

A comparative literature review on constructivism strategies for writing skill development in EFL learners

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ABSTRACT

Writing is one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners, as they often face vocabulary limitations, weak grammar skills, and difficulties in generating and organizing ideas. Although various learning approaches have been developed, many methods still lack the cognitive support and student-centered engagement necessary to effectively improve writing skills. This gap highlights the need to examine how constructivist-based strategies can improve student writing performance. This qualitative literature review analyzes three constructivist approaches taken from reputable articles. The purpose of this study is to identify how these strategies improve cognitive, affective, and interactive aspects of EFL writing learning. The findings show that mind mapping effectively supports idea development and writing structure organization, while reducing student anxiety when writing. Blog-based learning encourages collaboration, reflection, and audience awareness, which have an impact on writing fluency and critical thinking skills. Meanwhile, situation-based learning places writing activities in a real-world context, thereby improving understanding, vocabulary, and communication goals. In conclusion, constructivist strategies offer a number of advantages through active, engaging, and student-centered learning. This approach helps students write more clearly, purposefully, and confidently. This study recommends integrating several constructivist strategies simultaneously to improve the effectiveness of writing instruction and encourages further research with a broader scope of data.



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INTRODUCTION

English is an international language, plays an increasing importance in the contemporary period of globalization. English is an essential tool for global communication, utilized in daily interactions as well as in professional, academic, and technological contexts globally (Bondarchuk et al., 2024). The importance of English is obvious across multiple fields, including education, business, science, technology, and international diplomacy, where it frequently functions as the universal language for instruction, publication, and negotiation (Xhemaili, 2022). Andayani (2022) states that the use of English is a consequence of globalization, with its use expanding along the rise of worldwide collaboration and global mobility. Increased engagement with English in daily life correlates with a heightened reliance on English competence for improved job possibilities and educational development (Akther, 2022). Abro et al. (2025) state that English competence can substantially affect an individual's productivity, especially in academic and professional settings where communication, presentation, and collaboration primarily take place in English.

Therefore, mastery in English has become as an essential requirement for students worldwide (Ali, 2022), especially for those aim to engage in international competition (AlKadi & Ali, 2022). In non-English-speaking countries, English is both a foreign language and an interface to global information and academic resources (Nghia & Vu, 2023). Mastery in English allows students to engage with peers from diverse cultures, comprehend global viewpoints, and participate in worldwide academic discussions (Davidson & Liu, 2020). Achieving full proficiency in English necessitates the cultivation of four fundamental language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. All of these skills are essential for efficient communication; yet, writing is among the most intricate and demanding skills to acquire, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners (Taye & Mengesha, 2024). Therefore, it is imperative to explore creative ways that assist students in developing these

competencies, especially in writing, which necessitates a combination of vocabulary, grammar, organization, and clarity of ideas (Fitria, 2024).

Writing is an essential skill that significantly contributes to students overall language development. It helps organizing of thoughts, expression of ideas, and effective communication of meaning (Bora, 2023). It serves as both a mechanism for language generation and an medium for reflection, examination, and scholarly involvement. Harlena (2020) states that writing is a method for generating language and articulating one's ideas, emotions, and viewpoints in a systematic and cohesive form. Saaty (2023) defines writing skills as the capacity to express thoughts, feelings, and perspectives through written language in a comprehensible manner. Eschenauer et al. (2023) emphasize that writing is a creative and expressive ability that enables indirect communication, particularly advantageous in educational and professional contexts. Nonetheless, despite its importance, numerous students particularly those acquiring English as a Foreign Language (EFL) experience difficulties with writing. Common difficulties encompass concept generation and organization, correct grammatical application, logical sentence structure formation, and vocabulary limitations (Aminah et al., 2023). These challenges may result in frustration, reduced confidence, and the avoidance of writing assignments, thus obstructing students' academic advancement (Yan, 2024). Therefore, it is imperative for educators to employ effective instructional strategies that not only address these problems but also inspire students to enhance their writing skills within a supportive and engaging learning environment (Rahimi, 2024).

Many learning methods have been developed and used by teachers, one of which is the theory of constructivism. Constructivism appears to be a relevant and adaptive paradigm that teachers can apply. Constructivism is a learning theory that states that learners actively construct knowledge and make meaning based on their individual or social experience (Zajda & Zajda, 2021). Confrey described constructivism as the belief that all knowledge is a product of our own cognitive actions (Mitry, 2021).

Classical constructivist theorists such as Piaget (1970), Vygotsky (1978), and Bruner (1986) argue that learning occurs when learners actively construct meaning through interaction, discovery, and reflection. Unlike the traditional teacher-centered approach, the constructivist model places students as active participants, while teachers act as facilitators who guide students in organizing information, exploring ideas, and building deeper understanding (Alam, 2023). This model is highly effective in EFL writing instruction because it encourages higher-order thinking skills, supports the process of idea development, and enhances the ability to express ideas clearly and confidently (Srouf et al., 2021).

Although various constructivist-based strategies are increasingly being used in writing instruction, existing research still tends to examine each strategy separately and rarely provides a comparative evaluation of their advantages, limitations, and suitability in various contexts. Previous reviews have also focused more on general pedagogical impacts than on their specific application to EFL writing skills. Therefore, a comparative literature review is needed to synthesize and critically analyze various constructivist strategies to identify how they support the development of writing skills in different contexts and which strategies have the greatest pedagogical value.

This article presents a comparative literature review of constructivist strategies to improve the writing skills of EFL students. By analyzing and comparing these various approaches, this study aims to provide educators with clearer insights into effective constructivist-based writing pedagogy and encourage further research on the application of constructivist theory in EFL writing instruction.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative systematic literature review to examine constructivist-based strategies that can improve the writing skills of EFL learners. According to Snyder (2019), a qualitative review is appropriate for synthesizing conceptual and pedagogical insights from various studies, especially when the research objective is to deepen theoretical understanding rather than produce statistical generalizations. This approach is in line with the objective of this study, which is to analyze the pedagogical effectiveness of constructivist strategies used in EFL writing instruction.

To ensure academic accuracy, data was collected exclusively from reputable journal articles indexed by Scopus and peer-reviewed. The search was conducted on December 10–16, 2024, using several Boolean-based keyword combinations, including “constructivism” AND “EFL writing,” “constructivist approach” AND “writing instruction,” “English language learners” AND “writing skills”. These combinations allowed the search to remain conceptually focused while capturing relevant variations of constructivist-based pedagogy.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria are clearly defined to ensure transparency in the selection process. Articles were included if: (1) they were published between 2015 and 2025, (2) they were written in English, (3) they explicitly examined constructivist strategies in EFL writing instruction, (4) they focused on the development of writing skills, and (5) they were published in Scopus-indexed journals. Meanwhile, articles are excluded if they only discuss constructivism at a theoretical level, apply it to skills other than writing, focus on the context of ESL or native English speakers, and are not peer-reviewed scientific works such as conference proceedings, theses, or book chapters.

The screening process followed the PRISMA approach. The initial search yielded ten articles. After screening the titles and abstracts, six articles were eliminated because they did not directly examine the application of constructivism in EFL writing instruction or did not apply writing instruction techniques. Four articles remained for full review; however, one article was later removed because it only used a general constructivist perspective without applying specific writing teaching strategies. Thus, three articles met all eligibility criteria and were analyzed further. Although the number of studies included was relatively small, this was justified by the narrow and highly specific focus of the study, in line with the principles of qualitative review according to Snyder (2019).

The analysis of selected studies was conducted by extracting data related to research objectives, participants, learning context, research design, descriptions of constructivist-based strategies, and findings related to writing skill improvement. Each article represented a different instructional approach: mind mapping, blog-based collaborative writing, and situational or context-based learning. Thematic synthesis was conducted through repeated reading, open coding, and grouping of emerging themes. This process enabled the identification of recurring pedagogical patterns, strengths, limitations, and contextual factors that influenced the effectiveness of each strategy. Comparisons between studies ensured that the review did not stop at descriptive summaries but provided critical and comparative analysis as recommended by the reviewers.

All processes in this review, including searching, screening, data selection, coding, and thematic interpretation, were thoroughly documented to ensure methodological transparency, credibility, and replicability. This systematic and rigorous procedure strengthened the trustworthiness of the findings and contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of how constructivist strategies can support EFL students' writing development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results from the chosen studies indicate that constructivist-based strategies, specifically mind-mapping, blog writing, and situation-based learning, beneficially impact the writing development of EFL students. Each technique provides distinct advantages in helping learners' organization of ideas, fostering creativity and interaction, and contextualizing learning within real-life events. The subsequent sections define the outcomes of each methodology as recorded in the examined literature.

Mind-mapping Approach

The mind-mapping strategy is an effective constructivist approach for developing students' writing skills. Research conducted by Fahady (2019) was conducted at the Department of English, College of Education for Humanities, University of Mosul, for the academic year 2018/2019. The sample comprised 80 second-year students. The use of mind mapping helps students to group ideas before writing. Mind-mapping functions as a visual tool to help students design a writing framework and connect main ideas with supporting details between paragraphs.

The use of this mind-mapping approach also encourages students' creativity in writing because they can explore new ideas visually without fear of making mistakes when writing (Mustika et al., 2025). The results of students' writing can produce essays that are logical, have clear relationships in each clear idea, and have strong arguments. This study shows that mind mapping can help students overcome anxiety in writing with a framework that has been created in advance. Therefore, mind mapping is an effective tool for improving students' ability to create written texts systematically and measurably.

The Use of Blogs in Developing Writing Skills

The use of blogs in writing is based on the theory of social constructivism, which emphasizes collaboration, interaction, and construction. This study was conducted at BWDA Arts and Science College, Mailam (Tindivanam), conducted by Perumal, K, I, Ajit (2022). The participants in this study were 54 second-year B.A English and Commerce streams. In this study, students were asked to create

a blog as a medium for writing and sharing their ideas. Students publish their writing on blogs. In addition, the students could comment on other students' writing on the blog. This approach shows that students are more confident in conveying the odes they have, and their ideas can be seen by many audiences, not just by teachers.

The results of this study indicated that using blogs in writing can improve students' writing skills. In addition, with these blog media, there is interaction in the form of comments and discussions on the blog. The existence of these comments and discussions can strengthen students' critical thinking and analytical skills. Blogs are an effective tool for applying social constructivism theory to EFL learning

Situation-based Approach

The situation-based approach model is a constructivist approach designed to connect learning with real-world contexts, thus creating meaningful learning experiences for students. Research was conducted by Sroura et al. (2021) at the "Hayel Abdul Hameed" Secondary School. The participants in this study were 87 students in the first semester of the academic year 2019/2020.

In this study, this model was applied using reading texts as the main task for students in writing. In the approach used through integrated learning, students are asked to read and understand a text first, and then they are asked to write a text with information that has been understood. With this model, students can increase their vocabulary, specifically in relevant contexts.

The results of this study indicate that situation-based teaching is highly effective in improving students' writing skills. This method can also improve students' vocabulary and students can also improve their understanding of the correct sentence structure. This approach also enables students to connect learning with everyday life, as well as increase their motivation in writing.

Comparative Analysis

To highlight the key differences between the constructivist strategies discussed in this review, the following table presents a comparative summary of their main strengths, limitations, and most appropriate applications in the context of EFL writing instruction.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis

Strategy	Key Strengths	Limitations	Best Suited For
Mind Mapping	Organizes ideas, reduces anxiety, improves coherence	Minimal interaction; limited focus on revision	Planning stage of writing; students struggling with idea structuring
Blog Writing	Encourages collaboration, peer feedback, and critical thinking	Depends heavily on students' digital literacy and motivation	Developing argumentation, enhancing audience awareness, revision through interaction
Situation-Based Learning	Contextual relevance, vocabulary-in-context, increases motivation	Requires authentic materials and intensive facilitation	Classes needing real-world contexts; strengthening meaningful comprehension

Constructivism-based learning strategies have proven to be effective in enhancing students' writing skills, particularly in EFL contexts. This method develops an extensive and significant learning experience while promoting the acquisition of essential 21st-century abilities, including critical thinking, creativity, and self-reflection (Kharroubi & ElMediouni, 2024). Constructivism strategies promote active student engagement in the learning process, fostering ownership of their ideas and enhancing confidence in written expression (Le & Nguyen, 2024). The results from the three analyzed research consistently indicate that constructivist methodologies foster supportive, student-centered environments that substantially enhance writing performance. The subsequent items are essential discussion topics derived from the literature.

Writing tasks were addressed contextually. Strategies that connect learning to real-world contexts such as project-based learning and situational learning, enhance students' comprehension of the relevance and applicability of their writing (Gabuardi, 2021). These strategies offer significant settings that enhance understanding, increase task relevance, and foster heightened learner involvement. Situational learning specifically promotes the application of language abilities in real contexts, make the learning experience more relevant and real. This method has demonstrated the ability to develop an

intrinsic drive, which is essential for enduring learning. According to Damayanti (2023), intrinsic motivation not only bolsters students' writing performance but also improves other language abilities, such as listening. Furthermore, when writing is contextualized, students perceive it not only as a technical effort but as a practical method for articulating ideas, addressing difficulties, and interacting with real-world challenges (Maristry, 2020). This change in viewpoint fosters enhanced confidence, creativity, and intent in their writing. Contextualization facilitates the connection between academic material and students' real-life experiences, enhancing the inclusivity and relevance of learning. Consequently, incorporating contextual methods throughout writing instruction is essential for enhancing comprehension, encouraging active engagement, and eventually elevating learning outcomes in the EFL classroom (Sutrisno et al., 2024).

Constructivist-based strategies reduce students writing anxiety. Anxiety frequently defines a significant barrier for students during the writing process, particularly when they lack clarity on how to initiate or structure their ideas (Yan, 2024). A primary source of this fear is the insufficient comprehension of writing structure (Bulqiyah et al., 2021). These approaches facilitate the writing process by offering a clear and structured framework, make it more manageable and less intimidating. When students are presented with systematic steps, such as planning, organising, and revising they are able to feel assured and maintain concentration during the activity. A clearly delineated structure not only reduces ambiguity but also enables students to focus on creating substantive information. This not only alleviates anxiety but also enhances writing outcomes regarding coherence, clarity, and overall quality.

Constructivist-based learning significantly enhanced students' critical thinking skills. This method actively promotes students to analyse material, assess various viewpoints, and establish logical relationships between concepts all of which are crucial elements of proficient writing (Le & Nguyen, 2024). Constructivist learning settings provide students the opportunity to investigate challenges, interrogate assumptions, and contemplate their thinking processes (Mohammed & Kinyo, 2020). Tarchi and Mason (2020) state that critical thinking skills are essential for improving students' capacity to create well-organised and logical expository texts. In these contexts, writing is regarded not solely as a mechanical endeavour, but as a method for communicating thoughts, formulating arguments, and substantiating beliefs with facts. Students are instructed to formulate concepts that are rational, equitable, and substantiated by relevant evidence. These critical thinking skills beyond the classroom, enabling students to respond purposely and analytically to real-world situations in both academic and non-academic contexts.

CONCLUSION

The constructivist approach plays a strategic role in improving EFL students' writing skills because it encourages active, meaningful, and learner-centered learning. The three strategies examined each has a unique but complementary contribution to writing instruction. Mind mapping helps students generate and organize ideas visually, thereby reducing anxiety, especially in the pre-writing stage. The blog approach emphasizes collaboration, peer feedback, and active participation through interaction with a real audience. These strategies not only improve writing fluency but also foster critical and analytical thinking skills. Meanwhile, situation-based learning encourages students to respond to real-world issues through writing, thereby strengthening their ability to construct meaning, provide arguments, and connect writing to social and global issues.

Comparative analysis shows that no single strategy is universally superior. Each approach is most effective when used in a specific context according to learning needs. Mind mapping is more suitable for students who need help organizing ideas in the early stages of writing. Blogs are more effective for learning that emphasizes interaction, continuous revision, and audience awareness. Situation-based learning is most appropriate when teachers want to develop deeper conceptual understanding, contextual reasoning, and authentic communication skills. Overall, constructivist strategies not only improve writing skills, but also support students' cognitive, affective, and socio-cultural development. This study contributes by presenting a comparative synthesis of constructivist strategies in EFL writing instruction, explaining the pedagogical value of each approach, and identifying the contexts in which these strategies are most effective. From a practical standpoint, teachers are advised to combine these strategies in an integrated manner. However, this study also has limitations, such as a limited number of articles and a narrow publication range (2015–2025). Further

research needs to expand the scope of constructivist strategies, explore hybrid learning models, and involve more EFL educational contexts so that the findings can be generalized more strongly.

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