

# Students' perception of writing assessment in the English education study program

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## ABSTRACT

Assessment is an important component in learning teaching activities, aiming to measure students' abilities and progress throughout the learning process. Therefore, understanding students' perceptions of class assessments is crucial for determining the suitability and validity of the assessment. This research investigates students' perceptions and experiences in writing assessments in the Writing in Academic Context classes. A mixed-method design was employed in this research. Closed-ended questionnaires were utilized to get quantitative data aiming to know students' perceptions of writing assessments, while semi-structured interviews were employed to gather qualitative data aiming to know students' experiences in writing assessments. There were 25 questions for the closed-ended questionnaires and 10 questions for the interview. 40 students filled in the closed-ended questionnaire about their perception and 8 of them were chosen to be interviewed to get deeper information about their experiences. This research finds that students have positive perceptions and experiences toward the writing assessments conducted in their class. They agreed that the assessments measured their writing ability (Mean=3.2) and helped them to think and write critically (Mean=3.35). Additionally, they also had a positive experience when doing writing assessments. They felt excited when the topic was related because they could easily pour their ideas into it. Moreover, lecturers' feedback encouraged them to do better in English academic writing.

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## 1. Introduction

There are four skills taught in the EFL classroom (Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing). Writing is the most challenging and complex of the four language skills when compared to the others (Durga & Rao, 2018). Students are required to be able to write on the subject being covered in class with the appropriate sentence structure and grammar. Astitiani et al. (2022) argue that writing is the most difficult skill to master because it involves critical and creative thinking. According to Dewi as cited in Dwiyantri and Suwastini (2021), writing is crucial to teach in schools since writing enables pupils to think creatively and expand their vocabulary. Ismail (2011) stated that writing should receive increased emphasis in ESL lessons. Additionally, writing helps a person improve their ability to communicate information and grasp ideas (Johnson as cited in Woodard et al., 2019). Commonly teachers prepare and involve students in class learning by outlining subjects or materials needed, class activities, quizzes, and assessments. Assessment is an important part of analyzing student progress

and providing teachers and learners of languages with meaningful information (Shanorra et al., 2021). According to Fuentealba (2011), the assessment results may be used to present preliminary data (to create where students begin or prior knowledge), to guide instructions and evaluate student's progress in learning, or to assist the general objectives of assigning scores or deciding about students' progress throughout the course. Assessment is a crucial component of successful education since there is a complexity of the connection between the lessons that students receive and the knowledge they acquire as an outcome of the lessons (Black & Wiliam, 2018).

Furthermore, classroom writing assessment is more than just evaluating the quality of a text at the end of a classroom task or a writing class; it is a continuous activity that is crucial to teaching learning (Crusan & Matsuda, 2018 as cited in Tayyebi et al., 2022). Assessing writing means measuring or evaluating each construct or ability of writing, such as handwriting ability, spelling, grammatical structure, paragraph organization, and the context of the idea (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). In writing assessments, some students may face several problems, for instance, students tend to be afraid of making mistakes in their writing, mistakes in spelling, grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, unity and coherence, and a variety of other writing errors (Sasmita & Setyowati, 2021). Fatimah (2018) stated that students struggle with developing grammatically appropriate sentences as well as using words and language expressions in their writing. In addition, they have trouble conveying thoughts through academic writing in terms of idea growth, and their paragraphs lack consistency and cohesiveness (Fatimah & Madya, 2020).

The assessment of students' writing skills is essential because it provides important information about their language proficiency, critical thinking ability, and overall communication competence. However, how students perceive writing assessments can significantly impact how they prepare for writing assignments, persevere through challenges, and, eventually, how probable it is that they will become good writers (Zumbrunn et al., 2017). According to McGoldrick and Caffrey's statements as cited in an article by Rofiqoh and Chakim (2020), students' perceptions might be seen as their capacity to defend and differentiate between their own opinions and what they experience in class. Meanwhile, the word "student experience" encompasses a wide range of factors related to how college students view, feel, and interact with their academic and social surroundings. Students' experiences in the classroom will be greatly enhanced by motivation, engagement, satisfaction, and fulfillment with the instruction (Nguyen et al., 2021). According to Priyeti as cited in Rachel (2017) Perception can be classified into two types, positive and negative.

There are several previous studies that examined students' perceptions of writing assessment. One of them is research by Rachel (2017) entitled "Students' Perception Toward the Use of Written Test in Learning English by the Fifth Semester Students of English Department of FKIP UKI Toraja", the researcher found that fifth-semester English Department students at UKI Toraja had a more positive view of the usage of written tests in English learning. Another research was conducted by Tsurouya (2020) entitled "Students' Perception on Peer Correction for Academic Writing Performance", the findings show how peer correction can improve students' writing motivation, self-regulated reflection, two-way communication, and critical thinking. This recent research focused on students' perception of writing assessment in Writing in Academic Context classes and their own experience in doing the writing assessment.

## 2. Method

A mixed-method research design, which combines qualitative and quantitative research techniques (Creswell, 2018), was employed in this study. The quantitative data was collected using a closed-ended questionnaire, and the qualitative data was collected using a semi-structured interview. The population for data collection was students of the English Education Study Program who were enrolled in the Writing in Academic Context class for the 2022/2023 academic year (N = 45). This study used a random sampling technique. Based on the Krejcie and Morgan table, the sample used for a population of 45 was 40 respondents to fill out the questionnaire. As for the interview, 8 respondents were taken from 40 using a purposive sampling technique. Sugiyono (2019) defines purposive sampling as a technique of selecting data sources with certain considerations.

There were 25 statements for the closed questionnaire based on a theory of Brown and Abeywickrama (2019) from a book entitled Language Assessment Principles and Classroom

Practices. They are practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and washback, and 10 questions for the interview questions.

Table 1. Blue Print of the Questionnaire

No.	Aspects	Number of Items
1	Practicality in Writing Assessment	1-5
2	Reliability in Writing Assessment	6-10
3	Validity in Writing Assessment	11-15
4	Authenticity in Writing Assessment	16-20
5	Washback in Writing Assessment	21-25

The closed-ended questionnaire used a 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree) to minimize the ambiguity in the data. Below are the averages for each scale:

Table 2. Mean Range of Perceptions Scale Scores

Score	Mean Range	Degree	Interpretation
4	4.00-3.00	Strongly Agree	Positive
3	2.99-2.00	Agree	
2	1.99-1.00	Disagree	Negative
1	1.00-0.99	Strongly Disagree	

The researcher distributed close-ended questionnaires to 40 students of Writing in Academic Context classes through Google Forms. After collecting and processing the results, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews. The results of the questionnaire were summed up and presented as tables and descriptions. The interview data was analyzed and interpreted descriptively consisting of five steps as stated by Creswell (2018), including organizing and preparing the data, reading all the data, coding all of the data, generating a description and themes, and representing the description and themes.

### 3. Findings and Discussion

#### 3.1. Findings

##### a. Students' Perception of Writing Assessments

##### 1) Practicality in Writing Assessment

Table 3 illustrates students' perception of practicality in writing assessment. Almost all students strongly believe that the lecturer allows for revisions or drafts during the assessment process (Mean = 3.3), resulting in the highest score.

Table 3. Students' Perception Toward Practicality in Writing Assessment

Statement	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD	Mean	Degree	Interpretation
1. I think the deadlines for writing assignments are clear and achievable.	16	18	4	2	3.2	Strongly Agree	Positive
2. I assume that allowing flexible submission formats (e.g., online submissions and physical copies) enhances the practicality of writing assessments.	7	28	4	1	3.025	Strongly Agree	Positive
3. I think the lecturer always gives clear instructions and expectations for writing tasks.	13	22	4	1	3.175	Strongly Agree	Positive
4. I believe the lecturer allows me for revisions or drafts in the assessment process.	17	19	3	1	3.3	Strongly Agree	Positive
5. I believe that employing standardized assessment formats saves time and aids in the consistency of evaluating written tasks.	10	24	4	2	3.05	Strongly Agree	Positive

Further, many students strongly think that writing task deadlines are clear and achievable (Mean = 3.2). Furthermore, the lecturer always provides clear instructions and expectations for writing assignments (Mean = 3.175). Students also believe that using standardized assessment forms saves time and improves the consistency of evaluating written tasks (Mean = 3.05). Additionally, students believe that providing flexible submission forms (e.g., online submissions and physical copies) improves the efficiency of writing exams (Mean = 3.025).

## 2) Reliability in Writing Assessment

Table 4 displays students' perceptions of reliability in writing assessments. The students agree that the lecturer constantly provides them with a diversity of writing samples (various genres, durations, and topics), which improves the overall reliability of the writing assessment (Mean = 3.25).

Table 4. Students' Perception Toward Reliability in Writing Assessment

Statement	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD	Mean	Degree	Interpretation
6. I think the lecturer always provides rubrics for grading criteria that are applied consistently for every task.	13	16	8	3	2.975	Agree	Positive
7. In my opinion, the lecturer always gives rubrics.	12	19	6	3	3	Strongly Agree	Positive
8. I think the writing assessment in the class has certain aspect such as organization, content, grammar, punctuation-spelling-mechanics and style and quality of expression.	12	25	2	1	3.2	Strongly Agree	Positive
9. I believe the lecturer always gives me a variety of writing samples (different genres, lengths, and topics) that can enhance the reliability of the overall writing assessment.	14	23	2	1	3.25	Strongly Agree	Positive
10. I think the lecturer always scores my writing based on my competency.	14	19	7	0	3.175	Strongly Agree	Positive

The students also believe that the writing assessment in class includes aspects such as organization, content, grammar, punctuation-spelling-mechanics, and style and quality of expression. (Mean = 3.2). Furthermore, the students agree that the lecturer always grades their writing on the basis of their competency (Mean = 3.175). Students particularly agree that the lecturer always provides rubrics (Mean = 3). Furthermore, some students think that the lecturer always gives rubrics for grading criteria that are applied consistently for all tasks (Mean = 2.975).

## 3) Validity in Writing Assessment

Based on Table 5 about the validity of writing assessment. Almost all students believe that writing assessments help them think critically (mean = 3.35), which is the highest score.

Table 5 Students' Perception Toward Validity in Writing Assessment

Statement	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD	Mean	Degree	Interpretation
11. I was assessed to write down visual data information, such as diagrams, tables, and graphs.	16	19	4	1	3.25	Strongly Agree	Positive
12. I feel writing assessments support me to think critically.	20	16	2	2	3.35	Strongly Agree	Positive

13. I can write down my ideas based on visual data well using the correct structure (introduction, discussion, and conclusion).	13	25	2	0	3.275	Strongly Agree	Positive
14. I think writing assessments always require me to write related to the topic in the syllabus.	14	20	6	0	3.2	Strongly Agree	Positive
15. I think the lecturer always uses multiple evaluation methods (e.g., portfolios, essays, projects) to increase the assessment of diverse writing skills.	10	21	7	2	2.975	Agree	Positive

Furthermore, many students feel that they can effectively write down their ideas based on visual data using the proper structure (introduction, discussion, and conclusion) (mean = 3.275). Furthermore, the students agree that they are graded on their ability to write out visual data material such as diagrams, tables, and graphs in writing class (mean = 3.25). Then, students believe that writing assessments always require them to write about the topic on the syllabus (mean = 3.2). Finally, students feel that the lecturer always uses numerous methods of assessment (e.g., portfolios, essays, projects) to examine diverse writing skills (Mean= 2.975).

#### 4) Authenticity in Writing Assessment

Based on Table 6 about the authenticity of writing assessments. Both statements have the same score. More students strongly agree that the writing assessment emphasizes the application of writing skills to real-life contexts rather than rote memorization or information repetition; additionally, the lecturer provides opportunities for collaborative writing or group projects to improve social communication (Mean = 3.175), the highest average score.

Table 6. Students' Perception Toward Authenticity in Writing Assessment

Statement	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD	Mean	Degree	Interpretation
16. I think the writing assessment employed in the class mirrors real-world writing tasks encountered in academic settings.	8	26	5	1	3.025	Strongly Agree	Positive
17. In my opinion, the lecturer always asks me to write something that reflects my personal experiences and perspectives.	11	22	7	0	3.1	Strongly Agree	Positive
18. I think the lecturer always provides opportunities for me to choose topics relevant to my life.	9	24	6	1	3.025	Strongly Agree	Positive
19. I think the writing assessment emphasizes the application of writing skills to real-life contexts rather than rote memorization or information repetition.	12	24	3	1	3.175	Strongly Agree	Positive
20. I believe the lecturer provides opportunities for collaborative writing or group projects to enhance our social communication.	13	21	6	0	3.175	Strongly Agree	Positive

Furthermore, the students agree that the lecturer always asks them to write something about their personal experiences and perspectives (Mean = 3.1). Also, other statements received the same score. Students agree that the writing assessments used in the class mirror real-world writing problems experienced in academic contexts, and the lecturer always allows them to choose topics relevant to their lives (Mean= 3.025).

## 5) Washback in Writing Assessment

Table 7 shows students' perceptions of washback in writing assessments. Almost all students strongly agree that the type of writing tasks provided in class challenges them to make more effort and practice to improve their writing (Mean = 3.35), resulting in the highest score.

Table 7. Students' Perception Toward Washback in Writing Assessment

Statement	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD	Mean	Degree	Interpretation
21. I believe the writing assessment used in the class motivates me to improve my writing skills.	16	19	4	1	3.25	Strongly Agree	Positive
22. I think the format and structure of writing assessments significantly influence my learning strategies and study habits.	7	27	5	1	3	Strongly Agree	Positive
23. I believe the feedback provided during writing assessments shapes future writing practices and strategies.	18	14	8	0	3.25	Strongly Agree	Positive
24. I think self-reflection and revision impact long-term writing development positively.	16	21	2	1	3.3	Strongly Agree	Positive
25. In my opinion, the type of writing tasks assigned in the class challenges me to make more effort and practice to make my writing better.	20	15	4	1	3.35	Strongly Agree	Positive

Furthermore, many students believe that self-reflection and revising improve long-term writing development (mean = 3.3). Furthermore, the two statements share the same average score. The writing assessment used in class motivates them to enhance their writing skills, and the feedback offered during writing assessments influences future writing practices and strategies (mean = 3.25). Additionally, students believe that the format and structure of writing assessments have a significant effect on their learning strategies and study habits (mean = 3).

## b. Students' Experiences in Writing Assessments

The researcher interviewed 8 of the 40 respondents who had filled out the questionnaire. These 8 people were chosen from the 2 students in each class who had the highest and lowest scores on their questionnaire responses.

The interviewees discussed how they felt during the writing assessments. First of all, they felt excited and motivated when they were assigned a topic in which they excelled, and they also enjoyed the writing process when they knew exactly what they were going to write as mentioned by Ana:

*"What I feel during the writing assessment is that it is very happy, it can be a medium to calm my mind because I can pour out the ideas in my mind that I cannot express, especially if the topic given is related."*

Supported by a statement from Nita:

*"Sometimes I feel nervous but I also enjoy the writing process. I think writing is fun but confusing too."*

Widi also provided another positive statement:

*"[...] the most important thing is also determining the topic. It also makes me nervous and unfocused. But once I got the topic and understood where I wanted to go, I enjoyed doing it."*

Some students believed that the writing assessment in their class was not difficult because the lecturer provided topics relevant to the students, as well as clear directions and varied writing examples. Rahma delivered the following remarks, stating that the lecturer's directions were influential:

*"Actually, writing assessment is not too difficult because the lecturer in class has given clear instructions and the lecturer has also given many examples of good writing [...]"*

Sultan also had a positive opinion because he believed it was simple as long as we were familiar with English:

*"Actually, it wasn't that difficult for me, because so far I've been somewhat familiar with everyday English."*

However, some students felt the opposite: they were worried and struggled with the writing assessment since they didn't know what topics would be given or what type of writing would be required. They also felt overwhelmed and anxious because of the short time for the job, as well as a lack of ideas and English vocabulary. The following is a statement from Aida:

*"The writing assessment time is a bit stressful, especially if the assessment is done directly in class where there is less time provided, and then you don't know what will be tested."*

This is followed by Ambar's statement:

*"What I experienced while doing the writing assessment was that I felt more nervous than enjoying it because I realized that my writing skills were arguably lacking and also about the choice of diction, sentence structure, and how to organize or arrange the sentence so that it is clear where it is going."*

This is followed by a statement from Mala who experienced difficulties when assessing writing:

*"The most difficult challenge is finding the right idea and mastering it, if you have found the idea, sometimes you are confused about developing and connecting each sentence, starting from facts and then personal opinions."*

### 3.2. Discussion

#### a. Students' Perception of Writing Assessments

##### 1) Practicality in Writing Assessment

Based on the result of the practicality data, most students agree that the lecturer plays an essential role in writing assessment, for instance, the lecturer who always allows students to revise and draft their writing is beneficial for them. Moreover, achievable deadlines, clear instructions, consistent writing assessment forms, and flexible submission forms provided by the lecturer enhance the efficiency of writing assessments.

##### 2) Reliability in Writing Assessment

According to the reliability data, students believe that a variety of writing samples (different genres, lengths, and topics), specific and understandable criteria (such as organization, content, grammar, punctuation-spelling-mechanics and style and quality of expression), and provided rubrics improve overall reliability in their writing assessment. The findings corroborate Astitiani et al. (2022) statement that lecturers' involvement in the evaluation process is crucial for facilitating the assessment and providing guidance. Furthermore, students feel that teachers who always graded their papers based on their competency helped them determine the level of their writing abilities.

### 3) Validity in Writing Assessment

In accordance with the validity data results, most students believe that writing assessments help them think critically which supports Astitiani et al. (2022) statement that writing is the most difficult skill to master since it involves critical and creative thinking. Likewise, writing assessments facilitate their ability to properly put down their opinions using the right structure (introduction, discussion, and conclusion). Furthermore, students assume that writing evaluations always require them to write about a topic on the curriculum, such as writing using visual data materials such as diagrams, tables, and graphs. Additionally, students believe that different forms of assessment (such as portfolios, essays, and projects) examine a wide range of writing skills.

### 4) Authenticity in Writing Assessment

In response to the authenticity data, more students strongly believe that the writing evaluation emphasizes the application of writing abilities in real-life situations which supports Ismail's (2011) statement that to better prepare students to handle the communication demands of real-life situations, writing should receive increased emphasis in ESL lessons, and that collaborative writing or group projects increase their social communication. Furthermore, they feel at ease when they write about their personal experiences, opinions, and relevant topics.

### 5) Washback in Writing Assessment

Based on the washback data result, practically all students strongly agree that the kinds of writing activities assigned in class encourages them to put in more effort and practice to enhance their writing. Furthermore, self-reflection, revision, and feedback influence their writing habits and strategies. This point is supported by Ismail's (2011) research, which found that as classroom instruction and activities impacted students' confidence to work independently, reflection was a crucial component of the learning process since it allowed students to convey their thoughts. Added to that, students believe that the format and organization of writing evaluations also influence their learning strategies to improve their writing skill. It is in accordance with the findings of a study by Dwiyanti and Suwastini (2021) which discovered that students improved their performance by considering the suggestions and comments that they received from teachers.

## b. Students' Experiences in Writing Assessments

Semi-structured interviews were utilized to identify experiences with writing assessment. The interviews showed that each student had different feelings, perspectives, challenges, strategies, and responses to feedback. Some students felt that writing evaluations helped them mend their minds since writing exercises encouraged them to convey their ideas and opinions. Some individuals believe that writing assessments are enjoyable when they are assigned topics that they have studied, enjoy, and find relevant to their lives, making it easier for them to write. It relates to the findings from the study of Rachel (2017) that when taking a written exam, students feel pleased, and relaxed, and feel that they correlate with their personalities. Clear lecturer's instructions also improved writing assessment. Furthermore, giving students a range of writing examples made writing exams easier.

However, several other students were concerned and struggled with the writing exam because they had no idea which topics would be covered or what kind of writing would be expected. They also felt overwhelmed and nervous due to the short duration of the job, as well as a lack of ideas and vocabulary in English. In addition, they found the writing assessments difficult because they were not used to write in English. This statement goes along with Ismail's (2011) research, which found that students felt that they had inadequate prior experience to write in English. Students have also reported feeling uncertain when starting to write and developing ideas in each paragraph. This finding is supported by the



finding of Mubarak (2017) that students were unsure of themselves when they began to write and develop ideas in each paragraph. In addition, they have difficulty selecting appropriate diction and grammar structure.

#### 4. Conclusion

In students' opinion, lecturers are greatly involved in writing assessments by giving clear directions, deadlines, and flexible submission options. They feel that their writing ability is the main factor that determines their grades and that these assessments help them develop their communication and critical thinking abilities. Additionally, they improve communication through sharing experiences, group projects, and real-world applications. Also, Lecturer feedback improved confidence.

The students perceived that the writing assessment helped them a lot in expressing their ideas and opinions through relevant topics. However, difficulties such as unfamiliar topics, short duration, grammatical errors and lack of English vocabulary made them feel overwhelmed

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