



## **THE IMPACT OF IMPLEMENTING INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING ON EFL STUDENTS' WRITING DEVELOPMENT: A LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Ismiati Annur Husnaeni AR<sup>1</sup>, Yustika Nur Fajriah<sup>2</sup>, Pipih Setiawati<sup>3</sup>**  
Institut Pendidikan Indonesia<sup>1,2,3</sup>  
e-mail: [ismiatiannur@gmail.com](mailto:ismiatiannur@gmail.com)

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### **ABSTRAK**

Menulis merupakan salah satu keterampilan yang paling kompleks dalam konteks English as a Foreign Language (EFL) karena melibatkan kompetensi linguistik serta kemampuan berpikir tingkat tinggi, namun banyak siswa masih mengalami kesulitan akibat keterbatasan kosakata, kurangnya ide, dan pendekatan pembelajaran yang berpusat pada guru. Oleh karena itu, Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) diusulkan sebagai pendekatan alternatif yang mendorong pembelajaran aktif melalui proses bertanya, investigasi, dan refleksi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mensintesis hasil penelitian terkait implementasi IBL dalam pembelajaran menulis EFL serta dampaknya terhadap perkembangan kemampuan menulis siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode structured narrative literature review dengan menganalisis 29 artikel terpilih yang dipublikasikan antara tahun 2019–2025 dari berbagai database akademik seperti Google Scholar, ERIC, DOAJ, dan jurnal terindeks SINTA. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa IBL memberikan dampak positif terhadap kemampuan menulis siswa, termasuk dalam pengembangan ide, organisasi teks, koherensi, akurasi bahasa, serta kualitas tulisan secara keseluruhan. Selain itu, IBL juga meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa dalam proses pembelajaran dan mengembangkan keterampilan berpikir kritis yang mendukung konstruksi argumen dalam tulisan. Meskipun demikian, variasi konteks penelitian dan dominasi studi jangka pendek menjadi keterbatasan dalam generalisasi temuan. Dengan demikian, Inquiry-Based Learning memiliki potensi yang kuat sebagai pendekatan pembelajaran yang efektif untuk meningkatkan kemampuan menulis dalam konteks EFL dan direkomendasikan untuk penelitian lanjutan dalam konteks yang lebih luas dan jangka waktu yang lebih panjang

**Kata Kunci:** *Inquiry-Based Learning, Menulis EFL, Pengembangan Menulis*

### **ABSTRACT**

Writing is considered one of the most complex skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts as it requires both linguistic competence and higher-order thinking skills; however, many students still face difficulties due to limited vocabulary, lack of ideas, and teacher-centered instructional approaches. To address these challenges, Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) has been proposed as an alternative approach that promotes active learning through questioning, investigation, and reflection. This study aims to synthesize previous research on the implementation of IBL in EFL writing instruction and its impact on students' writing development. This study employed a structured narrative literature review by analyzing 29 selected articles published between 2019 and 2025 from various academic databases, including Google Scholar, ERIC, DOAJ, and SINTA-indexed journals. The findings indicate that IBL has a positive impact on students' writing development, particularly in terms of idea generation, text organization, coherence, language accuracy, and overall writing quality. In addition, IBL enhances student engagement in the learning process and fosters critical thinking skills that support argument construction in writing. Despite these benefits, variations in research contexts



and the predominance of short-term studies limit the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, Inquiry-Based Learning demonstrates strong potential as an effective instructional approach for improving writing skills in EFL contexts and is recommended for further investigation in broader contexts and over longer periods of time.

**Keywords:** *Inquiry-Based Learning, EFL Writing, Writing Development*

## INTRODUCTION

Writing is widely recognized as one of the most challenging skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. It requires not only linguistic competence, such as grammar and vocabulary mastery, but also higher-order thinking skills, including idea generation, organization, and argument development (Abdullah & Fatimah, 2021). Despite its importance, many EFL students continue to experience difficulties in writing. Previous studies have reported that students often struggle with limited vocabulary, writing anxiety, lack of ideas, first language interference, and grammatical problems (Jashari & Fojkar, 2019). In addition, these difficulties are frequently associated with the use of monotonous and less effective teaching methods in writing classrooms (Palanisamy & Aziz, 2021; Suvin, 2020).

In response to these challenges, instructional practices in many EFL classrooms remain largely teacher-centered. Teachers tend to provide model texts, explain text structures, and require students to produce similar texts with minimal engagement in idea exploration (Dewali, 2022; K.R. Purnami et al., 2023). Such practices emphasize the final product rather than the writing process. As a result, students become passive learners and have limited opportunities to develop critical thinking and construct their own understanding (Chen & Yu, 2019). This condition suggests that conventional approaches may not sufficiently support the development of essential cognitive processes involved in writing.

To address these limitations, Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) has been increasingly proposed as an alternative instructional approach that promotes active learning through questioning, investigation, and reflection (Pedaste et al., 2015). In the context of writing instruction, IBL enables students to explore topics in greater depth, gather relevant information, and construct meaning before engaging in the writing process. This approach is considered beneficial for enhancing students' critical thinking, creativity, and overall writing quality, as writing is grounded in meaningful inquiry and understanding (Hamid et al., 2021)

A growing body of research has highlighted the positive effects of Inquiry-Based Learning on student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement, particularly in language learning contexts (Chang et al., 2016; Pei, 2025). However, existing studies tend to focus primarily on general learning outcomes, with limited emphasis on how inquiry processes specifically support the development of writing skills in EFL contexts. In particular, there is still a lack of synthesis that explains how different stages of inquiry contribute to specific aspects of writing development, such as idea organization, text coherence, and argument construction. This gap indicates the need for a more focused understanding of how inquiry-based learning facilitates writing development beyond general learning outcomes.

Therefore, this study aims to synthesize previous research on the implementation of Inquiry-Based Learning in EFL writing instruction, with a particular focus on its impact on students' writing development. Specifically, this review seeks to identify how inquiry-based processes contribute to improvements in key components of writing, including idea development, organization, and coherence, as well as to highlight the pedagogical implications for implementing IBL in EFL writing classrooms.



## **METHODS**

This study employed a structured narrative literature review to examine previous research on the implementation of Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) in teaching writing within EFL contexts. This approach was selected to allow a comprehensive and flexible synthesis of existing studies while maintaining a systematic procedure in data collection and analysis. A narrative literature review enables researchers to interpret and integrate findings from various studies in a descriptive and contextual manner (Andriani et al., 2025). In addition, this approach is considered appropriate for exploring the conceptual and pedagogical aspects of instructional practices in diverse educational contexts (Snyder, 2019). The data were collected through a systematic search of several academic databases, including Google Scholar, ERIC, DOAJ, and SINTA-indexed journals. The search process employed relevant keywords (Stratton, 2019), such as “Inquiry-Based Learning in EFL,” “IBL and writing skill,” “inquiry learning in writing classroom,” and “EFL writing instruction,” using a combination of keywords and Boolean operators. To ensure the relevance and currency of the review, the selected articles were limited to those published between 2015 and 2025. A total of 50 articles were initially identified, of which 29 met the inclusion criteria and were included in the final analysis.

The selection of articles was conducted using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria consisted of: (1) studies focusing on the implementation of Inquiry-Based Learning in EFL contexts, (2) studies examining writing skills as the primary outcome, and (3) empirical or review studies published in peer-reviewed journals. Meanwhile, studies that did not focus on writing instruction or did not provide sufficient methodological detail were excluded. The selection process was carried out purposively to ensure that the chosen studies were relevant and contributed significantly to the research focus (van Wee & Banister, 2024). The selected studies were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This method allows researchers to identify, analyze, and report patterns within data systematically. The analysis focused on several key aspects, including (1) the stages of IBL implementation, (2) instructional strategies used in writing classrooms, (3) the roles of teachers and students, (4) the impact of IBL on students’ writing development, and (5) challenges encountered during implementation. Through this process, similarities and differences across studies were identified and interpreted. Finally, the findings from the selected studies were synthesized to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Inquiry-Based Learning supports writing development in EFL contexts. This synthesis aimed to identify common patterns in IBL implementation and their impact on writing development, highlight emerging trends, and reveal research gaps, particularly in relation to writing development and inquiry processes, that may inform future studies and pedagogical practices.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Based on an analysis of various studies examining the implementation of Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) in EFL contexts, a relatively consistent pattern emerges regarding its impact on students’ writing development. Across the reviewed studies, IBL is frequently reported to influence several aspects of the writing learning process. These influences are not limited to improvements in students’ writing scores but also include changes in how students generate ideas, organize information, and participate in writing activities. Many of the reviewed studies describe how inquiry-based learning encourages students to explore questions, search for relevant information, and discuss ideas before producing written texts. Through these processes, students are able to develop a deeper understanding of the topics they write about, which in turn supports the production of clearer and more organized texts.



In addition to improvements in writing performance, several studies also highlight other learning outcomes associated with inquiry-based learning. These include improvements in the overall quality of students' writing, increased engagement during classroom activities, and the development of critical thinking skills that support idea generation and argument construction. Although the reviewed studies were conducted in different educational contexts and employed different research designs, many of them report similar patterns of improvement following the implementation of inquiry-based learning.

## **Result**

### **1. Enhancing Overall Writing Performance through Inquiry-Based Learning**

The implementation of Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) has demonstrated a transformative impact on students' writing performance, particularly within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Many students in these environments initially struggle to generate coherent ideas or organize their thoughts effectively when tasked with writing in English. However, the inquiry-based approach addresses these fundamental challenges by shifting the focus from a passive task to an active exploration of knowledge. Before the actual writing begins, students are encouraged to investigate specific questions, conduct research, and engage in collaborative discussions. This preparatory phase allows learners to gather relevant information and connect diverse ideas more fluidly. As a result, writing evolves into a meaningful learning activity where students are not merely completing a classroom assignment but are actively constructing knowledge. This process ensures that the transition from thought to text is supported by a solid foundation of explored information and structured understanding.

Empirical evidence from various studies consistently supports the claim that inquiry-based activities lead to significant gains in students' writing scores. Research conducted by Ali and Ulkar (2020), Dandy et al. (2023), and Hamid et al. (2021), has documented noticeable improvements in performance, typically identified through a comparative analysis of pre-test and post-test results. These findings suggest that the development of writing ability is a continuous process facilitated by the investigative nature of IBL. During these activities, students are required to investigate complex topics and gather evidence before they even attempt to compose their final texts. This structured investigation supports learners in generating ideas more effectively and organizing them with greater clarity. Furthermore, the consistency of these results across different research settings indicates that IBL provides a robust framework for improving student outcomes, helping them overcome the typical barriers associated with academic writing in a second language (Huang et al., 2024; Rodriguez-Barboza et al., 2023; Waked et al., 2024; Wale & Nurie, 2021).

### **2. Structural Development and Linguistic Quality in Student Composition**

Beyond general score improvements, Inquiry-Based Learning significantly contributes to the enhancement of writing quality, specifically regarding text organization and coherence. Studies emphasize that IBL encourages students to explore topics deeply, which naturally leads to better paragraph unity and the effective use of topic sentences. For instance, Putri and Novita (2024) observed that students demonstrated measurable progress in organizing their thoughts and maintaining clarity throughout their compositions. Similarly, Hermansyah and Sadapotto (2021) noted that students who engaged in inquiry-based strategies were better equipped to elaborate on their ideas and provide relevant supporting details. By engaging in questioning and exploration before the writing phase, students develop a clearer mental roadmap of how their ideas should be connected. This awareness of logical flow and structural integrity ensures that the final written product is not only informative but also easy for the reader to follow and understand.



The linguistic dimensions of writing, such as vocabulary use and grammatical accuracy, also see marked improvement through the IBL process. Research by Kasmainsi and Zahrida (2022), Daulay et al. (2023), and Mulyani et al. (2025) indicates that students become more aware of how language features interact within written communication. Furthermore, Sukserm and Wasanasomsithi (2023) highlighted that combining IBL with visual literacy activities helped students produce texts with stronger content and more accurate language usage. This multifaceted approach allows students to experiment with a wider range of expressions, as seen in the findings of Nguyen Thi Thao and Pham Quang (2024). Additionally, Othman (2021) found that IBL helped reduce writing anxiety among postgraduate students, providing them with the confidence to explore language more creatively. When students feel prepared through investigation, they are more likely to produce coherent, meaningful, and well-developed texts that reflect both linguistic precision and high-level content development across various genres of writing.

### **3. Fostering Student Engagement and Learner Autonomy**

A crucial finding in the study of Inquiry-Based Learning is the significant increase in student engagement and the creation of a more interactive classroom atmosphere. Traditional writing instruction often relies on a teacher-centered approach, which can lead to passivity; however, IBL shifts this dynamic by placing the student at the center of the learning process. According to Ulkar and Ali (2023), students responded more positively to IBL because it allowed them to participate actively in problem-solving and classroom discussions. This involvement makes the learning experience feel more personal and meaningful, as students see their own inquiries shaping the direction of the lesson. When students are given the agency to ask questions and explore their own interests within a topic, they become more motivated to see the writing task through to completion. This shift in engagement is essential for creating a sustainable interest in writing development.

The development of learner autonomy and responsibility is another hallmark of the inquiry-based approach across various educational settings. Studies by Tresnawati (2021) and Hidayat et al. (2025) have shown that IBL increases student initiative and supports self-regulated learning habits, even in hybrid or digital learning environments. Imansyah et al. (2019) and Amelia and Prystiananta (2021) also emphasized that this method encourages creativity and responsibility, as students must manage their own investigation and data collection. By fostering independence, IBL prepares students to handle complex writing tasks with less direct supervision, as they learn how to manage the investigative process themselves. This sense of ownership over the learning process not only improves the immediate quality of their writing but also equips them with lifelong skills such as initiative and self-directed inquiry. Consequently, students move from being passive recipients of information to becoming active, independent investigators of their own academic growth.

### **4. Integration of Critical Thinking Skills into the Writing Process**

Inquiry-Based Learning serves as a powerful catalyst for the development of students' critical thinking skills, which are inherently linked to the cognitive demands of writing. Because the IBL process requires learners to investigate problems, evaluate various sources of information, and reflect on their findings, it naturally engages higher-order thinking. Rather than simply summarizing existing information, students must analyze ideas from different perspectives and formulate evidence-based conclusions. Wale and Bogale (2021) identified that inquiry-based writing instruction significantly improved six key dimensions of critical thinking: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. These cognitive skills allow students to approach writing tasks more thoughtfully and systematically. By



strengthening the link between thinking and writing, IBL ensures that students are not just recording facts but are engaging in a rigorous intellectual exercise that enhances the depth and quality of their arguments.

Further research reinforces the relationship between inquiry-based practices and the strengthening of analytical capabilities in student writers. Studies by Erviona et al. (2023), Amelia and Prystiananta (2021), and Imansyah et al. (2019) have found that IBL strengthens critical thinking skills in tandem with improvements in overall writing performance. This synergy suggests that as students become better at investigating and questioning information, they simultaneously become more adept at organizing and presenting complex ideas in their written work. The ability to evaluate the relevance of information and synthesize it into a coherent narrative is a sophisticated skill that IBL directly targets. Ultimately, the inquiry process provides the necessary cognitive tools for students to produce well-supported, analytical texts. These findings collectively demonstrate that IBL does not just teach students how to write; it teaches them how to think critically, ensuring that their writing is characterized by logical rigor and intellectual maturity.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this review indicate that Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) has a significant impact on EFL students' writing development. Across the reviewed studies, improvements were observed not only in students' writing performance but also in the way students generated ideas, organized their texts, and engaged in the writing process. In addition, several studies reported increased student participation during learning activities as well as the development of critical thinking skills. These patterns suggest that inquiry-based instruction creates a learning environment in which students actively construct knowledge rather than passively receive information from the teacher.

One possible explanation for these improvements can be understood through the nature of the inquiry learning process itself. Inquiry-based learning typically involves several interconnected stages, including orientation, conceptualization, investigation, and reflection. During these stages, students are encouraged to formulate questions, explore information, and evaluate ideas before producing a final outcome. When applied to writing instruction, this process allows students to spend more time exploring and understanding the topic before they begin composing their texts. As a result, writing is not treated merely as a final product to be completed but as a process through which learners gradually develop and refine their ideas. Evidence from several studies indicates that students who experience structured inquiry cycles demonstrate improvements in idea generation, sentence construction, and content development in their writing (Amelia & Prystiananta, 2021);

The improvement in writing quality observed in many of the reviewed studies can also be explained from the perspective of second language writing development. Writing is widely recognized as a complex cognitive activity that involves generating ideas, organizing information, and developing arguments. Effective writing instruction therefore needs to support learners not only in mastering linguistic forms but also in structuring ideas in meaningful and coherent ways. Inquiry-based learning appears to support this process because students are encouraged to investigate topics, discuss information, and reflect on their understanding before writing. Through this exploration process, learners can develop a clearer understanding of the topic, which may lead to more coherent and well-developed texts. Empirical evidence suggests that structured inquiry activities help learners address common difficulties related to vocabulary use, grammar, and conjunctions, resulting in clearer organization and improved writing quality (Taye & Mengesha, 2024). Similarly, repeated inquiry cycles have been found to enhance



students' abilities in idea development, organization, vocabulary use, and grammatical accuracy in descriptive writing tasks (Imansyah et al., 2019).

Another important aspect highlighted in the findings is the increase in student engagement during inquiry-based learning activities. In many traditional writing classrooms, students often struggle to generate ideas and tend to rely heavily on teacher explanations. Inquiry-based learning shifts this instructional focus toward student participation, where learners are encouraged to ask questions, exchange ideas with their peers, and explore information from multiple sources. From a sociocultural perspective, learning is strongly influenced by interaction and collaboration with others, as knowledge is constructed through social dialogue and shared experiences. Within this framework, classroom discussions and collaborative inquiry activities provide opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning, clarify their understanding, and refine their ideas before expressing them in written form. Research has shown that students who participate in collaborative inquiry activities, including technology-supported discussions, tend to become more active and confident in contributing ideas during writing tasks (Erviona et al., 2023).

The development of critical thinking skills reported in several studies can also be interpreted as a natural outcome of the inquiry process. Inquiry-based learning requires students to analyze information, evaluate different perspectives, and formulate conclusions based on available evidence. These activities involve higher-order thinking skills that are closely related to the cognitive processes required in writing. When learners evaluate information and organize arguments during inquiry activities, they are simultaneously practicing the reasoning processes needed to construct logical and well-supported written texts. Consequently, writing tasks become opportunities not only for practicing language use but also for developing analytical thinking and reasoning abilities. Empirical evidence indicates that inquiry activities strengthen students' abilities in analysis, evaluation, and argument construction, which in turn contribute to the development of more coherent and persuasive written texts (Wale & Bogale, 2021).

Taken together, these findings suggest that inquiry-based learning supports writing development through several interconnected processes, including idea exploration, collaborative discussion, and reflective thinking. These learning experiences enable students to engage more actively in constructing and communicating their ideas before translating them into written form. In EFL contexts, where learners often experience difficulties in generating ideas and organizing texts in English, such learning experiences play an important role in helping students produce more meaningful, coherent, and well-structured written work.

## CONCLUSION

This review examined a range of studies investigating the implementation of Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) in EFL writing instruction. The findings indicate that Inquiry-Based Learning has a significant impact on EFL students' writing development. Across the reviewed studies, students who participated in inquiry-based learning activities demonstrated improvements in several aspects of writing, including the organization of ideas, clarity of text structure, and the development of written arguments. In addition, many studies reported increased student engagement in classroom activities as well as the development of critical thinking skills that are closely related to the writing process. These findings suggest that inquiry-based learning creates learning conditions in which students are encouraged to explore ideas, actively construct knowledge, and express their thoughts more effectively in written form.



Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. The studies included in this review were conducted in diverse educational contexts and employed different research designs, which may affect the comparability of the findings. In addition, many of the reviewed studies focused on relatively short-term classroom interventions. As a result, the long-term impact of inquiry-based learning on students' writing development remains less clearly understood. Future research may therefore investigate the sustained effects of inquiry-based instruction over longer periods of time and explore its implementation across a wider range of EFL learning environments. In conclusion, Inquiry-Based Learning shows considerable potential as an instructional approach for supporting writing development in EFL classrooms. By encouraging students to investigate topics, exchange ideas, and reflect on information before writing, inquiry-based learning may help learners strengthen not only their writing abilities but also the critical thinking skills that are essential for effective communication in academic contexts.

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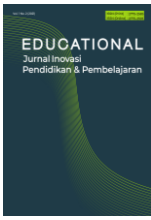
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