

## **A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF LINGUISTIC, ORGANIZATIONAL, AND AFFECTIVE CHALLENGES IN EFL DESCRIPTIVE WRITING**

Sarah Theodora Wahyuni Lumbantobing<sup>1</sup>, Selviana Napitupulu<sup>2</sup>

Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar<sup>1-2</sup>

Corresponding email: [sarahlumbantobing49@gmail.com](mailto:sarahlumbantobing49@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [selviananapitupulu@uhnp.ac.id](mailto:selviananapitupulu@uhnp.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>

### **ARTICLE INFO**

#### **Article History**

Submission : 23-01-2026

Received : 23-01-2026

Revised : 30-01-2026

Accepted : 14-02-2026

#### **Keywords**

EFL Writing

Descriptive Text

Affective Factors

Linguistic Difficulties

Qualitative Analysis

### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to conceptually examine the linguistic, organizational, and affective challenges encountered by EFL learners in writing descriptive texts. Employing a qualitative conceptual approach, the study critically synthesizes findings from relevant empirical and theoretical studies on EFL writing, with particular attention to the Indonesian context. The analysis reveals that students' writing difficulties are not solely rooted in linguistic limitations such as grammar and vocabulary, but are also closely associated with weaknesses in text organization and affective factors, including writing anxiety, low self-confidence, and fear of making errors. Importantly, these challenges are found to be interrelated, whereby linguistic difficulties tend to intensify affective barriers, which subsequently hinder learners' ability to organize ideas coherently. The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its integrative conceptual framework that positions linguistic, organizational, and affective dimensions as mutually reinforcing components of EFL writing difficulties, extending previous research that has predominantly examined these aspects in isolation. The study concludes that pedagogical responses to EFL writing challenges should adopt a holistic approach that simultaneously addresses language form, text structure, and learners' emotional engagement in the writing process.

### **Introduction**

Writing is widely acknowledged as one of the most demanding skills for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as it requires the integration of linguistic knowledge, cognitive processing, and affective engagement. In the context of descriptive writing, learners are expected not only to demonstrate grammatical accuracy and lexical appropriacy, but also to

organize ideas coherently and express meaning in a clear and engaging manner. Despite its importance in academic contexts, descriptive writing remains a persistent challenge for many EFL learners, particularly in secondary education settings.

Previous studies on EFL writing have consistently reported a range of difficulties experienced by learners, including grammatical errors, limited vocabulary, and problems with text organization. These studies have provided valuable insights into common patterns of writing problems and have contributed to the development of various pedagogical strategies. However, much of the existing research tends to address these difficulties in a fragmented manner, often focusing on linguistic or structural aspects while giving comparatively limited attention to learners' affective experiences during the writing process.

More recent research has begun to acknowledge the role of affective factors, such as writing anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence, in shaping learners' writing performance. Nevertheless, these affective dimensions are frequently discussed as supplementary variables rather than as integral components of writing difficulty. As a result, the complex interplay between linguistic, organizational, and affective challenges in EFL descriptive writing remains underexplored.

This conceptual gap suggests a need for an integrative perspective that critically examines how these dimensions interact and reinforce one another. Without such integration, pedagogical responses risk addressing surface-level symptoms of writing difficulty without tackling their underlying interconnections. Moreover, in the Indonesian EFL context, where writing instruction is often examination-oriented, learners' emotional engagement with writing tasks may be further constrained, intensifying existing challenges.

Responding to these limitations, the present study positions itself as a conceptual analysis that synthesizes and critically examines previous research on EFL descriptive writing difficulties. Rather than generating new empirical data, this study aims to reconceptualize existing findings by framing linguistic, organizational, and affective challenges as interconnected dimensions. By doing so, the study seeks to advance theoretical understanding of EFL writing difficulties and to offer a more holistic lens for interpreting learners' struggles in descriptive writing.

## **Research Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative conceptual design aimed at synthesizing and critically analyzing existing empirical and theoretical research on EFL descriptive writing difficulties. The epistemological stance of this approach is interpretivist, viewing writing difficulties as socially and cognitively constructed phenomena shaped by instructional contexts and learners' experiences. Data sources consist of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and relevant academic publications focusing on EFL writing, descriptive text, and affective factors. The analysis follows a thematic synthesis procedure, in which key concepts and patterns are identified, compared, and integrated into a cohesive conceptual framework. To enhance trustworthiness, the analysis emphasizes transparency in source selection and consistency in thematic interpretation.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **1 Writing in the EFL Context**

EFL writing research has long emphasized the complexity of writing as a skill that extends beyond the mere production of grammatically correct sentences. Studies have documented that EFL learners often struggle to transform ideas into coherent written texts due to limited exposure to authentic writing practices and an overemphasis on form-focused instruction. While these studies highlight similar challenges across contexts, their findings are rarely synthesized to reveal broader patterns or tensions that could inform a unified theoretical perspective.

Collectively, the literature suggests that persistent writing difficulties stem not only from limited linguistic competence but also from instructional practices that prioritize accuracy over meaning-making. This body of research provides an important foundation for understanding EFL writing problems, yet it also points to the need for a framework that connects these insights to learners' organizational and affective experiences.

### **2 Descriptive Text and Its Linguistic Features**

Descriptive texts require learners to employ specific linguistic features, including the use of adjectives, relational processes, and clear referential expressions. Research indicates that EFL learners often produce descriptive texts that are generic and repetitive, reflecting limited lexical depth and insufficient control of descriptive language. These findings justify a focused examination of descriptive writing as a genre that poses unique challenges, particularly for secondary school learners who are still developing genre awareness.

From a conceptual standpoint, these linguistic difficulties cannot be separated from learners' ability to organize information meaningfully. The literature thus supports the argument that linguistic and organizational challenges in descriptive writing are closely intertwined.

### **3 Common Difficulties in EFL Writing**

Studies on common EFL writing difficulties consistently identify problems related to grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and cohesion. However, these studies often stop at listing categories of errors without critically examining how such difficulties interact. When viewed collectively, the literature reveals a pattern in which linguistic weaknesses frequently co-occur with organizational breakdowns, suggesting a more complex underlying structure of writing difficulty.

This observation highlights a research gap: while individual difficulties are well documented, there is limited conceptual work that synthesizes these findings to explain their interrelationships. Addressing this gap is essential for advancing theoretical understanding of EFL writing challenges.

### **4 Pedagogical Approaches to Teaching Writing**

Various pedagogical approaches, such as process-based writing, genre-based instruction, and collaborative learning, have been proposed to address EFL writing difficulties. Although these approaches offer valuable strategies, the literature often presents them as generalized solutions without explicitly linking them to the specific dimensions of writing difficulty they are intended to address.

From a conceptual perspective, these pedagogical discussions imply the necessity of an approach that simultaneously targets linguistic competence, text organization, and affective support. This study adopts this implication as an analytical lens, using it to interpret writing difficulties as multidimensional phenomena rather than isolated instructional problems.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The conceptual analysis reveals three interrelated categories of challenges in EFL descriptive writing: linguistic, organizational, and affective difficulties. Linguistic difficulties, including grammatical inaccuracies and limited vocabulary, often serve as the most visible obstacles. However, these issues frequently trigger organizational problems, such as unclear text structure and weak coherence. In turn, repeated experiences of linguistic and organizational failure contribute to affective challenges, particularly writing anxiety and reduced self-confidence.

The relationship among these categories suggests a cyclical pattern in which difficulties reinforce one another. For instance, learners who lack confidence in their grammatical accuracy may hesitate to elaborate ideas, resulting in underdeveloped descriptions. This finding extends previous research by emphasizing the interconnected nature of writing difficulties rather than treating them as separate variables.

From a pedagogical perspective, this integrative interpretation underscores the limitation of instructional approaches that focus exclusively on error correction. Instead, effective writing instruction should acknowledge the emotional dimension of writing and create supportive environments that encourage risk-taking and self-expression alongside linguistic development.

## **Conclusion**

This study provides a conceptual contribution to EFL writing research by integrating linguistic, organizational, and affective dimensions into a unified framework of descriptive writing difficulty. By synthesizing existing literature, the study demonstrates that these challenges are mutually reinforcing and cannot be effectively addressed in isolation. The findings highlight the importance of adopting holistic pedagogical approaches that balance attention to language form, text organization, and learners' emotional engagement.

Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its reliance on secondary sources and the absence of empirical classroom data. Future research may build on this framework by examining its applicability across different text genres, educational levels, or technology-

mediated writing contexts. Such studies could further refine the conceptual model and enhance its relevance for diverse EFL learning environments.

### References

- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (5th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Cheng, Y. S. (2004). A measure of second language writing anxiety. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 13(4), 313–335.
- Flower, L., & Hayes, J. R. (1981). A cognitive process theory of writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 32(4), 365–387.
- Graham, S. (2018). A revised writer(s)-within-community model of writing. *Educational Psychologist*, 53(4), 258–279.
- Harmer, J. (2015). *How to teach writing*. Pearson Education.
- Hyland, K. (2019). *Second language writing* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2013). *Learning vocabulary in another language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. B. (2012). *Academic writing for graduate students* (3rd ed.). University of Michigan Press.