were assigned to write an essay, but their types were not indicated in the studies (e.g., Farahian, 2015; Ma, 2013). In the other studies, the authors specified that the writing assigned to learners involved writing paragraph-length papers (González et al., 2017; Worathumorong, 2021), sending an e-mail, and preparing academic reports (Qin & Uccelli, 2020).

The analysis of the data collection and analysis methods revealed that the authors mostly adopted mixed-methods approach and only a quantitative approach (Each is 46.15%). The studies with only a qualitative approach were 7.69%. A detailed look at the methods employed in the selected studies revealed that the authors favored qualitative methods, such as coding the patterns or structures to be investigated in students' writings or transcripts of recorded interviews held with the participants. Besides, statistical techniques such as frequencies and percentages, factor analysis, t-tests, and ANOVA were performed on the SPSS. Thus, the authors preferred the methods listed here depending on their research purposes.

What are the Research Purposes and Main Findings of the Selected Studies?

The research purposes the studies served to investigate were analyzed, and the findings substantiated that the studies addressed different research purposes and scopes regarding assessing writing. The research scopes were categorized in the figure below.

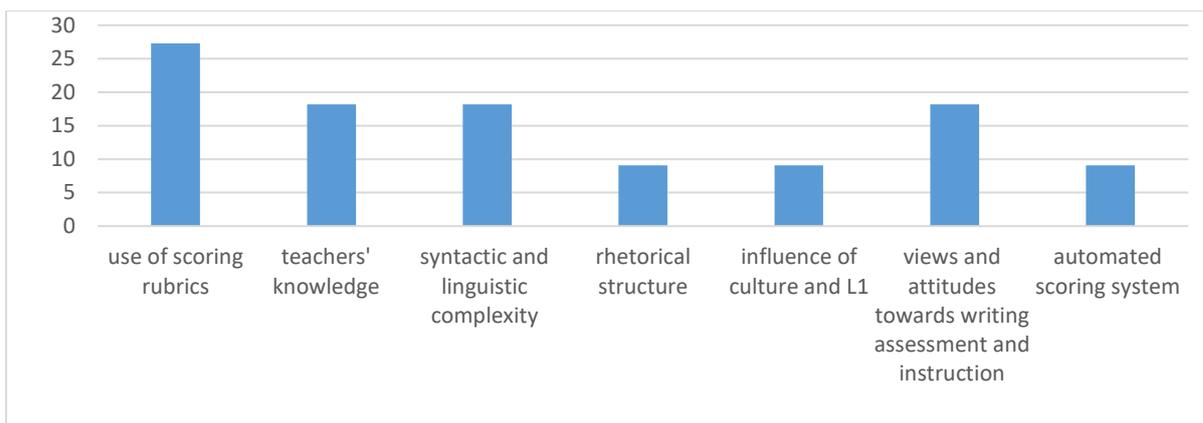


Figure 4. The Research Purposes

Figure 4 indicates that the selected studies embodied the investigation of the use of rubrics, teachers' knowledge of assessment and metadiscoursal features in writing, the syntactic complexity and linguistic complexity together with aspects such as genre and register flexibility, rhetorical structure, the influence of culture and L1 on discourse features, the views and attitudes towards writing assessment and instruction, and the use of automated scoring system in writing assessment. The details of each have been presented respectively.

Activities

One of the research purposes favored by the researchers of the selected studies involved examining the use of rubrics in writing assessments. The study authored by González et al. (2017) encompassed the investigation of raters' opinions related to writing assignments and analytical scoring rubrics. González et al. (2017) examined the inter-rater reliability of scores given to writing assignments of EFL students at university. A rubric-based assessment was adopted in the study. The researchers concluded that assessing writing based on rubrics was potentially reliable. In a different study, Jeong (2015) compared essay scores given when a rubric was used and when it was not. The study investigated whether English teachers in a Korean high school utilized the rubrics while assessing students' writing. Jeong (2015) explored that there were differences when the teachers employed rubrics and when they did not. For example, the results of her study indicated that there was more focus on accuracy problems while scoring a paper without a rubric but more focus on issues based on the students' comprehension when the rubric was used to assess writing. Also, teacher interviews revealed in Jeong (2015) that the assessment criteria and the descriptors in the rubrics led to changes in writing rating. With respect to the use of rubrics, Jeong (2015) proposes that teachers be trained to use rubrics effectively. Similarly, Li (2022) used many-facet Rasch measurement, a statistical analysis technique to examine the components of an instrument, to investigate a

scoring rubric with manifold criteria for EFL writing. The study investigated the reliability and internal validity of the rubric and provided an understanding of how to develop a rubric. Li (2022) remarked that rubrics can give substantial evidence related to student writing, but they are required to be used carefully. Li (2022) articulated that validation is vital when employing a rubric to assess writing. Li (2022) explained that when the rubric is ensured to be valid, EFL teachers can assist learners in using it for self-assessing and understanding the reasons for their scores.

Teachers' Knowledge

The examination of the research purposes of the selected studies indicated that some authors aimed to reveal what the participant teachers in their studies knew about writing assessment. To exemplify, Ölmezer-Öztürk and Aydin (2018) intended to develop an instrument named Language Assessment Knowledge Scale and to validate it. Thus, they aimed to assess teachers' knowledge of assessment. They concluded that the instrument was valid and reliable for assessing language teachers' assessment knowledge. In a different study performed by Abdelrahim and Abdelrahim (2020), the authors reported on the value of a training program for professional development. The program aimed to upgrade teachers' knowledge of metadiscoursal features in argumentative writing, train teachers to assess expression, unity, and organization in writing, and reform their instruction of metadiscoursal features. The findings from the study of Abdelrahim and Abdelrahim (2020) indicated that the program improved teachers' knowledge and skills in instructing and measuring metadiscoursal features in argumentative writing. Considering the research findings, the researchers underscored the significance of professional development programs to renovate instruction and heighten students' writing performance.

Syntactic and Linguistic Complexity

Findings also revealed that in some studies, the researchers sought the extent to which learners vary grammar structures and vocabulary in their writings. Pu, Heng, and Cao (2022) investigated how genre affects the syntactic complexity of writing by analyzing Chinese EFL learners' argumentative and expository essays. As a result of their analysis, Pu et al. (2022) revealed discrepancies between the two types of essays. Accordingly, Pu et al.'s (2022) study yielded more syntactic complexity in argumentative than expository essays. The study displayed that genre impacts syntactic complexity in writing and suggested implications for educators to be more aware of genre differences in EFL writing. Besides syntactic complexity, Qin and Uccelli (2020) examined the linguistic complexity and register flexibility in writings produced by EFL learners. Qin and Uccelli (2020) controlled how linguistic features varied

when two different registers were utilized. Their study showed that EFL writing assessment should encompass criteria to evaluate learners' adaptation to diverse registers and contexts.

Rhetorical Structure

The analysis indicated that one study among the selected studies intended to reveal the effect of rhetorical structure in writing. Devanadera (2018) analyzed Vietnamese EFL learners' writings to control the rhetorical structure in narrative essays, using the framework of Labov and Waletzky. The study revealed that Vietnamese students' rhetorical structure in writing follows a pattern which is dissimilar to the standard. The Vietnamese students are disposed to overlook specific steps of a composition, such as the introduction, development of a story, and summary. Devanadera (2018) suggests assessing writing based on criteria which take the diversity in linguistics and cultures worldwide. Thus, it would be more related and appropriate to EFL students from diverse backgrounds.

The Influence of Culture and L1

A detailed look at the research purposes and scopes of the selected studies moreover displayed that researchers intended to represent the effect of learners' native language (L1) and culture on writing. To illustrate, Worathumrong (2021) sought the influence of L1 and culture on Thai EFL learners' writing, specifically the discourse features. The researcher found language and discourse features which are under the effect of L1 and native culture. Worathumrong (2021) explained that teachers can better help EFL learners develop their language when such effects on EFL writing are understood. As teachers spot learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, their instruction will be more efficient and relevant by means of a reactive approach based on culture and first language.

Views and Attitudes

The scope of some of the studies performed in assessing writing in the EFL contexts involved investigating the views and attitudes towards writing assessment (Obeid, 2017; Sari & Han, 2022). To illustrate, Obeid (2017) examined Saudi EFL teachers' and learners' perceptions and attitudes toward writing assessment. Thus, Obeid (2017) aimed to discover what the teachers and learners experienced in the Saudi EFL context with regard to writing assessment and revealed its complications and prospects from this perspective. The study findings indicated that teachers and learners pinpointed a lack of sources, support, and training, and the differences concerning linguistics and cultures as handicaps in writing assessment in the research context. Obeid (2017) stressed that the effect of writing assessment on language development and writing skills cannot be ignored; therefore, it is essential to train and provide

the required support to teachers in writing instruction and assessment. In this respect, cultural and linguistic features should be paid attention to (Obeid, 2017).

In Sarı and Han's (2022) article, the researchers investigated Turkish EFL teachers' beliefs about writing instruction and assessment. The teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards assessing and teaching writing varied. Like Obeid's study (2017), the instructors identified difficulties with a lack of resources and training. Additionally, the study findings indicated that a lack of time and difficulty encouraging students to write were the challenges the Turkish EFL instructors faced while teaching writing. Concerning the assessment, though the teachers stated to use distinct strategies while evaluating the writing, they felt a lack of self-reliance to measure writing performance effectively. In order to eliminate the problems, Sarı and Han (2022) also underscored a need for training.

Automated Scoring System

The use of online automated scoring systems in writing assessments has been revealed in Ma's (2003) article. Ma (2003) examined the extent to which an automated scoring system was influential in the assessment and could augment Chinese EFL learners' writing skills. The study findings revealed a positive impact of the automated scoring system on refurbishing writing skills, more student involvement, and fulfillment. Additionally, Ma (2003) stressed the importance of feedback to the students so that they can detect their strong and weak points in writing.

Discussion

The present study aimed to display the studies concerning assessing writing at the tertiary level in the EFL context. For this purpose, the selected studies were analyzed, and their research contexts, participants, and methodologies were pictured together with a detailed analysis of their research purposes and scopes. The analysis indicated that the studies were conducted in various EFL contexts. The researchers of the selected studies based their research mostly either on learners or teachers, but there were also studies investigating both learners and teachers together. Their numbers were at a lower percentage, however. The research methodologies in the selected studies incorporated mixed-methods research or only qualitative methods, which shows that the researchers used qualitative and quantitative data triangulation methods. The researchers employed methods such as coding and surveys at the same time. Equally, assessing writing studies mostly adopted methodologies based on qualitative research. This depicted that the researchers' examination of the effects of various factors was grounded in using methods such as coding.

This study exhibited that types of writing assignments were primarily argumentative, descriptive, cause and effect, and expository essays. In some studies, researchers did not specify the type but indicated that their research involved the analysis of essays. The present review aimed to analyze the writing assignments at the tertiary level of education. Thus, the learners were university students in different departments. It is known that English has been used as a medium of instruction at the tertiary level across the world; likewise, the number of international students in universities in English-speaking countries is rising simultaneously (Basturkmen, 2017). This has given rise to academic writing courses for English as a second language or EFL students (Basturkmen, 2017). Costley and Flowerdew (2017) state that writing shows a discipline's character by explaining that writing processes and procedures in a discipline are specific to that discipline. A learner needs to be acquainted with the conventions in a particular discipline and be able to perform the genres accompanying the discipline (Costley & Flowerdew, 2017). Nesi and Gardner (2012) state that genre is significant in academic writing and maintain that academic writing concentrates on various genres, which can be exemplified as research articles, theses, student coursework, and academic textbooks. By thinking about the result here, it might be concluded that in the studies investigating writing assignments in the EFL context, essay types were preferred. Predictably, essay-type writing is an essential part of university education for specific reasons. West, Malcolm, Keyword, and Hill (2019) explain that the primary aim of essay writing encloses an organized argument that is logically supported and developed with literature. It requires 'critical, communicative, and research-based skills'; as a result, researchers and instructors favor it as a common type of assessment for learning (West et al. 2019, p. 609).

The analysis of the research purposes indicated that the selected studies aimed to review various topics. However, the most commonly investigated topic was found to be related to the use of rubrics. The use of rubrics in writing assessments has a significant value (González & Roux, 2013). Also, in different disciplines, such as Sociology or Engineering, there are diverse types of writing, each with a different role, organization, and relation to research (Nesi & Gardner, 2012). Thus, regarding the use of rubrics, disciplinary distinctions should be also taken into consideration. The decision on the use of rubrics requires to be made based on the writing type, careful examination, and course goals (González & Roux, 2013). With respect to the use of rubrics, the findings from the selected studies suggested that training for using the rubrics is vital. This finding also aligns with the findings of other studies in the field. To illustrate, Rezaei and Lovorn (2010) stressed that it is vital to train the raters about using rubrics, which will help to assess a piece of writing reliably and accurately. However, because

of the complicated nature of the rating process, Eckes (2008) warns that training does not guarantee rating differences. While using a rubric, Weigle (2007) explains that familiarity with the type of rubric is essential. Thus, it is crucial to enable teachers to practice various rubrics in a training program, for example.

Another finding from the analysis of the selected studies suggested a positive impact of automated scoring systems. Chen and Cheng (2008) support the constructive effect of automated writing systems and say such systems are effective since they give instant feedback. Learners can focus on linguistic problems in their writing and improve it. On the other hand, Dikli (2010) expounds on the adverse effects of automated scoring systems and explains that such systems fail to spot local errors and give too detailed feedback for the learners. While technology has been integrated into all aspects of academic areas, it would be inevitable to incorporate it into writing assessments. As explained by Hamp-Lyons (2002), assessing writing has been through three waves: directly assessing the texts, multiple-choice testing, which is followed by portfolio assessment. Hamp-Lyons (2002) mentions that the goad behind portfolio assessment was a result of the teachers' dissatisfaction rather than specialists and had two main reasons: 'lack of authenticity/ validity' and 'washback' (p. 11). Even though portfolio assessment solved such problems at first, it was still problematic. Hampton-Lyons (2002) offers that computer-based writing assessment will be the future of writing assessment and underscores that it should be humanistic and technological, which means that assessing writing in that way will benefit from the technological advances. Weigle (2002) suggests that the effect of technology is inevitable and explains that technology will influence 'the nature of writing itself' and 'the scoring of writing by computer' will yield some "important social and political consequences" (p.231). Technology will make writing more speech-like as people use more e-mail services. As a result, the way writing is taught will change.

Consequently, how all the changes will affect writing assessment and its definition should be considered carefully (Weigle, 2002). Also, how to benefit from technology should be planned by considering the positive and negative aspects of technology on writing assessment and performance. As Weigle (2002) proposed, technology would impact the future of writing assessment and nature by means of computers. Instruction and knowledge to assess writing by using technology may need to be thought accordingly. As Weigle (2014, p. 234) exemplified, 'social networking sites, online discussion boards, blogs, and wikis' have expanded classroom interaction between teachers and students by presenting the opportunities of electronic media to the writing courses. Thus, teachers' training to benefit from the advantages of technology in education takes priority.

Regardless of the research purposes, one common finding mostly stressed in the selected studies was the necessity and eminence of teacher training. The analyzed studies exposed that teachers' knowledge and instruction could be improved through training programs. Thus, the studies show such training programs' positive impact on writing instruction. Similarly, the studies investigating the teachers' and learners' perceptions or attitudes towards assessing writing unveil that writing practices generally fail due to lack of experience. Thus, training has a central place for the betterment of writing instruction.

With regard to writing instruction and assessment, this review shows that training for the instruction and assessment of writing performance is an absolute necessity. Boyle (2006) explains that assessment literacy, which is defined as "an understanding of the principles and practices of testing and assessment", is crucial in educational systems (p. 18). Through assessment literacy, foreign language teachers can specify the proper assessment methods and consider experiential data to expand their instruction. Otherwise, assessment results would be considered invalid and unreliable, leading to a negative washback effect on the content and design of an academic writing course, as mentioned in Ahmad (2021). Therefore, it is particularly momentous to present professional service opportunities for in-service and preservice foreign language teachers (Boyle, 2006).

The present review also presented that the researchers sought the effects of syntactic complexity, linguistic complexity, and register variety in students' writing in the selected studies. Their findings indicated that writing assessment changes correspondingly depending on factors such as genre type, register, syntactic, and linguistic variety. This finding suggests that there are no one-fitting-all-sizes types of writing courses. Seker (2018) interprets that writing is a complex skill that encapsulates linguistic, metacognitive, and sociocultural elements. Thus, the findings show the importance of approaching writing instruction and assessment accordingly. Besides the factors differentiating based on the genre or register, the analysis of the selected studies gives insights into the effects of culture or native language on writing and suggests taking into consideration such factors in teaching writing. Without a doubt, writing is a means to communicate ideas. In order to avoid confusion while conveying our ideas, it is vital to be aware of the influence of such factors. While the effects of native language may reflect upon one's writing positively, it may also adversely impact and cause misinterpretation in different contexts. To illustrate, when an EFL learner's native language has a different rhetorical style or linguistic and syntactic structure than the ones in the target language, it may cause the learner to write incongruously and unsuccessfully in the disciplinary framework in which the learner is writing. Therefore, it is crucial to plan academic writing

courses by planning the students' background information and to train not only teachers but also learners for effective writing.

Conclusion

Writing has prominence which cannot be disregarded in all aspects of life. Promoting it for effective communication is vital, especially in academic and professional life. In all universities, the departments aim to prepare their students for a competitive world where students are required to be trained in all facets. In countries where English is used as a *Lingua Franca*, learners are also expected to improve their writing skills in their first language and foreign language. With this respect, universities, as a department requirement, serve writing courses in which students are expected to write based on the conventions in their departments. Therefore, the findings from the present review indicate how EFL students and teachers at the university level are involved in practices in writing classes.

The present review investigated how writing is assessed in EFL contexts. The studies published over a 10-year-long period were searched with the title 'assessing writing in EFL context.' The studies extracted from the databases were examined in detail, and the findings were shared in the review. Thus, the paper intended to provide researchers who would like to explore the topics and their findings in the EFL context with an understanding, synthesizing the available data. With this respect, the findings from this study may depict updated information about what has been done in this context.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Studies

The present study suffers from certain limitations. Firstly, the present review was limited to only a small number of studies. This was a result of the fact that the topic searched in the databases was limited to only assessing writing in EFL contexts, and the participant groups were limited to only university students. When the search was completed, only a small number of studies were extracted from the databases. In future studies, researchers may expand their search by varying the terms searched for data retrieval. The studies conducted at different education levels could be searched, and the findings could be compared and contrasted with each other.

The choice of databases was based on practicality and relevancy to the content. Specifically, EBSCOhost and the databases in that search engine were utilized for data extraction in the present review. Also, the publication dates of the studies were kept limited to ten years. When these factors are considered, the number of studies to include in the review

likely remains limited. There are other renowned databases which could be used in the same scope of the present review. Therefore, in future studies, researchers could investigate the same topic by entering diverse variations of terms related to the present review's topic and also in different periods of publication time. Thus, they may obtain more distinct findings than this study and compare them with each other.

The present review involved the search for writing skills only in the EFL context; hence, the results cannot be generalized to the contexts where the research on writing skills is done in ESL or L1 contexts. It can be easily predicted that in L1 contexts, applying the conventions of language would be easier for learners in distinguishable disciplines, and learners would straightforwardly use the tones and styles. However, in EFL contexts, learners may need help to use grammar and vocabulary appropriately in a particular discipline due to the language barrier. Therefore, it is without a doubt that writing performance in L1, ESL, and EFL contexts would yield divergent results. In future studies, researchers may consider conducting research to review studies on writing assessments in various contexts and compare the present study's findings with theirs.

To summarize, the present study intended to depict the research on assessing writing in EFL contexts, and the results were shared to present an overview of the research conducted over ten years. Thus, the paper aims to contribute to researchers who aspire to perform similar research insights about the purpose, methodologies, and findings of previous studies.

Acknowledgement

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

References

- Abdelrahim, A. A., & Abdelrahim, A. M. (2020). Teaching and assessing metadiscoursal feature in argumentative writing: A professional development training for EFL teachers. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 30(2), 70-91.
- Ahmad, Z. (2021). Teachers' assessment of academic writing: Implications for language assessment literacy. In S. Hidri (Ed.), *Perspectives on language assessment literacy: Challenges for improved student learning* (pp. 159-176). Routledge.
- Anna, H., Qianyi, G., Ying, G., Yanli, X. (2023). Examining the effects of kindergarten writing instruction on emergent literacy skills: A systematic review of the literature. *Early Child Development & Care*, 193(3), 334-346.

- Basturkmen, H. (2017). Developing writing courses for specific academic purposes. In J. Flowerdew & T. Costley, *Discipline-specific writing: Theory into practice* (pp. 1-12). Routledge.
- Chen, C. F., & Cheng, W. Y. (2008). Beyond the design of automated writing evaluation: Pedagogical practices and perceived learning effectiveness in EFL writing classes. *Language Learning & Technology*, 12(2), 94-112.
- Costley, T., & Flowerdew, J. (2017). Introduction. In J. Flowerdew & T. Costley, *Discipline-specific writing: Theory into practice* (pp. 1-12). Routledge.
- Curry, M. J., & Hewings, A. (2005). Approaches to teaching writing. In C. Coffin, M. J. Curry, S. Goodman, A. Hewings, T. M. Lillis, & J. Swan (Eds.), *Teaching academic writing* (pp. 19-45). Routledge.
- Curry, M. J., & Lillis, T. M. (2005). Issues in academic writing in higher education. In C. Coffin, M. J. Curry, S. Goodman, A. Hewings, T. M. Lillis, & J. Swan (Eds.), *Teaching academic writing* (pp. 1-19). Routledge.
- Damanik, J. Y. (2022). Peer feedback to improve Indonesian adult learners' writing skills: A literature review. *Journal of English Teaching*, 8(1), 49-58.
- Defazio, J., Jones, J., Tennant, F., & Hook, S. A. (2010). Academic literacy: The importance and impact of writing across curriculum – A case study. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 10(2), 34-47.
- Devanadera, A. (2018). Assessing Vietnamese EFL students' writing in the light of world Englishes. *The Journal of English as an International Language*, 13(2), 88-105.
- Dikli, S. (2010). The nature of automated essay scoring feedback. *CALICO Journal*, 28(1), 99-134.
- Eckes, T. (2008). Rater types in writing performance assessments. *Language Testing*, 25(2), 155-185.
- Farahian, M. (2015). Assessing EFL learners' writing metacognitive awareness. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 11(2), 39-51.
- Franco, R. S., Franco, C. A. G. D. S., Severo, M., Ferreira, M. A., & Karnieli-Miller, O. (2022). Reflective writing in the teaching of communication skills for medical students - A systematic review. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 105, 1842-1851.
- González, E. F., & Roux, R. (2013). Exploring the variability of Mexican EFL teachers' ratings of high school students' writing ability. *Argentinian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 1(2), 61.

- González, E. F., Trejo, N. P., & Roux, R. (2017). Assessing EFL university students' writing: A study of score reliability. *Revista Electrónica de Investigación Educativa*, 19(2), 91-103.
- Hamp-Lyons, L. (2002). The scope of writing assessment. *Assessing Writing*, 8, 5–16.
- Li, W. (2022). Scoring rubric reliability and internal validity in rater-mediated EFL writing assessment: Insights from many-facet Rasch measurement. *Reading and Writing*, 35, 2409-2431.
- Jeong, H. (2015). Rubrics in the classroom: Do teachers really follow them? *Language Testing in Asia*, 5(6), 1-4.
- Ma, K. (2013). Improving EFL graduate students' proficiency in writing through an online automated essay assessing system. *English Language Teaching*, 6(7), 158-167.
- Nesi, H., & Gardner, S. (2012). Families of genres of assessed writing. In H. Nesi & S. Gardner (Eds). *Genres across the disciplines: Student writing in higher education* (pp. 21-56). Cambridge University Press.
- Obeid, R. (2017). Second language writing and assessment: Voices from within the Saudi EFL context. *English Language Teaching*, 10(6), 174-181.
- Ölmezer-Öztürk, E., & Aydin, B. (2018). Toward measuring language teachers' assessment knowledge: Development and validation of language assessment knowledge scale (LAKS *Language Testing in Asia*), 8(20), 1-15.
- Patiñoa, J. F., Calixto, A. L., Chiappe, A., & Almenarez, F. T. (2020). ICT-Driven writing and motor skills: A review. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*. 12(5), 489-498.
- Perumal, K., & Ajit I. (2020). Enhancing writing skills: A review. *Psychology and Education*, 57(9), 2229-2236.
- Pu, L., Heng, R., & Cao, C. (2022). The effects of genre on the syntactic complexity of argumentative and expository writing by Chinese EFL learners. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 1-14.
- Rezaei, A. R., & Lovorn, M. (2010). Reliability and validity of rubrics for assessment through writing. *Assessing Writing*, 15(1), 18-39.
- Ruffini, C., Osmani, F., Martini, C., Giera, W-K., & Pecini, C. (2023). The relationship between executive functions and writing in children: A systematic review. *Child Neuropsychology*.
- Qin, W., & Uccelli, P. (2020). Beyond linguistic complexity: Assessing register flexibility in EFL writing across contexts. *Assessing Writing*, 45.

- Sarı, E., & Han, T. (2022). An investigation of Turkish EFL instructors' beliefs about writing in English. *ODÜ Sosyal Bilimler Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 12(1), 169-184.
- Seker, M. (2018). Intervention in teachers' differential scoring judgments in assessing L2 writing communities of assessment practice. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 59, 209-217.
- Weigle, S. C. (2002). *Assessing writing*. Cambridge University Press.
- Weigle, S. C. (2007). Teaching writing teachers about assessment. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 16(3), 194-209.
- Weigle, S. C. (2009). *Assessing writing* (6th ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Weigle, S. C. (2014). Considerations for teaching second language writing. In M. Celce-Murcia, D. M. Rinton, & M. A. Snow (Eds.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (4 Ed.) (pp. 222-237). Heinle Cengage Learning.
- West, H., Malcolm, G., Keywood, S., & Hill, J. (2019). Writing a successful essay. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 43(4), 609-617.
- Westhuizen, G. J. U. (2009). Writing as an instrument for learning. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 27(4), 471-481.
- Worathumrong, S. (2021). "Show the furby coming is...": Inference of first language and culture in Thai EFL learners' paragraph writing. *English Language Teaching*, 14(10), 92-104.