



A Textbook based on Community-based Learning: Its Validity, Practicality and Effectiveness

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Abstract

Persistent difficulties in academic writing among EFL learners reflect a deeper structural problem, namely the disconnection between decontextualized instructional materials and students' lived experiences. Addressing this gap, this study introduces a Community-Based Learning (CBL) textbook that reconceptualizes writing instruction as a process of transforming real-world engagement into structured academic discourse. Using a design-based research approach, the study was conducted through iterative phases of analysis, design, evaluation, and revision involving 23 undergraduate students and two lecturers in an Indonesian higher education context. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, observations, and writing tests, and analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The findings reveal that students' writing difficulties are multidimensional, encompassing linguistic limitations, constrained idea generation, and weak paragraph organization, all of which are intensified by the absence of contextual learning opportunities. The developed textbook demonstrated high validity, strong usability, and substantial instructional effectiveness, evidenced by expert validation results and improved student writing performance during field testing. Crucially, the integration of community-based tasks enabled students to generate meaningful content, strengthen coherence, and construct more logically organized paragraphs. This study extends existing theories of experiential and sociocultural learning by operationalizing them into a coherent instructional material design, rather than treating them as isolated pedagogical strategies. By positioning textbook design as a central mediator of experiential, cognitive, and social learning processes, this research provides a novel and scalable framework for contextualized writing instruction, offering a significant contribution to the global advancement of EFL writing pedagogy.

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INTRODUCTION

Despite decades of pedagogical innovation, academic writing remains one of the most challenging competencies for EFL learners worldwide, particularly in higher education contexts where students are expected to produce coherent and meaningful texts. In the 21st century, English language education has expanded beyond linguistic mastery to include critical thinking, collaboration, and social responsibility as essential competencies for global citizenship. Higher education institutions are therefore required to prepare students not only as proficient language users but also as individuals capable of applying their knowledge in socially relevant and contextually grounded ways. This transformation aligns with global educational priorities such as the Sustainable Development Goals, which emphasize inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all learners (Abuhassna et al., 2025; Nedungadi et al., 2024). However, existing English language teaching practices often remain decontextualized, relying heavily on textbook-driven instruction that prioritizes grammatical accuracy over meaningful communication and real-world application (Pastini & Hardina, 2025; Tabasum & Sadiq, 2025). As a result, students frequently struggle to connect writing tasks with their lived experiences, leading to low engagement and superficial learning outcomes. Writing, as a

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cognitively demanding skill, requires the integration of linguistic competence, idea development, and contextual awareness, making it particularly difficult for EFL learners to master (Jiang & Kalyuga, 2022; Taye & Mengesha, 2024). Empirical studies consistently report that students encounter significant difficulties in generating ideas, organizing paragraphs, and maintaining coherence, highlighting the urgent need for more contextualized and meaningful instructional materials (Mallahi, 2022; Panday, 2025).

One promising approach to addressing these challenges is Community-Based Learning, which integrates academic learning with real-world community engagement to create meaningful and authentic learning experiences. Community-Based Learning enables students to interact directly with social issues, collect real data, and transform their experiences into academic outputs, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice (Li & Yan, 2023). This approach is grounded in experiential learning theory, which posits that knowledge is constructed through the transformation of experience into understanding (Photo, 2025; Williams & Sembiane, 2022). In addition, sociocultural theory emphasizes that learning occurs through interaction with the social environment, reinforcing the importance of contextual and collaborative learning processes (Zhao, 2023). In the field of writing pedagogy, contextual and experience-based approaches have been shown to significantly improve students' ability to generate ideas, develop coherent arguments, and maintain engagement in writing tasks (Prawiro et al., 2025). Despite its strong theoretical and empirical foundation, the implementation of Community-Based Learning in English language teaching remains limited, particularly in the development of structured instructional materials. Most existing textbooks still adopt traditional, skill-based approaches that separate language learning from real-world application, resulting in a disconnect between academic tasks and authentic experiences. Therefore, there is a compelling need to design instructional materials that systematically integrate Community-Based Learning into writing instruction to enhance both relevance and effectiveness.

A growing body of research has explored the challenges and innovations in EFL writing instruction, revealing that writing competence is shaped by complex interactions between linguistic, cognitive, and contextual factors. Studies by Wu et al., (2024) demonstrate that students frequently struggle with idea generation, paragraph organization, and coherence, indicating that writing difficulties extend beyond grammar to include higher-order thinking processes. Similarly, Alawad & Ahmed, (2026); Naini & Ulya, (2025) highlight that sentence-level inaccuracies and lack of structured guidance significantly limit students' ability to produce coherent academic texts. To address these challenges, previous studies have proposed metacognitive strategies, scaffolding techniques, and structured writing processes to support learners' development Ahmadi Safa & Motaghi, (2024); Wang et al., (2024). Other research has emphasized the importance of contextual and project-based learning approaches, showing that authentic tasks can enhance student engagement and improve writing quality Andargie et al., (2025); Chang et al., (2024). In the domain of instructional material development, Alhasani & Orji, (2025); Lu et al., (2022) stress that effective educational products must meet the criteria of validity, practicality, and effectiveness to ensure their usability and impact. Furthermore, studies by Chisunum & Nwadiokwu, (2024); Dixit et al., (2024) demonstrate that aligning instructional materials with students' contextual needs and learning styles significantly enhances learning outcomes. However, most of these studies focus on teaching strategies or digital tools rather than developing comprehensive textbooks that systematically embed Community-Based Learning principles. Consequently, although theoretical support for contextual and experiential learning is well established, its translation into structured instructional materials remains limited.

Despite the extensive literature on writing pedagogy and contextual learning, there remains a significant gap in the development of instructional materials that systematically integrate community-based experiences into academic writing instruction. Existing studies tend to focus on isolated teaching interventions rather than producing comprehensive and validated textbooks that can be consistently implemented in higher education settings. Moreover, many instructional materials remain decontextualized and fail to connect students' learning experiences with real-world social issues, limiting their ability to develop meaningful and coherent written texts. There is also a lack of research that simultaneously evaluates instructional materials in terms of validity, practicality, and effectiveness as integrated quality dimensions. In addition, the absence of structured frameworks for implementing Community-Based Learning in writing instruction creates challenges for lecturers in designing meaningful learning experiences. As a result, writing instruction often

remains theoretical and disconnected from authentic contexts. This issue is particularly critical in academic writing, where students require both linguistic support and contextual grounding to develop their skills effectively. Therefore, addressing this gap requires the development of a theoretically grounded and empirically validated textbook that integrates Community-Based Learning into structured writing instruction.

This study aims to design and develop a textbook based on Community-Based Learning to improve students' academic writing skills, particularly in paragraph writing. The study seeks to integrate real-world community engagement with structured writing processes to enhance students' ability to generate ideas, organize content, and construct coherent paragraphs. In addition, this research evaluates the developed textbook in terms of its validity, practicality, and effectiveness as an instructional product. The study also examines how community-based learning activities influence students' engagement and writing performance in authentic contexts. Furthermore, this research provides a structured pedagogical framework that can guide lecturers in implementing contextual and experiential learning approaches in writing instruction. By bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, this study contributes to the advancement of writing pedagogy in English language teaching. This study also offers a novel contribution by operationalizing Community-Based Learning into a structured textbook design framework that integrates experiential engagement, scaffolded writing processes, and measurable instructional quality indicators within a single pedagogical model. Ultimately, this research positions itself as an innovative effort to transform academic writing instruction into a more contextual, socially responsive, and pedagogically meaningful learning process applicable across diverse EFL contexts.

METHOD

This study employed a design-based research (DBR) approach to systematically develop and evaluate a textbook grounded in Community-Based Learning principles. This approach was selected because it enables iterative refinement of instructional materials while simultaneously generating both practical and theoretical contributions (Abuhassna & Alnawajha, 2023; Bedewy & Lavicza, 2023). Design-based research is particularly suitable for educational product development as it integrates design, implementation, and evaluation within authentic learning environments. In this study, the development process followed four main phases, namely analysis, design, evaluation, and revision, which were conducted cyclically to ensure continuous improvement. The evaluation phase adopted a formative evaluation framework consisting of self-evaluation, expert review, one-to-one evaluation, small group evaluation, and field testing. This framework allows the developed product to be assessed in terms of validity, practicality, and effectiveness. The iterative nature of DBR ensures that the product evolves based on empirical feedback rather than theoretical assumptions alone. Therefore, this approach provides methodological rigor while maintaining strong ecological validity in real classroom settings.

The research was conducted at the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Sriwijaya University, Indonesia, during the 2025/2026 academic year. This setting was selected because the Paragraph Writing course represents a foundational component of academic writing instruction for first-year students. The study was implemented over one academic semester, allowing sufficient time for conducting needs analysis, developing the instructional materials, and carrying out multiple stages of evaluation. The classroom context reflects a typical EFL higher education environment in Indonesia, where students often experience difficulties in academic writing. The institutional context also supports the integration of innovative pedagogical approaches such as Community-Based Learning. This setting provided an authentic environment for testing the practicality and effectiveness of the developed textbook. Furthermore, conducting the study in a real classroom enhances the applicability of the findings. Therefore, the research context was considered both relevant and representative for achieving the study objectives.

The participants of this study consisted of 23 undergraduate students enrolled in the Paragraph Writing course and two lecturers who were actively involved in the teaching process. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, considering their direct relevance to the research objectives and their involvement in the instructional process. The sample included students with varying levels of English proficiency to capture diverse learning needs. The formative evaluation

stages were structured to include three students in the one-to-one evaluation, six students in the small group evaluation, and fourteen students in the field testing phase. This structure follows the principles of formative evaluation in design-based research, where smaller, focused samples are used to obtain in-depth feedback (Nafiz Kaya & Kaya, 2024; Shaheen et al., 2023). The inclusion criteria required participants to be actively enrolled in the course and willing to participate throughout all research stages. The lecturers were included as expert practitioners to provide professional insights into instructional design and implementation. The detailed distribution of participants across evaluation stages is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Participants in Formative Evaluation

Formative evaluation	Number of participants	Notes
One-to-one	3	1 student with low, intermediate, and high English proficiency
Small group	6	3 students with low, intermediate, and high English proficiency
Field test	14	All active students of 2025/2026
	Two lecturers	Handle Paragraph Writing class

The study employed multiple instruments, including questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, observation sheets, and writing tests, to collect comprehensive data. The questionnaire was designed using a Likert-scale format to assess students' writing challenges, learning needs, and expectations. The interview protocol was developed to explore participants' perceptions and experiences in greater depth, allowing for qualitative insights into the effectiveness of the instructional materials. Observation sheets were used to document students' engagement, participation, and interaction during the implementation of the textbook. The writing test was administered to measure students' academic writing performance, particularly in terms of idea development, coherence, and grammatical accuracy. All instruments were developed based on established frameworks in writing pedagogy and instructional design to ensure alignment with the research objectives. Each instrument targeted specific constructs to enable data triangulation. The use of multiple instruments enhances the comprehensiveness and credibility of the data collected. Therefore, the instrumentation strategy ensures a holistic evaluation of the developed textbook.

The validity and reliability of the instruments were ensured through a structured process of expert judgment and iterative refinement. Content and construct validity were assessed by experts in English language teaching and instructional design, who evaluated the relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of the instruments. The validation process employed structured evaluation rubrics adapted from established educational research frameworks (Lazou et al., 2025). Feedback from experts was systematically used to revise and improve the instruments prior to their implementation. To enhance reliability, consistency checks were conducted across evaluators to minimize subjective bias. Although statistical reliability measures were not applied due to the developmental nature of the study, the use of multiple validators strengthened the credibility of the evaluation results. This approach aligns with the principles of formative evaluation in design-based research. The iterative validation process ensures that the instruments are both theoretically sound and practically applicable. Therefore, the instruments were considered valid and reliable for use in this study.

Data collection was conducted through a structured procedure consisting of several sequential stages. The process began with the needs analysis phase, where questionnaires and interviews were administered to identify students' writing difficulties, learning preferences, and expectations. This was followed by the design phase, in which the textbook prototype was developed based on the findings from the needs analysis. The evaluation and revision phase was then carried out using formative evaluation methods, including self-evaluation, expert review, one-to-one evaluation, small group evaluation, and field testing. During the implementation stage, observations were conducted to monitor students' engagement and interaction with the instructional materials. The writing test was administered during the field test phase to evaluate the effectiveness of the developed textbook. All data were systematically documented to ensure transparency and traceability. The iterative nature of the procedure allowed continuous refinement of the product

based on empirical evidence. Therefore, the data collection process was comprehensive and methodologically robust.

The data analysis employed both quantitative and qualitative techniques to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the findings. Quantitative data from questionnaires and writing tests were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages and mean scores, to identify patterns and trends. The effectiveness of the textbook was determined based on the proportion of students achieving the expected performance level, with a minimum threshold of 70 percent. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving data reduction, coding, categorization, and theme development (Goyanes et al., 2025; Sercekman & Meltem, 2024). This approach enabled the researchers to interpret participants' experiences and perceptions systematically. Data triangulation was applied to integrate findings from multiple sources, enhancing the credibility and validity of the results. The combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis provided both measurable outcomes and contextual insights. This analytical approach is consistent with the objectives of design-based research. Therefore, the data analysis ensured both rigor and depth in interpreting the findings.

This study adhered to established ethical research principles to ensure the protection of participants' rights and data integrity. All participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by ensuring that participants' identities were not disclosed in any part of the study. Data were securely stored and used solely for research purposes. Participants were also given the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. The study complied with institutional ethical guidelines for educational research. These ethical considerations ensured that the research was conducted responsibly and transparently. Therefore, the study meets the ethical standards required for international academic publication.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this study present a comprehensive evaluation of the development and implementation of a Community-Based Learning textbook in the context of paragraph writing instruction. The findings are structured into several key phases, including needs analysis, product development, validation, practicality testing, and effectiveness evaluation. Each phase provides empirical evidence supporting the feasibility and pedagogical value of the developed instructional material. The results not only describe the data obtained but also interpret the significance of these findings in relation to students' learning needs and instructional challenges. This section demonstrates how the developed textbook addresses identified gaps in traditional writing instruction. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data enables a more holistic understanding of the research outcomes. Furthermore, the results highlight the transformation from a problem-based condition to an improved instructional solution. Therefore, the findings provide strong empirical support for the implementation of Community-Based Learning in academic writing instruction.

Analysis Phase

The analysis phase revealed critical insights into both instructional and environmental conditions of the paragraph writing course. Instructionally, the curriculum emphasized students' ability to use English accurately and contextually, yet the existing textbook failed to fully support this objective. The materials were found to be overly general and lacked integration with real-world contexts, limiting students' ability to develop meaningful writing content. This indicates a mismatch between curriculum goals and instructional resources, which can hinder the development of higher-order writing skills. From an environmental perspective, classroom practices were predominantly teacher-centered, with limited variation in writing topics and absence of community-based activities. Students were mostly engaged in passive learning, such as listening and completing isolated writing tasks without authentic context. This condition suggests that the learning environment did not sufficiently stimulate critical thinking or experiential engagement. As a result, students lacked

opportunities to connect writing tasks with real-life experiences. Therefore, both instructional and environmental analyses highlight the need for more contextualized and interactive learning materials.

Students' Learning Challenges in Paragraph Writing

The findings from the questionnaire indicate that students experienced substantial difficulties in multiple aspects of paragraph writing, particularly in grammar, idea generation, and organization. Grammar and sentence structure emerged as the most dominant challenge, reported by 38.2 percent of respondents, indicating a strong limitation at the sentence construction level. This suggests that students struggle not only with linguistic accuracy but also with transforming ideas into grammatically coherent sentences. In addition, 29.4 percent of students reported difficulties in generating ideas and organizing paragraph structure, highlighting challenges in both cognitive and rhetorical processes. These findings demonstrate that writing difficulties extend beyond language mechanics to include higher-order thinking skills. Students also reported challenges related to coherence and cohesion, although at a lower percentage, indicating that discourse-level organization remains an issue. Overall, the data suggest that students require structured guidance and contextual support to develop their writing skills effectively. The distribution of these challenges is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' Challenges in English Paragraph Writing

Challenges	Percentage	Interpretation
Generating ideas and selecting appropriate topics.	29.4	Students struggle to begin writing due to limited experience linking ideas to real contexts.
Organizing logical structure of paragraphs.	29.4	Indicates difficulty with logical division and unity.
Grammar and sentence structure	38.2	Students had no adequate knowledge about how to construct a good sentence structure and use correct grammar
Coherence and cohesion	3	Students need structured guidance and examples
Total	100	

Table 2 illustrates that grammar-related issues are the most significant barrier to writing proficiency, followed by difficulties in idea generation and paragraph organization. This pattern indicates that students' writing problems are multidimensional, involving both linguistic and cognitive components. The relatively lower percentage for coherence does not necessarily imply its insignificance, but rather reflects its dependence on other underlying skills. The data also suggest that students lack sufficient exposure to authentic contexts that could support idea development. Consequently, writing tasks become abstract and disconnected from real-life experiences. This condition reinforces the need for instructional materials that integrate contextual learning approaches. The findings confirm that traditional textbooks are insufficient in addressing these complex learning challenges. Therefore, a more structured and context-based approach is required to improve students' writing performance.

Qualitative Findings on Students' Difficulties

The qualitative data further strengthen the quantitative findings by revealing deeper insights into students' writing difficulties. Students expressed uncertainty in organizing ideas and maintaining coherence, indicating a lack of practical strategies for structuring paragraphs. One participant stated, "I need more guidance in organizing ideas and building coherence," reflecting the need for explicit instructional support. Another student mentioned, "Sometimes I don't know what to write or how to connect sentences," highlighting challenges in idea generation and sentence linkage. These responses suggest that students experience both cognitive and linguistic barriers in writing. Furthermore, students emphasized the importance of real-world examples, stating that "examples from real experiences and community issues would help create stronger content." This indicates that contextual exposure plays a crucial role in supporting idea development. The qualitative findings reveal that students' writing challenges are not solely technical but also contextual in nature. Therefore, instructional materials must address both dimensions to be effective.

Students' Expectations for the Textbook

The findings also reveal strong student expectations for a more contextualized and structured writing textbook. Students expressed a clear preference for materials that integrate real community issues into writing tasks, indicating a desire for meaningful and relevant learning experiences. They also emphasized the need for step-by-step guidance to help them understand the writing process more effectively. This suggests that students require scaffolding to support their development from idea generation to paragraph construction. In addition, students showed interest in project-based and community-based activities, reflecting a shift toward experiential learning preferences. The inclusion of multimodal resources, such as images and real data, was also identified as an important factor in supporting learning. These expectations indicate that students are motivated by interactive and context-based learning environments. The summary of these expectations is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Students' Expectations for the Paragraph Writing Textbook

Expectation category	Interpretation
Contextual materials linked to real community issues.	Majority <i>Strongly Agree</i> on integrating social issues into writing.
Step-by-step structured writing guidance.	Indicates difficulty with logical division and unity.
Authentic tasks and projects (CBL-based activities).	Students are learning from real-world activities.
Multimodal resources (visuals, interviews, real data, case studies)	Students need various resources to explore their ability using pictures, for example
Collaborative learning opportunities.	Teamwork in CBL stimulates and strengthen students' critical thinking and collaboration.

Table 3 demonstrates that students strongly value contextual, structured, and interactive learning materials. The emphasis on community-based tasks indicates a need for authentic engagement in writing activities. The demand for step-by-step guidance highlights the importance of instructional scaffolding in writing development. The inclusion of multimodal resources suggests that students benefit from diverse learning inputs. These findings confirm that traditional textbooks do not fully meet students' learning needs. Therefore, the development of a Community-Based Learning textbook is aligned with students' expectations. The results also indicate that students are ready to engage in more active and experiential learning processes. Consequently, these expectations provide a strong foundation for the design of the developed instructional material.

Teacher Evaluation of Existing Textbook

The evaluation from lecturers provides additional evidence supporting the need for improved instructional materials. Lecturers reported that the existing textbook is too theoretical and lacks contextual relevance, making it difficult for students to generate ideas. Although fundamental writing concepts are presented, the absence of real-world examples limits students' ability to apply their knowledge. Lecturers also noted that the textbook does not provide sufficient opportunities for authentic writing practice. This results in low student engagement and limited development of critical thinking skills. Furthermore, the lack of structured guidance makes the learning process highly dependent on teacher intervention. Lecturers emphasized the need for scaffolding, multimodal resources, and community-based activities. These findings suggest that instructional materials must go beyond theoretical explanations to include practical applications. Therefore, the development of a contextualized textbook is strongly supported by both students and lecturers.

Validation Results

The validation results indicate that the developed textbook meets the required standards of instructional quality. Expert evaluation shows that the textbook achieved a score of 4 for content validity and media validity, and 3.8 for instructional design validity, indicating that it is valid with minor revisions. These results suggest that the textbook is theoretically sound and suitable for classroom implementation. The slightly lower score in instructional design highlights areas for improvement, particularly in providing clearer task instructions and output expectations. Expert feedback emphasized the need for structured guidance and time allocation for each task. The results demonstrate that the textbook has a strong foundation but requires refinement for optimal effectiveness. The detailed evaluation is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Validity of the Developed Textbook

Themes	Average	Sub-themes
English	4	Valid with minor revisions, but usable in learning
Instructional	3.8	Valid with minor revisions, but usable in learning
Media (technology)	4	Valid with minor revisions, but usable in learning

The validation results confirm that the textbook meets essential quality criteria in terms of content, structure, and media integration. The high scores indicate that the material is aligned with educational standards and learner needs. The suggested revisions contribute to improving clarity and usability. These findings demonstrate that the textbook is both academically sound and practically applicable. Therefore, the developed product is considered valid for further testing. The validation process ensures that the material is ready for implementation in real classroom settings. Consequently, the textbook has a strong potential to improve writing instruction.

Practicality Results

The practicality evaluation indicates that the developed textbook is highly usable in classroom settings. The one-to-one evaluation resulted in a score of 4, indicating that the textbook is practical and requires no significant revisions. The small group evaluation produced a score of 4.2, further confirming the usability of the material. These results suggest that students can effectively use the textbook with minimal difficulty. The high practicality scores indicate that the material is accessible, clear, and engaging. Students were able to follow the instructions and complete tasks successfully. The results also reflect positive user experience during implementation. Therefore, the textbook is considered practical for real-world application.

Effectiveness Results

The effectiveness of the developed textbook was evaluated through field testing involving 14 students. The results show that most students were able to produce well-structured academic paragraphs after using the textbook. This indicates a positive impact on students' writing performance. The improvement suggests that the integration of Community-Based Learning enhances both idea development and coherence. The findings demonstrate that students are able to apply writing skills in a more meaningful and contextualized manner. The results of the field test are illustrated in Figure 1.

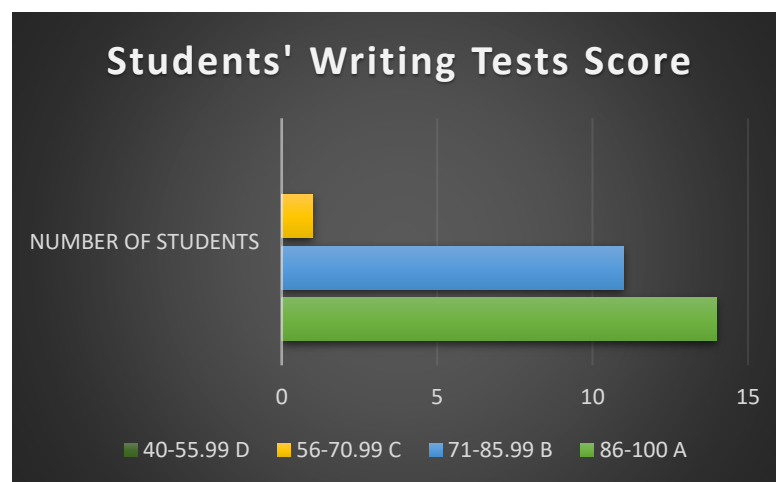
**Figure 1.** Students' Writing Performance in Field Testing Phase

Figure 1 shows a clear distribution of student performance, indicating that the majority achieved satisfactory writing outcomes. This suggests that the developed textbook effectively supports students' learning processes. The integration of real-world contexts appears to enhance engagement and motivation. The results also indicate that students are better able to connect ideas and construct coherent paragraphs. Therefore, the textbook demonstrates strong effectiveness in improving academic writing skills. The findings confirm that Community-Based Learning provides a

meaningful framework for writing instruction. Consequently, the developed textbook can be considered both effective and pedagogically valuable.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that students' difficulties in paragraph writing are fundamentally multidimensional, extending beyond grammatical inaccuracies to encompass cognitive, rhetorical, and contextual limitations. While grammar and sentence structure emerged as the most dominant challenge, the substantial proportion of difficulties in idea generation and paragraph organization indicates that writing failure is rooted in the inability to transform lived experiences into structured academic discourse. This finding reconceptualizes EFL writing problems not merely as linguistic deficits but as failures of meaning construction within decontextualized instructional environments. From a theoretical standpoint, this aligns with cognitive load theory, which suggests that learners struggle when multiple processes—idea generation, structuring, and language encoding—are not supported simultaneously (Jiang & Kalyuga, 2022). However, this study extends prior work by demonstrating that these difficulties are exacerbated when instructional materials fail to provide contextual anchors for idea development. Consistent with recent studies (Wu et al., 2024; Panday, 2025; Mallahi, 2022), learners experience fragmentation in writing when tasks are abstract and disconnected from real-world contexts. Nevertheless, unlike previous studies that primarily focus on pedagogical strategies, this research demonstrates that the problem is structurally embedded in the design of instructional materials. Therefore, the findings shift the discourse from “how to teach writing” toward “how writing knowledge is materially constructed and mediated through textbooks.”

The analysis of instructional conditions further reveals a critical misalignment between curriculum expectations and textbook design, highlighting a systemic gap that has been underexplored in global writing pedagogy. Although curricula emphasize contextual and meaningful language use, existing textbooks remain largely decontextualized, thereby constraining students' ability to generate authentic content. This finding challenges the implicit assumption in many prior studies that improving teaching strategies alone is sufficient to enhance writing outcomes. Instead, this study argues that instructional materials function as epistemic tools that shape how knowledge is accessed, constructed, and internalized. Drawing on experiential learning theory (Williams & Sembiente, 2022; Photo, 2025), meaningful learning occurs when learners actively transform experience into conceptual understanding; however, such transformation cannot occur in the absence of structured experiential input. This aligns with Li and Yan (2023), who emphasize the role of real-world engagement in bridging theory and practice, but this study advances the argument by embedding that engagement directly into textbook design. Compared to previous research focusing on project-based or strategy-based interventions (Ahmadi Safa & Motaghi, 2024; Wang et al., 2024), the present study offers a material-centered innovation, positioning the textbook itself as a driver of experiential learning. Consequently, this research expands the theoretical scope of writing pedagogy by demonstrating that learning effectiveness is contingent upon the alignment between curriculum, pedagogy, and instructional material design.

Students' expectations for contextualized, structured, and interactive learning materials further reinforce the argument that writing instruction must be reoriented toward socially grounded learning processes. The strong demand for community-based tasks, multimodal resources, and step-by-step guidance indicates that learners require both experiential input and cognitive scaffolding to develop writing competence. This finding supports sociocultural theory, which posits that learning is mediated through interaction with social and cultural environments (Zhao, 2023), but also extends it by showing that such mediation must be systematically embedded in instructional materials rather than left to classroom improvisation. Previous studies (Andargie et al., 2025; Chang et al., 2024; Prawiro et al., 2025) have demonstrated that contextual and project-based learning enhances engagement; however, these studies often treat contextualization as a supplementary activity rather than a core design principle. In contrast, the present study operationalizes contextual learning into a structured textbook framework that integrates community exploration, idea development, drafting, and reflection. This shift is theoretically significant because it transforms Community-Based Learning from a pedagogical approach into a design architecture for instructional materials. As a result, writing becomes not only a linguistic activity but also a socially situated practice of meaning-

making. Therefore, the study contributes a new conceptual lens in which writing competence is understood as the product of interaction between experience, structure, and social context.

The validation results provide further evidence that the developed textbook is theoretically grounded and pedagogically sound, while also revealing the importance of instructional design precision in contextual learning environments. The high validity scores across content, instructional, and media dimensions confirm that the integration of Community-Based Learning principles is conceptually appropriate and aligned with educational standards. However, the need for minor revisions in instructional design highlights a critical issue often overlooked in contextual learning research, namely the tension between authenticity and structure. While authentic tasks provide rich experiential input, they may also increase cognitive complexity if not accompanied by clear guidance and sequencing. This finding resonates with Alhasani and Orji (2025) and Lu et al. (2022), who argue that instructional effectiveness depends on the balance between content relevance and usability. Yet, this study goes further by demonstrating that in Community-Based Learning contexts, instructional clarity becomes even more crucial because students must navigate both real-world data and academic writing conventions simultaneously. Thus, the validation phase not only confirms the feasibility of the textbook but also contributes to the refinement of instructional design theory by emphasizing the necessity of structured scaffolding within authentic learning environments.

The practicality findings indicate that the textbook is not only theoretically valid but also operationally feasible, suggesting that Community-Based Learning can be effectively implemented in real classroom settings when supported by well-designed materials. The high usability scores demonstrate that students were able to engage with the textbook, follow instructions, and complete tasks with minimal difficulty. This finding is particularly significant because it challenges the common perception that contextual or community-based approaches are difficult to implement in formal education due to logistical and cognitive constraints. In line with Chisunum and Nwadiokwu (2024) and Dixit et al. (2024), instructional materials that align with learners' needs and contexts tend to enhance usability; however, this study adds a critical dimension by showing that usability is not merely a function of simplicity but of structured experiential integration. Furthermore, the use of formative evaluation stages (Nafiz Kaya & Kaya, 2024; Shaheen et al., 2023) demonstrates that practicality emerges through iterative refinement rather than initial design perfection. Therefore, the study provides empirical evidence that Community-Based Learning, when embedded within a structured textbook, can overcome traditional barriers of implementation and become a scalable instructional model.

The effectiveness results confirm that the integration of Community-Based Learning within textbook design significantly improves students' writing performance, particularly in idea development and paragraph coherence. This improvement suggests that writing competence is enhanced when students are provided with meaningful content derived from real-world experiences, combined with structured guidance for organizing that content into academic form. From a theoretical perspective, this finding supports the interaction between experiential learning and cognitive scaffolding, where experience provides content while structure enables articulation. Consistent with previous research (Li & Yan, 2023; Zhao, 2023; Prawiro et al., 2025), contextual learning enhances engagement and coherence; however, this study advances the field by demonstrating that such effects can be systematically reproduced through textbook design rather than relying solely on teacher-led activities. Nevertheless, the presence of a lower-performing student indicates that contextualization alone does not fully address individual differences in linguistic competence, suggesting the need for differentiated support. This nuance adds depth to the findings by acknowledging that while Community-Based Learning enhances writing development, it must be complemented by targeted linguistic reinforcement. Therefore, the study offers a more balanced and realistic perspective on the effectiveness of contextual learning in EFL writing.

Critically, this study redefines the role of Community-Based Learning in writing pedagogy by positioning it as a foundational framework for instructional material development rather than a supplementary teaching strategy. Unlike prior studies that treat contextual learning as an external intervention, this research embeds it within the epistemic structure of the textbook, thereby transforming how writing knowledge is constructed and experienced. This represents a significant conceptual contribution, as it shifts the focus from instructional techniques to material design as the primary locus of pedagogical innovation. In doing so, the study addresses a critical gap in the

literature, where few studies have developed and empirically validated textbooks that integrate experiential learning, scaffolding, and measurable quality indicators simultaneously. Moreover, the use of design-based research strengthens the study's contribution by linking theoretical development with practical implementation in authentic classroom settings. As a result, the study not only supports existing theories of experiential and sociocultural learning but also extends them by demonstrating how these theories can be operationalized into scalable educational products. Consequently, the research positions itself within the global literature as an innovative effort to bridge the persistent divide between academic writing instruction and real-world social engagement.

Finally, while the findings demonstrate strong theoretical and practical contributions, they must be interpreted within the specific context of Indonesian EFL higher education. The relatively small sample size and the developmental nature of the study limit broad generalization, yet they enhance ecological validity by reflecting authentic classroom conditions. Importantly, the study suggests that the effectiveness of Community-Based Learning is highly dependent on contextual alignment, instructional design quality, and learner readiness. This implies that future research should explore cross-context implementation, larger sample validation, and integration with digital learning environments to expand scalability. Despite these limitations, the study provides compelling evidence that writing instruction can be fundamentally transformed when learning materials are designed to connect language, experience, and social reality. In this sense, the research contributes a new paradigm in writing pedagogy, where textbooks are no longer passive repositories of knowledge but active mediators of experiential, cognitive, and social learning processes.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the development of a Community-Based Learning textbook constitutes a significant advancement in addressing the persistent challenges of academic writing among EFL learners. The findings confirm that students' writing difficulties are not solely linguistic in nature but are deeply rooted in the absence of contextual grounding, limited idea generation, and insufficient structural guidance within traditional instructional materials. By systematically integrating real-world community engagement with scaffolded writing processes, the developed textbook successfully bridges the gap between abstract writing instruction and meaningful knowledge construction. The results further establish that the textbook meets the essential criteria of instructional quality, as evidenced by its validity, practicality, and effectiveness across multiple stages of formative evaluation. More importantly, the study reveals that writing competence improves when learners are positioned as active meaning-makers who transform authentic experiences into structured academic discourse. In this sense, the research moves beyond incremental pedagogical improvements and offers a structural reconfiguration of how writing instruction is designed and delivered. Therefore, the study provides robust empirical and theoretical evidence that Community-Based Learning, when embedded within instructional material design, can function as a powerful mechanism for enhancing writing performance in higher education contexts.

From a broader theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the global discourse on writing pedagogy by reconceptualizing instructional materials as active mediators of experiential, cognitive, and social learning processes. Unlike prior approaches that treat contextual learning as a supplementary classroom strategy, this research operationalizes it into a coherent textbook framework, thereby extending the application of experiential and sociocultural learning theories into tangible educational products. This conceptual shift offers a new direction for future research and practice, emphasizing the importance of aligning curriculum objectives, pedagogical approaches, and material design within a unified learning ecosystem. Practically, the developed textbook provides lecturers with a scalable and contextually responsive model for teaching academic writing, particularly in EFL environments where students often struggle to connect language with real-world meaning. However, the study also acknowledges that contextualized learning alone is not sufficient to address all dimensions of writing difficulty, as individual differences in linguistic competence still require targeted instructional support. Future studies are therefore encouraged to explore the integration of Community-Based Learning with adaptive learning technologies and broader institutional contexts to enhance generalizability and impact. Ultimately, this research positions itself as an innovative contribution that not only addresses an existing pedagogical gap but also redefines

the role of instructional materials in fostering more meaningful, socially grounded, and academically rigorous writing practices.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Hesti Wahyuni Anggraini conceptualized the study, designed the research framework, and led the development of the Community-Based Learning textbook. She was also responsible for data collection, data analysis, and the drafting of the original manuscript. Zuraida contributed to the research design, supervised the implementation of the study, and provided critical revisions to strengthen the theoretical and methodological aspects of the manuscript. Tita Ratna Wulan Dari was involved in the development and validation of research instruments, supported data interpretation, and contributed to the refinement of the instructional design. Juliantina assisted in data collection, participated in the implementation process, and contributed to the review and editing of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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