

**THE IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE THROUGH STUDENTS' ESSAY  
WRITING ABILITY AT ENGLISH EDUCATION UIN RADEN INTAN  
LAMPUNG**

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**Abstract**

This study investigates the impact of integrating environmental issues into essay writing tasks on students' academic writing ability in the English Education Study Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the research involved 20 sixth-semester students enrolled in the Essay Writing course. Data were collected through students' written essays and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that writing about environmental topics encouraged deeper engagement with content, improved the organization of ideas, enriched vocabulary use, and enhanced critical thinking and argumentation. Students also expressed higher motivation and personal connection to the topics, which positively influenced their writing performance. The study concludes that environmental themes are not only relevant to content integration but also pedagogically effective in developing EFL students' essay writing competence and social awareness.

**Keywords:** Essay writing, environmental issue, academic writing, EFL students, critical thinking, motivation

**Introduction**

In recent decades, environmental issues have emerged as a pressing global concern that demands critical awareness and responsive action across various sectors, including education. Corresponding author: [nursyamsiah@radenintan.ac.id](mailto:nursyamsiah@radenintan.ac.id)

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Climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, and deforestation are no longer distant topics but have become local realities impacting everyday life. Consequently, integrating environmental themes into the English language teaching (ELT) curriculum has become increasingly relevant, especially in fostering critical thinking and social responsibility among university students (Cates, 2004, p. 56). In this context, English Education students at UIN Raden Intan Lampung are expected not only to master academic writing skills but also to demonstrate awareness of global environmental challenges through their written expression.

Essay writing, as a core component of academic literacy, serves as a powerful medium for students to articulate complex ideas, argue perspectives, and reflect on societal problems, including environmental degradation. According to Hyland (2016, p. 112), writing in an academic context should not only focus on language accuracy but also on content richness and argumentative clarity. When students engage with environmental topics, they are encouraged to explore interdisciplinary knowledge, synthesize scientific information, and propose practical solutions, thereby enhancing the cognitive and critical dimensions of their writing performance. Thus, the incorporation of environmental issues into writing tasks may significantly impact the development of students' essay writing ability.

Moreover, the use of environmental themes in writing classes can foster learner autonomy, relevance, and motivation. As argued by Nation (2009, p. 74), meaningful content input is a crucial factor in developing language skills, particularly in writing. Environmental issues, being both urgent and relatable, offer authentic contexts that stimulate students' engagement and emotional investment in writing tasks. This relevance increases the likelihood of producing well-structured essays with coherent arguments and deeper reflections. In the setting of English Education at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, where students are being trained to become future educators, such competencies are vital in promoting sustainability-oriented pedagogy.

Previous studies have highlighted the pedagogical benefits of integrating global issues into writing instruction. For instance, Hadley and Charles (2017, p. 89) found that students who wrote essays on real-world problems demonstrated higher levels of analytical thinking, vocabulary range, and argumentative development compared to those who worked on general or personal topics. In the local context of Indonesian higher education, research by Suryani (2021, p. 39) also showed that environmentally themed writing tasks improved not only writing mechanics but also students' environmental literacy. Despite these findings, limited empirical studies have explored this approach within the specific context of Islamic-based institutions like UIN Raden Intan Lampung.

Given this background, the present study aims to investigate the impact of environmental issues on students' essay writing ability at the English Education Study Program of UIN Raden Intan Lampung. The research focuses on how environmental themes influence students' coherence, cohesion, argumentation, and critical thinking in writing. It also seeks to understand students' perceptions and responses toward the use of environmental issues as writing prompts. Through this study, it is expected that insights can be gained into the effectiveness of using environmental content as a tool to enrich academic writing instruction and promote environmental awareness in teacher education programs.

## Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore how environmental issues integrated into essay writing tasks impact students' writing ability. The research aimed to describe students' writing performance in relation to specific environmental topics and to gain insights into their perceptions and challenges during the process. This approach was selected to allow a more nuanced and in-depth analysis of students' written texts and their responses, as qualitative methods are effective for investigating complex educational phenomena in natural settings (Creswell, 2014, p. 185).

The participants of this study were 20 students from the sixth semester of the English Education Study Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, who were enrolled in the "Essay Writing" course during the academic year 2024/2025. The participants were selected using purposive

sampling based on their active enrollment in the course and their prior experience in writing argumentative essays. This selection ensured that the participants possessed sufficient background knowledge and writing competence to engage meaningfully with the assigned environmental issues.

The data collection techniques involved two main instruments: (1) students' written essays on environmental issues and (2) semi-structured interviews. Each participant was assigned to write one essay (500–700 words) on a specific environmental topic such as climate change, deforestation, pollution, or waste management. The topics were selected based on their relevance to current environmental discourse and their alignment with the course learning objectives. After collecting the essays, individual interviews were conducted to explore students' perspectives on how the topic influenced their writing process, content development, and critical thinking.

The data analysis followed a qualitative content analysis technique. The students' essays were analyzed based on five main indicators of essay writing ability: (1) content relevance and development, (2) organization and coherence, (3) grammar and vocabulary use, (4) argumentative strength, and (5) critical reflection. These indicators were adapted from Brown & Abeywickrama's (2010, p. 226) writing assessment rubric. Meanwhile, the interview data were transcribed and thematically coded to identify recurring themes related to students' experiences, challenges, and benefits of writing about environmental issues.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied triangulation by comparing essay texts with students' verbal reflections. Member checking was also conducted by returning the interview summaries to the participants for verification. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly observed throughout the research process. All data were anonymized, and participants had the right to withdraw at any stage without any academic consequences.

## Findings and Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the integration of environmental issues into essay writing activities had a significant and multifaceted impact on students' writing ability in the English Education Study Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung. Through the analysis of students' essays and interviews, it was found that writing about environmental topics stimulated deeper engagement with content, improved the structure and coherence of students' writing, and encouraged the use of more relevant and precise vocabulary. Many students showed notable improvements in organizing their ideas more logically, crafting clearer thesis statements, and connecting arguments across paragraphs. Their essays were more developed and often supported by real-world examples related to environmental problems such as climate change, plastic pollution, and deforestation, particularly in Indonesian contexts.

The data obtained from students' essays and interviews were analyzed to explore how environmental issues influenced their essay writing ability. The findings are presented thematically in the following sub-sections.

### 1. Improvement in Content Development

The analysis of 20 student essays showed that environmental topics significantly enhanced the relevance and richness of essay content. Students developed their ideas with more detail, provided real examples, and demonstrated greater awareness of current global and local issues. Most essays included data or facts, such as statistics on plastic waste or the effects of deforestation in Indonesia, showing that students were encouraged to engage in research before writing.

Indicator	Strongly Evident	Evident	Less Evident
Relevance of content	11 (55%)	6 (30%)	3 (15%)
Depth of explanation	9 (45%)	7 (35%)	4 (20%)

This supports Cates' (2004, p. 56) view that global issues enhance the quality of content in English writing. Through meaningful topics, students become more critical and expressive in constructing ideas.

## 2. Organization and Coherence of Ideas

Another notable finding was the improvement in the logical structure and cohesion of essays. Many students followed the standard academic structure: introduction, thesis statement, body paragraphs with topic sentences, and a conclusion. The use of cohesive devices (e.g., however, furthermore, therefore) also increased, contributing to smoother transitions between ideas.

Interview data revealed that students found it easier to organize their ideas when the topic was "serious and clear." One participant explained:

*"When I wrote about climate change, I knew what I wanted to say, so the structure came naturally."*

This aligns with Hyland's (2016, p. 112) theory that topic familiarity leads to better organizational control in writing.

## 3. Vocabulary and Grammatical Accuracy

In terms of lexical richness, students used more academic and domain-specific vocabulary, such as "renewable energy," "carbon footprint," and "environmental degradation." Table 2 below shows improvement in vocabulary use as assessed by a rubric adapted from Brown & Abeywickrama (2010).

Vocabulary Indicator	Number of Students (%)
Advanced/precise vocabulary	12 (60%)
Adequate vocabulary	6 (30%)
Basic vocabulary	2 (10%)

However, grammatical accuracy remained inconsistent. While some students improved in sentence construction, others still struggled with verb tense, article usage, and sentence fragments. This finding suggests that while content engagement boosts vocabulary, grammar development may require more focused instruction.

## 4. Argumentation and Critical Thinking

Writing about environmental issues pushed students to make stronger arguments. The essays showed better development of claims, support with examples, and consideration of counterarguments. Critical thinking was evident in students' ability to connect personal experience with global issues. For example, one student wrote:

*"As someone who lives near a polluted river, I see the damage every day. I believe education is the key to changing how people treat the environment."*

This supports Hadley and Charles' (2017, p. 89) assertion that real-world problems enhance students' ability to reason and reflect critically in their writing.

## 5. Students' Perception of Writing About Environmental Issues

Semi-structured interviews showed that most students felt more motivated and emotionally connected when writing about environmental topics. 17 out of 20 students expressed that writing on meaningful themes gave them a purpose. One student said: *"It's not just writing for grades, it's writing to express my concern and maybe influence others."*

This confirms Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis, which emphasizes that emotionally relevant content lowers anxiety and promotes better language output. Additionally, students appreciated the chance to link writing with real life and felt their voices mattered more.

These findings suggest that integrating environmental issues into academic writing enhances not only students' technical writing skills but also their motivation, social awareness, and critical thinking. The results are in line with theories from Nation (2009), Cates (2004), and Hyland (2016), all of whom emphasize the importance of meaningful content in language education. While vocabulary and content improved notably, grammar remains an area that requires more explicit and structured instruction.

Overall, the use of environmental issues as writing prompts proves to be a pedagogically effective strategy in EFL classrooms, particularly in teacher education contexts such as English Education at UIN Raden Intan Lampung.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that integrating environmental issues into essay writing instruction can effectively enhance students' academic writing performance in the context of English language education. The use of real-world, meaningful topics has stimulated deeper content engagement, improved the organization of ideas, enriched students' vocabulary, and encouraged stronger argumentative reasoning. The integration also fostered greater motivation among students, as they connected their writing to social and environmental realities.

The findings confirm that environmental topics not only serve as relevant content but also function as catalysts for developing critical thinking and reflective writing in EFL contexts. These outcomes are particularly significant for prospective teachers, as they demonstrate the potential of academic writing as a tool for both linguistic development and social advocacy.

Future researchers are encouraged to expand this study by employing a mixed-method design involving larger and more diverse student samples, or by comparing the impact of different thematic approaches in academic writing. Longitudinal research may also reveal how consistent exposure to global issues across semesters can further shape students' writing ability and critical awareness in a sustainable manner.

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