
Rewriting the Earth: Ecolinguistic Task Based Activities to Enhance Writing Skills in English

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ABSTRACT

English writing remains a significant challenge for many secondary school students in Indonesia, particularly in expressing ideas coherently, organizing structure, and using appropriate vocabulary. This Classroom Action Research (CAR) investigates the effectiveness of integrating Ecolinguistic Task Based Activities (ETBAs) in improving the English writing skills of 25 Grade X students at Yayasan Pendidikan Nazhirul Asrofi Medan. Grounded in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and ecolinguistic theory, the study was conducted in two cycles involving planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. The intervention centered on environmentally-themed writing tasks designed to enhance linguistic competence while fostering ecological awareness. Quantitative findings revealed an average improvement of 20% in students' writing scores across five components: content relevance, vocabulary use, organization, language accuracy, and mechanics. The most significant gains occurred in vocabulary and organization. Qualitative data from observation sheets and reflection journals indicated increased learner motivation, autonomy, ecological vocabulary usage, and critical environmental awareness. The findings suggest that ETBAs function not only as an effective pedagogical strategy for improving writing skills but also as a transformative approach for integrating sustainability education into EFL classrooms.

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I. INTRODUCTION

English writing proficiency remains a significant challenge for many secondary school students in Indonesia, including those at Yayasan Pendidikan Nazhirul Asrofi Medan. Despite being a crucial skill for academic success and global communication, students in Class X often struggle with generating coherent ideas, organizing thoughts logically, employing appropriate vocabulary and grammar, and expressing themselves fluently in written English. Traditional writing instruction, frequently focused on isolated grammar drills and formulaic essays, may fail to engage students authentically or demonstrate the real-world relevance of writing (Hyland, 2019).

At the same time, the development of writing skills in English remains a challenge for many EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. Traditional approaches often isolate grammar and vocabulary from meaningful content, resulting in low student engagement. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has emerged as a solution by offering real-world, meaningful tasks that motivate students to use language purposefully (Ellis, 2019). TBLT has been found effective in enhancing students' writing performance, vocabulary use, and learner autonomy (González & Pinzón, 2019; Sundari et al., 2018).

While TBLT and ecolinguistics have each been explored separately in language classrooms, there is still limited research integrating ecolinguistic content within TBLT frameworks, especially in secondary school contexts. A study by Luardini & Sujiyani (2018) at the junior high school level in Indonesia showed that eco-themed texts helped students improve their environmental vocabulary and writing coherence. However, similar research at the senior high school level, particularly in the context of Medan, remains scarce.

Simultaneously, global environmental challenges, climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, demand urgent attention and action. Education systems are increasingly recognized as vital platforms for fostering environmental awareness and stewardship (UNESCO, 2021). Ecolinguistics, a rapidly evolving interdisciplinary field, examines the intricate relationship between language, human interaction, and the natural world (Stibbe, 2021). It explores how language shapes our perceptions of the environment, influences ecological practices, and can either promote destructive ideologies or foster sustainable ones. Integrating ecolinguistic perspectives into language teaching offers a powerful avenue to make learning more meaningful, relevant, and transformative by connecting language use to students' lived experiences and pressing global issues (Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2023).

Recent developments in both applied linguistics and environmental education strongly support the integration of ecolinguistic principles into English language teaching. Ecolinguistics, as a discourse-based and socially engaged framework, provides a critical lens through which language learners can explore how linguistic choices impact ecological understanding (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2020; Lemke, 2020). In parallel, task-based language teaching (TBLT) continues to evolve as an evidence-based pedagogy that aligns well with 21st-century learning outcomes, especially when tasks are designed around real-world issues such as sustainability (Bygate, 2020; Long, 2021).

Furthermore, integrating environmental discourse into language learning helps bridge the gap between global citizenship education and language pedagogy (Cates, 2021; Goulah, 2020). This link is increasingly emphasized in the UNESCO Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Roadmap, which advocates for transformative pedagogies that empower learners to act responsibly and reflect critically (UNESCO, 2021; Læssøe & Mochizuki, 2021).

In the context of Indonesian EFL classrooms, recent studies confirm the need for innovative strategies to overcome persistent barriers in writing fluency, lexical variety, and content engagement (Kurniawan & Lestari, 2023; Wulandari et al., 2021). Integrating ecolinguistic task-based models offers a way forward by combining local ecological realities with global language objectives, thus grounding writing activities in both cognitive development and ecological ethics (Ardiansyah & Hastuti, 2020; Rosdiana et al., 2022).

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) provides a robust pedagogical framework ideally suited for such integration. TBLT emphasizes learning through completing meaningful tasks that reflect real-world language use (Ellis, 2023). By designing tasks centered on environmental themes – such as describing local ecosystems, analyzing environmental advertisements, proposing solutions to local pollution problems, or creating campaigns for sustainable practices – students engage with authentic purposes for writing. This approach moves beyond abstract exercises, situating language learning within contexts that matter (Nunan,

2021). The process of researching, discussing, and writing about environmental topics not only develops language skills but also inherently cultivates ecological awareness and critical thinking about human-environment relationships.

Therefore, this study proposes to design, implement, and evaluate a series of Ecolinguistic Task-Based Activities specifically aimed at enhancing the English writing skills of Class X students at Yayasan Pendidikan Nazhirul Asrofi Medan. It posits that intertwining the development of writing competence with the exploration of environmental issues through meaningful tasks will yield dual benefits: improved linguistic proficiency and heightened ecological consciousness.

II. METHODS

This study adopts a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design to investigate how ecolinguistically-themed task-based activities can enhance the English writing skills of Grade X students. As defined by Burns (2010), CAR is a practical, reflective methodology that empowers teachers to improve teaching practices through systematic inquiry within their own classrooms. The decision to use CAR is grounded in the intention to not only address the persistent challenges students face in writing but also to embed meaningful, ecologically-relevant content into English language instruction. The research was conducted over two cycles, allowing the researcher to implement, evaluate, and refine ecolinguistic task-based activities through a recursive process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

The study took place at Yayasan Pendidikan Nazhirul Asrofi Medan during the 2024/2025 academic year. Participants consisted of 25 students from a single Grade X class, selected purposively based on their English writing challenges and intermediate-level proficiency. These students were identified through preliminary classroom observations and English test scores, which indicated difficulties in idea generation, vocabulary usage, organization of ideas, and writing fluency. The selection also considered the students' openness to creative learning approaches, particularly the integration of environmental themes in language tasks. This context provided an authentic setting to implement the research while addressing students' language learning needs and their growing role as environmentally-aware global citizens.

The procedures followed the four systematic stages of CAR. In the planning phase, the researcher designed lesson plans grounded in the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) framework (Ellis, 2023), infused with ecolinguistic content. Tasks were created around real-world environmental topics such as plastic pollution, deforestation, and local waterway cleanliness. Writing assignments ranged from descriptive and narrative tasks to persuasive texts, allowing students to explore ecological issues using English meaningfully. Rubrics were developed to assess writing based on five criteria: content relevance, vocabulary use, text organization, language accuracy, and mechanics (Hyland, 2019).

In the acting stage, the tasks were implemented across several class meetings, with students engaging in group discussions, brainstorming sessions, draft writing, peer feedback, and revision. Each task included pre-task input and modeling, task completion (individually or collaboratively), and post-task reflection. For example, one task required students to write a short article proposing an eco-solution to reduce waste in their school. These activities aimed to increase student engagement and make writing more purposeful, reflecting Ellis's (2023) argument that authentic tasks enhance motivation and language acquisition.

During the observation phase, the researcher recorded data using multiple instruments. These included observation sheets documenting student participation, field notes capturing classroom dynamics, and student reflection journals where learners described their experience with each task. Writing tests were administered before and after each cycle to measure progress in writing ability. All writing products were evaluated using standardized rubrics to ensure consistency and transparency in assessment.

In the reflection phase, the researcher reviewed all data sources to determine the effectiveness of the activities. Student performance was analyzed both quantitatively, by comparing pre-test and post-test scores and qualitatively by examining students' written texts and reflective journals. Improvements in vocabulary (particularly environmental terms), textual coherence, and student confidence were indicators of successful intervention. Based on the findings from the first cycle, the second cycle was refined to include clearer scaffolding, more structured peer-review sessions, and differentiated support for struggling learners.

To ensure validity, the study employed triangulation through the use of varied data sources and instruments. Peer debriefing sessions were held with fellow English teachers to discuss and validate instructional strategies and data interpretation. Furthermore, students were involved in member checks to confirm the accuracy of interpretations regarding their learning experience. Reliability was supported by consistent use of rubrics and inter-rater evaluation, involving a second teacher for cross-checking the scoring of writing outputs.

Finally, this study was conducted in accordance with ethical research practices. Students were informed about the purpose and scope of the research, and their voluntary participation was ensured. Their names were anonymized in data presentation, and written permission was obtained from the school's leadership. The research aligns with UNESCO's (2021) emphasis on integrating sustainability and ecological consciousness into education, particularly through interdisciplinary and participatory approaches.

In Cycle I, students were introduced to foundational ecological themes through structured tasks designed to build their awareness and descriptive abilities. They began with a descriptive writing task focused on "Environmental Problems in My Neighborhood," which encouraged them to observe and articulate local issues such as plastic waste, clogged drainage, and river pollution. This was followed by a short expository paragraph on the "Causes and Effects of Plastic Pollution," where students identified at least three causes and two effects using a guided vocabulary list. To further support their writing, a vocabulary enrichment task required them to create a mini eco-glossary consisting of 15 environmental terms, including words like pollution, recycling, and deforestation.

Building on insights gained from reflection on Cycle I, the tasks in Cycle II were designed to be more structured and persuasive, aiming to deepen students' engagement and rhetorical skills. The first task involved writing a persuasive essay on "Reducing Plastic Waste in Our School," where students proposed solutions using a clear argument structure that included an introduction, arguments, and a recommendation. Next, a narrative writing task titled "My Eco Experience: A Personal Story of Protecting Nature" allowed students to connect personally with environmental themes. Additionally, students created an eco-campaign poster accompanied by a 150-word written explanation of its environmental message, blending creativity with persuasive writing. Finally, a peer review workshop was implemented, where students used a structured checklist to evaluate each other's work based on criteria such as clarity of the main idea, correct use of eco-terms, proper use of connectors, and identification of grammar mistakes.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The research findings derived from the two cycles of Classroom Action Research (CAR). The analysis integrates both quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate the impact of Ecolinguistic Task-Based Activities (ETBAs) on students' writing skills in English, particularly in relation to content relevance, vocabulary use, organization, language accuracy, and mechanics. Kurniawan & Lestari (2025) found that ecological topics significantly enhanced lexical fluency and idea development among Indonesian EFL learners. Similarly, Syafira et al.

(2025) reported that ecolinguistics based instruction increased students' argumentative clarity and social awareness. More recently, Aydın (2025) observed that sustainability themed TBLT tasks improved both writing coherence and learner engagement. The present study extends these findings by demonstrating measurable improvement within a Classroom Action Research framework, highlighting the practical adaptability of ETBAs in secondary school contexts.

Pre Intervention Condition

Before the implementation, students exhibited noticeable difficulties in expressing ideas clearly in writing. Initial diagnostic tests revealed underdeveloped content, weak vocabulary, especially on environmental topics, poor paragraphing, and frequent grammatical errors. Many students wrote with limited ecological vocabulary and produced disjointed ideas. This supports Hyland's (2019) observation that traditional writing instruction fails to engage learners meaningfully, often reducing writing to mechanical formality.

Result from the First Cycle

In the first cycle, students were introduced to basic ecological concepts and performed writing tasks such as describing environmental issues in their surroundings. While the engagement increased and vocabulary use began to improve, the outputs still showed weaknesses in structure and depth. Reflection journals indicated growing interest: one student wrote, *"I like learning English with environmental topics because it feels real and useful."*

However, peer-review sessions lacked depth, and some students struggled to complete tasks without guided scaffolding. This aligns with González & Pinzón (2019), who emphasized that without meaningful modeling and collaborative practice, task-based writing may fall short of its full potential.

Result from the Second Cycle

The second cycle integrated improved scaffolding, guided vocabulary-building sessions, and peer collaboration protocols. Tasks included persuasive writing about plastic waste reduction and narrative writing on personal eco-experiences. Students demonstrated stronger lexical variety, cohesive structure, and clearer argumentation.

Reflection data confirmed increased learner autonomy and motivation. One student reflected, *"Now I know how to write something useful to help the environment."* Writing became more purposeful and persuasive, echoing Ellis (2023) who notes that authentic tasks tied to students' realities stimulate deeper engagement.

Sample of Students' Writing (Before and After)

A comparison of student writing samples from before and after the intervention reveals significant progress in writing quality and ecological understanding. The pre-test sample demonstrates foundational weaknesses, as one student wrote: "There is much garbage in my place. People throw plastic and it make dirty. Environment is bad and many problem happen." This excerpt illustrates limited vocabulary, a lack of clear structure, noticeable grammar errors, and an absence of elaboration, highlighting the need for more targeted instruction. In contrast, the post-test sample from Cycle II shows marked improvement: "Plastic waste has become a serious environmental problem in our school area. Many students still use single-use plastics without realizing the long-term impact. To reduce this problem, the school should provide refill stations and encourage students to bring reusable bottles. Through collective awareness and action, we can create a cleaner and healthier environment." This later writing features a clear introduction, effective use of ecological terms, logical organization, a persuasive tone, and better

grammar control, demonstrating the effectiveness of the more structured and persuasive tasks introduced in Cycle II.

Quantitative Data: Writing Test Results

Quantitative analysis compared the pre-test and post-test scores across five writing components. The graphic below illustrates substantial improvements in all areas, particularly in content relevance and vocabulary use, core strengths expected from the ecolinguistic integration:

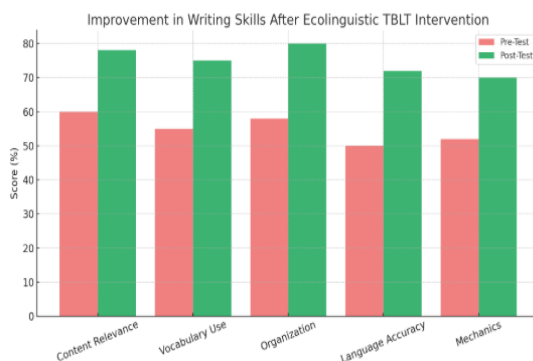


Figure 1. Writing Components

The quantitative data further supports the effectiveness of the intervention, revealing substantial improvements across all assessment criteria. As shown, content relevance improved from 60% to 78%, vocabulary use increased from 55% to 75%, organization rose from 58% to 80%, language accuracy improved from 50% to 72%, and mechanics increased from 52% to 70%. This indicates an average gain of approximately 20% across all categories, demonstrating that the structured, task-based approach in Cycle II significantly enhanced students' writing performance. These findings align with Sundari et al. (2018), who also reported that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) increased both lexical complexity and writing coherence among EFL learners in Indonesia, further validating the pedagogical decisions made in this study.

Thematic Analysis: Qualitative Result

Thematic analysis of journal entries, peer feedback, and classroom discussions revealed four key outcomes that underscore the effectiveness of the intervention. First, eco-awareness emerged as a powerful motivator, with students demonstrating greater emotional investment in writing about real environmental issues, confirming Stibbe's (2021) claim that ecolinguistics enhances learner identity and social responsibility. Second, the data showed increased lexical sophistication, as students began incorporating terms such as "microplastic," "greenhouse gas," "waste management," and "reforestation" into their writing, reflecting successful lexical transfer from the input sessions. Third, students developed greater writing autonomy, exhibiting increased confidence in planning, drafting, and revising their texts, a finding consistent with Ellis's (2023) assertion that authentic tasks improve learner independence. Finally, collaborative learning was strengthened through the peer review process; although initially weak, peer feedback became more critical and supportive in Cycle II, fostering communal learning—a component often undervalued in conventional writing instruction.

DISCUSSION

The findings from the implementation of *Ecolinguistic Task-Based Activities* (ETBAs) reveal a significant improvement in the writing performance of Grade X students, especially in content relevance, vocabulary, organization, and learner autonomy. These outcomes resonate strongly with the theoretical framework and prior research, validating the integration of ecolinguistic content into task-based English writing instruction.

First, the increased content relevance observed in students' writing indicates that ecolinguistic themes, such as pollution, conservation, and sustainability—provide meaningful contexts that engage students' critical thinking. As noted by Stibbe (2021), ecolinguistics urges learners to reexamine the “stories we live by” and reconstruct narratives that support ecological well-being. This aligns with the qualitative data where students expressed enthusiasm in writing about real environmental issues affecting their communities. Such contextual engagement fosters deeper understanding and promotes purposeful language use, as highlighted by Fill & Mühlhäusler (2023), who argue that ecological content enhances linguistic relevance and moral development.

Second, the improvement in vocabulary sophistication, especially in ecological terminology (e.g., *reforestation*, *carbon footprint*, *biodiversity loss*), reflects the successful integration of environmental discourse into language learning. The lexical gain supports the findings of Luardini & Sujiyani (2018), who showed that students exposed to eco-themed materials developed broader vocabularies and more coherent writing. Furthermore, vocabulary enrichment was particularly visible in the second cycle, when tasks required students to produce persuasive texts on environmental issues, an activity that demanded precise and impactful word choices.

Third, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), as applied in this research, clearly contributed to students' writing improvement. Ellis (2023) argues that meaningful tasks—especially those tied to students' real-life experiences—lead to greater engagement and retention. In this study, tasks such as proposing environmental solutions or writing eco-campaigns motivated students to express ideas more clearly and critically. Additionally, peer-review activities fostered reflection and revision, further supporting the process-based approach to writing advocated by Hyland (2019).

Another crucial aspect was the growth in writing organization and coherence. Students began to structure their essays with clearer introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions. Logical connectors were used more effectively, resulting in more cohesive texts. This reflects findings from Sundari et al. (2018), who demonstrated that TBLT enhanced both structural and grammatical aspects of EFL writing in Indonesia. The progression from fragmented paragraphs in the pre-test to structured persuasive essays in the post-test signifies the developmental nature of writing under guided task cycles.

Furthermore, the observed rise in learner autonomy and motivation was noteworthy. Students began initiating revisions, engaging more actively in peer discussions, and demonstrating confidence in their written voice. This mirrors González & Pinzón's (2019) assertion that task-based learning promotes learner independence by offering ownership over content and purpose. One journal entry in this study captured it well: “*Writing becomes easier when I care about the topic.*”

The integration of ecological values into language tasks did not merely enhance writing skills, it also deepened students' environmental awareness. As suggested by UNESCO (2021), education that fosters sustainability must connect knowledge to action. By allowing students to articulate their understanding of environmental problems through English, the project encouraged them to become both literate and ecologically responsible. This dual achievement exemplifies the transformative potential of ecolinguistic pedagogy.

However, some challenges were identified. In Cycle I, peer feedback was superficial, and some students required additional support in idea generation. These were addressed through

scaffolding in Cycle II, which provided more structured brainstorming and modeling activities. Such adjustments underscore the iterative strength of the Classroom Action Research model (Burns, 2010), which allows continuous refinement of instructional strategies based on observed classroom realities.

To address weak peer feedback in Cycle I, structured scaffolding strategies were introduced in Cycle II. First, students were trained using a peer review modeling session where the teacher demonstrated how to give constructive comments. Second, a checklist based feedback form was provided to guide evaluation. Third, sentence starters such as “Your main idea is clear, but...” and “You can improve this paragraph by...” were introduced to support lower proficiency learners. Finally, peer review was conducted in small heterogeneous groups to ensure balanced participation. These scaffolding strategies significantly improved the depth and quality of peer responses.

In conclusion, the discussion confirms that the integration of *Ecolinguistic Task-Based Activities* is both pedagogically sound and contextually relevant. It not only advances students’ writing performance but also nurtures ecological literacy, an educational goal of growing importance in today’s world.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study demonstrates that Ecolinguistic Task Based Activities (ETBAs) significantly improved the writing performance of 25 Grade X students, with an average score increase of 20% across five writing components. The integration of environmental themes enhanced content relevance, vocabulary development, organization, and learner autonomy. Students became more engaged and confident in expressing ideas through meaningful ecological topics. The findings confirm that combining TBLT with ecolinguistic perspectives creates both linguistic and environmental learning benefits.

It is recommended that English teachers in Indonesia incorporate real world environmental themes into writing instruction to increase student engagement. Additionally, structured peer review scaffolding should be implemented to maximize collaborative learning effectiveness.

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