

The Challenges and Needs Analysis of Developing a Theory-Enabled Instructional Blog for MUET Writing Task 2

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Abstract: The Malaysian University English Test (MUET) holds significant importance as it serves as a crucial examination for assessing the English proficiency of students aiming to gain entry into local universities. Recent studies and reports from the Malaysian Examination Council have brought attention to the challenges faced by English as a Second Language (ESL) students in MUET Writing Task 2, encompassing linguistic competence, task fulfillment, and anxiety issues in completing written tasks. In order to overcome these challenges, educators often develop innovative approaches like online learning materials grounded in theoretical frameworks to enhance students' writing skills. When determining a suitable theoretical framework as the foundation for online learning, several elements must be considered, such as how effectively it addresses the challenges. In writing, Web-based Cognitive Writing Instruction (WeCWI) stands out as a suitable option since it fosters structured guidance and strategies for improving linguistic competence, achieving task fulfillment, and alleviating anxiety issues in completing written tasks. Thus, the primary aim of this research is to thoroughly examine the difficulties encountered by ESL students in MUET Writing Task 2 and emphasise the necessity for an instructional blog to provide them with essential support. To achieve this, data was meticulously gathered through an online questionnaire distributed among 84 respondents from a private higher learning institution in Malaysia. The collected data was thoroughly analysed using descriptive statistics with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 21.0). The analysis revealed the presence of a statistically significant score of challenges ESL students face in MUET Writing Task 2, highlighting the critical need for developing an effective instructional blog to enhance their proficiency in this area. Future research efforts should focus on designing and creating a theory-enabled instructional blog tailored to address the nuances of MUET Writing Task 2 to provide comprehensive support to ESL students. Additionally, this study's sample size and demographics should be expanded to larger and more diverse samples to enhance validity and reliable results across institutions with different demographics and educational cultures.

Keywords: challenges, instructional tool, MUET Writing Task 2, needs, theory-enabled, WeCWI

INTRODUCTION

ESL undergraduates are students enrolled in higher education institutions who are non-native speakers of English. These students must acquire proficiency in the English language to develop the four fundamental language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening, particularly within academic contexts. As noted by Zainuddin, Pillai, Dumanig, and Phillip (2019), undergraduates at Malaysian universities must attain competence in English literacy as it significantly influences their career trajectories and addresses the market demand for qualified professionals, given the global prominence of English. In higher learning education, English proficiency is measured through the ability to use the four skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. According to Yabis and Hamid (2023), the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) should be taken for Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (STPM), matriculation, diploma, and pre-university students who want to pursue study in any local tertiary education institution in Malaysia.

MUET aims to assess students' English language proficiency to prepare them for academic tasks in higher education institutions. The examination evaluates four key language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Based on past studies, there are several issues that have been highlighted in MUET writing as it is one of the hardest skills to be scored by candidates. A recent study on the challenging skill to pass MUET by Harun et al. (2021) discovered that 150 over 500 students found that writing skill is the second hardest skill to be acquired by Malaysian students while speaking skill is in the position of rank one. This is worrying as writing skills are one of the active skills that need to be mastered by students in the tertiary level of education. Besides, the awareness of writing skills has been highlighted by Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013) from primary to secondary learning institutions, where extra classes outside of schooling hours should be done since it is one of the hardest exam scores (Ahn et al., 2022).

Amreet and Harun (2019) mentioned that problems in writing occur because of the lack of creative and innovative pedagogy in teaching writing. Creative and innovative pedagogy is a must in teaching writing; it involves creativity, critical thinking, self-expression, and communication skills, making the learning more engaging, relevant, and effective. With the rapid development of technology in the education field, many educators have started to integrate information and communication technology (ICT) while teaching writing to make the lesson more meaningful and engaging among students. Based on the systematic literature review regarding the use of writing tools in teaching writing by Jack and Hashim (2023), the study recommended that there is a need for improvement in information, communication, and technology writing tools which cover the choice of vocabulary, constructing sentences, and writing format. From here, the pedagogical instructional writing tool with an injection of technology is crucial in facilitating students' writing skills, especially in understanding the writing structure, expanding vocabulary, and grammar usage.

When designing educational technology-integrated learning materials, several frameworks like Community of Inquiry (CoI), Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK), and Web-based Cognitive Writing Instruction (WeCWI) have been explored. While CoI emphasises e-learning and blended learning, critiques suggest that it is too focused on logic over social knowledge construction (Annand, 2019). TPACK on the other hand, integrates technology with pedagogy and content, which requires advanced proficiency in handling technology and making its application challenging for untrained educators (Phillips & Harris, 2018). WeCWI, on the other hand, stands out as a hybrid e-framework with theoretical and pedagogical guidelines, offering tools for language and cognitive development through diverse instructional designs, making it particularly effective for fostering these skills (Mah, 2024). In addition Mah (2025), also mentioned that WeCWI addresses L2 learners' writing challenges

in higher education by integrating language acquisition, composition studies, cognitive theories, and e-learning to support literacy, linguistic, cognitive, and psychological development. This makes WeCWI a suitable framework for catering to the needs of ESL learners in improving their MUET Writing skills. For this study, two research questions have been constructed:

- 1) What are the challenges faced by ESL undergraduates in MUET Writing Task 2?
- 2) What are ESL undergraduates' perceived needs that could be addressed by a theory-enabled instructional blog for MUET Writing Task 2

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

MUET, also known as the Malaysian University English Test, was introduced in 1999 by the Malaysian Examination Council. Its main purpose is to bridge the difference between secondary and tertiary English language requirements instead of enhancing English proficiency. Four important skills will be evaluated in MUET: Listening (800/1), speaking (800/2), Reading (800/3), and Writing (800/4). In recent years, several issues have been highlighted in MUET Writing Task 2 (extended writing). According to Jee and Aziz (2021), writing is a difficult task for students to succeed in because they have to communicate by delivering their ideas in words and organised in paragraphs. Based on the MUET report prepared by the Malaysian Examination Council (2021), stated that most candidates faced problems in elaborating ideas due to insufficient knowledge and poor language proficiency. It is also cited by Jee and Aziz (2021), the analysis done by the Malaysian Examination Council (2018), depicts that 63.18% of candidates who performed MUET session 3/2018 only managed to get band 3 as their score in writing papers. It is worrying, as mentioned in the analysis, that candidates have issues with providing ideas and elaborating on them.

For linguistic issues, Karnine et al. (2022) stated that, the challenge that the students faced in MUET writing was a lack of knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. Hadi et al. (2024) further noted that students in Malaysian tertiary education not only faced issues related to linguistic competence also struggled with task fulfillment such as poor essay structure and inability to justify viewpoints. Psychological factor also affect performance: pre-university students also faced anxiety issue in writing whether they are able to completed writing task correctly with the specific time given. pre-university students also experienced writing anxiety, particularly about whether they could complete the writing task correctly within the given time and avoid negative evaluation (Sukri et al., 2023).

These ongoing challenges indicate the need for advanced pedagogy in writing. Raoofi et al. (2017) stated that there is a demand for tailored writing strategies and instructional design by institutions or lecturers to facilitate teaching writing in universities since students are dealing with academic writing and MUET. This is also supported by Haidari and Katawazai (2020), who suggested teachers or language practitioners should consider the pedagogical aspect of designing an activity or practice by using technology as a tool in teaching. In addition, Sulistyo et al. (2019) mentioned that the writing process should be integrated with technology since technology will lead to more effective teaching and learning methods.

Many educators have used technology in ESL teaching and learning to enhance meaningful learning that can equip the needs of the 21st century through Web 2.0 as an e-learning platform (Halim & Hashim, 2019). Examples of Web 2.0 platforms are social network sites (SNSs) such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and others. Since the rapid development of Web 2.0 technology, several online learning tools and platforms have been utilised and

developed to encourage students to practice their MUET writing skills. For instance, the use of SNS by Haron & Kasuma (2021); Aziz et al., (2019), Padlet by Rashid et al., (2019), Zoom by Suhaimi and Yunus (2021) and Blog by Mah et al. (2021).

Although MUET Writing Task 2 is one of the essential parts of university admission, ESL undergraduates continue to experience certain difficulties such as low vocabulary, weak grammar, lack of ability to develop ideas, and essay organization. Furthermore, psychological obstacles such as writing anxiety and fear of negative appraisal further obstruct their ability. These issues are further compounded by the absence of innovative, theoretical language instruction tools that cater specifically to the MUET Writing Task 2 in terms of linguistic and affective needs of students. This paper attempts to shed light on these issues by identifying the challenges and evaluating the demand for a theory-informed instructional blog.

LITERATURE REVIEW

MUET Writing and The Challenges

In Malaysia, various English tests and examinations assess students' proficiency in the English language. These include the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Pearson Test of English Academic (PTE Academic), and Cambridge Assessment English. The MUET examination evaluates students' proficiency in using English to prepare and successfully overcome academic tasks in higher learning contexts.

According to Parnabas et al. (2022), recent studies conducted in local universities exposed that pre-university students face difficulty in MUET Writing Task 2 (extended writing) since it carries 60% marks as the highest score. As mentioned by Ghani and Paramalingam (2023), MUET Writing Task 2 measures students' ability to deliver their thoughts logically, discuss and support their points constructively, write in a well-structured essay writing, provide evidence, and have a clear understanding of second language to use appropriate grammar, vocabularies, spelling, and punctuation. Saprina et al. (2020), stated that the student's inability to generate ideas and construct the ideas in a written form becomes a threat to their passing argumentative writing successfully.

In addition to this issue, writing anxiety is also found to affect students' writing performance. Recently, a study in Malaysia conducted by Aidit et al. (2023) on Second Language Writing Anxiety (SLWA) found that ESL undergraduates faced writing anxiety in implementing written tasks; this included the fear of linguistic difficulties, negative evaluation, lack of instruction in writing composition, and insufficient feedback from instructors.

Based on a number of past studies and official MUET reports have documented challenges in MUET Writing Task 2. These challenges broadly fall into two categories: linguistic competence and task fulfillment. For linguistic competence: Ghani and Shing (2019) observed frequent grammatical errors among candidates. The MUET Report (2020) highlighted L1 interference as a major obstacle to sentence construction. Karnine et al. (2022) and Edward et al. (2021) attributed limited vocabulary to inadequate reading habits. The MUET Report (2021) also emphasized students' misuse of cohesive devices, leading to lack clarity of ideas. Next is task fulfillment: The MUET Report (2023) noted that students often produced unstructured essays. Joannes and AlSaqqaf (2022) identified a lack of elaboration in argumentative writing, while the MUET Report (2022) pointed to shallow justifications of viewpoints as a recurring issue.

Web 2.0 as Learning Tools For MUET Writing

According to Halim and Hashim (2019), educators have been using Web 2.0 as a learning platform to enhance meaningful learning that is in line with the needs of the 21st Century. Web 2.0 facilitates users' participation, collaboration, and contribution to formal and informal settings (Khanzode & Sarode, 2016). Examples of Web 2.0 platforms are Social Networking Sites (SNS), Social media platforms, blogs, Wikis, collaborative tools, and others.

In education, numerous studies have investigated using Web 2.0 platforms as a supplementary tool for teaching English courses and MUET preparation at tertiary-level learning institutions. For instance, Kamlun et al. (2020) employed social media platforms like YouTube videos and websites to improve students' grammar and communication skills in a MUET preparatory course, Rashid et al. (2019) utilised Padlet to get feedback from teachers and peers, Nazri et al., (2018) apply Mindomo in pre-writing class for brainstorming and Chiau (2019), used voice note in telegram improve speaking skills.

In the case of MUET writing, Azlan and Yunus (2020) stated that SNS is useful as a teaching and learning tool since students will share information, tips, and discuss topics worldwide. Haron and Kasuma (2021) highlighted the use of WhatsApp in writing to encourage peer interaction and idea sharing in the discussion. Rashid et al. (2019) used Padlet for lower proficiency students who have issues with their writing to improve their language proficiency and communication, increase motivation, and lower their anxiety. Suhaimi and Yunus (2021) employed Zoom for teaching writing in cooperative learning as it is effective for students to discuss in the breakout rooms, enabling them to generate ideas in writing.

The Efficiency of Web 2.0 Blog for Writing

Elega and Ozad (2018) stated that blogs acted as Computer-Mediated Communication (CMS) tools in the early 2000s. In education, the blog is technically used as the medium of instruction, interaction, and practice among educators to improve students' understanding of the lesson. Zeng (2020) highlights that a blog offers a platform for writing practice, feedback, and correction, fostering engagement and exposing students to authentic materials with various digital tools such as software programs, interactive multimedia materials, and online courses to enhance language teaching and learning.

In teaching writing, the use of blogs is proven effective in the teaching and learning process as it fosters a collaborative atmosphere and enhances social interaction between teachers and students, as well as among students themselves (Spanou & Zafiri, 2019).

According to Barua (2022), blogs enable students to increase their interest and motivation in learning, as they tend to complete written tasks with their peers. Other than that, the effectiveness of a blog can be seen as the students can develop their writing content through reading and engaging discussions with their peers while allowing for the correction of errors during the peer checking and publishing process (Alsamadani, 2018). A study by Alsubaie and Madini (2018) also noted that blogs not only encourage students' critical thinking but also facilitate students' vocabulary expansion through reading from websites recommended in the blog and writing practice while commenting and sharing information.

Theory-Enabled Instructional Blog for MUET Writing

Learning theories are foundational to instructional design, particularly in creating online learning materials (Abuhassna et al., 2024). A theory-enabled instructional blog integrates learning principles such as reflection, dialogue, and critical engagement, transforming the blog

into a pedagogical tool that supports deeper understanding, critical thinking, and skill development (Almulla, 2023). In the context of MUET writing, theoretical grounding enhances both the teaching process and learner outcomes by addressing learners' linguistic and cognitive needs.

Among established frameworks, the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model is widely used for designing online learning through its three elements: cognitive, teaching, and social presence. CoI emphasizes collaborative learning and reflection, which are beneficial for higher-order thinking (Hasani et al., 2022). However, recent critiques argue that CoI neglects emotional presence and lacks clarity in addressing metacognitive strategies and learner autonomy (Xue et al., 2023; Mare & Mutezo, 2025).

The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework offers a comprehensive view of how educators can integrate technology effectively. It blends content, pedagogy, and technology knowledge to support innovative instruction (Usman et al., 2022). TPACK has shown to improve educators' confidence and technological use, but its practical application can be hindered by unclear boundaries between knowledge domains and the varying digital competence among educators (Taopan et al., 2020; Li et al., 2024).

In contrast, the Web-based Cognitive Writing Instruction (WeCWI) framework is specifically designed for developing writing skills, particularly in ESL contexts like MUET. It incorporates both linguistic and non-linguistic dimensions of learning. According to Mah and Cheah (2022), the theoretical and pedagogical manual based on WeCWI principles is different and differs from other online instructional materials since it is specifically tailored towards students' language and cognitive development. With the proficiency that is needed to be acquired by ESL students in terms of cognitive and language skills in writing (Vula et al., 2024), the WeCWI framework is suitable to be used as the foundation of the instructional blog to improve students' MUET writing task 2 based on their problem in writing anxiety, linguistic competence, and task fulfillment. Psychologically, WeCWI reduces writing anxiety via customizable and learner-centered blog platforms.

Unlike CoI and TPACK, which are more general-purpose, WeCWI is tailored for writing instruction and directly addresses challenges like task fulfillment, linguistic competence, and cognitive engagement in MUET. Study by Chen (2025), indicates that writing instruction supported by the WeCWI framework is more effective than traditional methods in improving students' argumentative writing skills. Another skills related to the contribution of WeCWI is speaking and listening (Rahim et al., 2021; Mah & Han, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research employs a quantitative methodology involving statistical analysis and aims for a precise and trustworthy evaluation (Queiros et al., 2017). The questionnaire is used for the data collection method. However, before conducting the current research, a pilot test was carried out to evaluate the questionnaire's reliability. Consequently, the reliability index in Cronbach Alpha depicts a solid and consistent production.

Participants

The participants were 84 ESL undergraduates who enrolled in an Academic Writing class at a private university in Kuala Lumpur. The sample size determination is based on the Krejcie and Morgan Table. Over 100 students enroll in an Academic Writing course every semester in the

Faculty of Computing and Multimedia (FCOM). According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), if the population is N=100, it equals S=80.

Data Collection

The questionnaire consists of 3 sections with 27 questions. Section Demographic Information; Section B- Challenges on MUET Writing Task 2; and Section C- The Needs of an Instructional Blog. The 23 questions (not including the demographic information section) need to be responded to by using a 5 Likert scale, including "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Neutral", "Agree", and "Strongly Agree". The questionnaire was administered in physical classrooms, with lecturers providing guidance to participants on how to complete each section. The data then were analysed using SPSS version 21.

Table 1: Summary of Questionnaire

Section	Item
A: Demographic	A1: Age
	A2: Gender
	A3: MUET Band Achievement
	A4: Year of MUET Achievement
B: The Challenges of MUET Writing Task 2	B1: I emphasise on building my confidence in using correct grammar for MUET Writing Task 2.
	B2: I deal with the challenge of mastering subject-verb agreement and tenses in MUET Writing Task 2.
	B3: I try to improve on expanding my reading habits to incorporate varied and appropriate vocabulary for MUET Writing Task 2.
	B4: I focus on mastering cohesive devices and connectors to link sentences and paragraphs in MUET writing Task 2.
	B5: I pay attention on organising my ideas logically to effectively justify them in MUET Writing Task 2.
	B6: I develop a skill of taking a clear stand on the given issue in MUET Writing Task 2.
	B7: I try to enhance my ability to elaborate and justify viewpoints with relevant examples in MUET Writing Task 2.
	B8: I try to improve my English to reduce anxiety and boost confidence for MUET Writing Task 2.
	B9: I prepare to achieve a good grade in MUET Writing Task 2, which helps in reducing my exam anxiety.
	B10: I strive to achieve a good grade in MUET Writing Task 2 in order to reduce my post-exam anxiety.
	B11: I work on improving my access to online/ offline resources (websites/ books or printed materials) to practice my MUET Writing skills.
C: The Needs of a theoretically-enabled Instructional Blog	C1: I believe a tailored theory-enabled online instructional blog will significantly enhance my understanding of MUET Writing Task 2, beyond other resources or platforms.
	C2: I feel more encourage to read in English and expand my vocabulary by using free online instructional blogs such as MUET Tutorial, MUET my Way and etc
	C3: I actively use the free resources (online instructional blogs) to strengthen my writing abilities for MUET Writing Task 2.
	C4: I actively explore various online articles to gain valuable insights into MUET Writing Task 2.
	C5: I recognize the importance of a comprehensive theory-enabled online instructional blog to further support learners in mastering MUET Writing.
	C6: I enhance my critical thinking for MUET Writing Task 2 by reading academic texts from blogs, more than from other online platforms.
	C7: I prefer communicating in real-time in English with peers through the blog.
	C8: I respond to comment and feedback from peers and lecturers on online instructional blogs to think critically about the topics discussed.

- C9: I receive additional information on specific topics by reading comments from others on the blog.
 C10: I understand MUET Writing Task 2 better when I receive instant responses from the blog.
 C11: I use dictionary widgets on the blog to check the meaning of difficult words, rather than relying on other platforms.
 C12: My English grammar has getting better through the references available on blogs like ProWritingAid, Daily Grammar and etc

The population is targeted as the representative of the larger set of subjects to generalisation (Shukla, 2020). As the sample, purposive sampling was used in this research for students who enrolled in an Academic Writing course from a private university. The reason to choose Academic Writing students is that Academic Writing course is offered in higher learning institutions, and extended writing share similar goals, which require a high level of proficiency in the English language, which covers the same high-stakes conventions of structure, style, and source-based argumentation.(Mensah & Hilton, 2024). The questionnaire was distributed to 88 students via Google Forms, taking around 3 weeks to gather the responses.

Data Analysis

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
0.949	27

The collected data were analysed using SPSS software version 21 to determine the reliability of the test. Before the data were collected through Google Forms, an initial pilot study was conducted at a private university. This test is compulsory to be conducted to validate and determine the reliability of the survey questions before they can be distributed to several target samples in the target population. Based on the reliability test, the Cronbach Alpha result for 27 items on the questionnaire is 0.949, which is more than the value of 0.7 and less than the value of 0.99 or 1, indicating that the reliability was high and acceptable.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Section A: Demographic Profiles

Table 3: Breakdown of Respondents' Demographic Background

		N	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	55	65.5%
	Female	29	34.5%
Age	18-21	49	58.3%
	22-24	34	40.5%
	25-27	1	1.2%
	28 and above		
Year of MUET Achievement	2020	6	7.1%
	2021	3	3.6%
	2022	20	23.8%

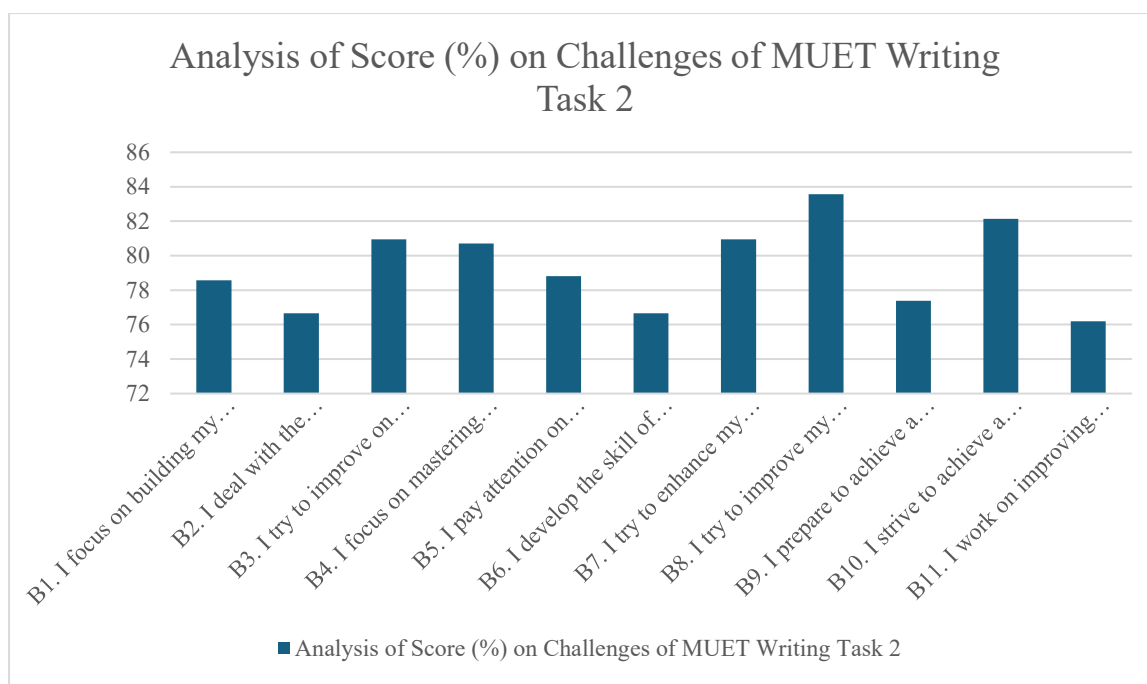
	2023	55	65.5%
MUET Score (Year 2020)	Band 2	2	2.38%
	Band 3	1	1.19%
	Band 4	2	2.38%
	Band 5	1	1.19%
MUET Score (Year 2021 to 2023)	Band 1.0 - 2.5	1	1.19%
	Band 3.0 - 3.5	48	57.1%
	Band 4.0 - 4.5	28	33.3%
	Band 5.0 - 5+	1	1.19%
Total		84	100%

Table 3 depicts the summary of respondents' demographic background. In total, there are five categories asked in the survey: gender, age, year of MUET achievement, MUET score (Year 2020), and MUET score (Year 2021 to 2023). The Year of MUET score has been separated due to the new MUET alignment with the Common European Framework (CEFR), which started in 2021. Most of the respondents are male, comprising 55 respondents (65.5%) and 29 female respondents (34.5%). Most respondents' ages are 18-21 ($n = 49$, 58.3%), followed by 22-24 ($n = 34$, 40.5%). One respondent was 25 and above ($n = 1$, 1.2%). Since this survey is distributed among students of a private university, researchers who are also educators at the university manage to utilise their students as the research subject.

The researchers also asked respondents' year of MUET achievement, i.e. the year respondents sat for the exam. The data gathered illustrated that the majority of the respondents sit for MUET in 2023 (65.5%), followed by the year 2022 (23.8%) and 2020 (7.1%), respectively. Only three respondents sat for the MUET exam in 2021 (3.6%). Specifically, two respondents received Band 2, followed by one respondent who received Band 3, two respondents who received Band 4, and finally, one respondent who received Band 5 in 2020. For the year 2021 – 2023, since the Band system took a slight change, most respondents received Band 3.0 – 3.5 (57.1%), followed by Band 4.0 – 4.5 (33.3%), and only one respondent received Band 5.0 – 5+ (1.19%) meanwhile another respondent received Band 1.0 – 2.5 (1.19%).

Section B: Challenges of MUET Writing Task 2

Figure 1: Analysis of Percentage on the Challenges of MUET Writing Task 2



Based on Figure 1 above, the B8 statement “*I try to improve my English to reduce anxiety and boost confidence for MUET Writing Task 2*” received the highest score 83.5% ($m=4.17$, $SD=0.73$). This indicates that due to insufficient proficiency in English, the respondents try to improve their English skills to reduce anxiety and increase their confidence level. Meanwhile, the second highest score comes from the B10 statement, “*I strive to achieve a good grade in MUET Writing Task 2 to reduce my post-exam anxiety*”. This further reinforces the issue, with 82.1% of respondents from the pilot test expressing agreement ($m = 4.10$, $SD = 0.80$). From the statement, it can be seen that the respondents experienced anxiety about excelling in MUET writing after taking the exam. The third highest score is from the B3 statement, “*I try to improve on expanding my reading habits to incorporate varied and appropriate vocabulary for MUET Writing Task 2*” with 81% agreement ($m = 4.04$, $SD = 0.89$), which indicates that developing a reading habit enables respondents to enhance their vocabulary knowledge.

The B4 statement follows this: “*I focus on mastering cohesive devices and connectors to link sentences and paragraphs in MUET Writing Task 2*”, which is the fourth highest score with 80.7% agreement ($m=4.03$, $SD= 0.79$). This shows that the respondents trying to improve the cohesion in writing. Finally, the B7 statement, “*I try to enhance my ability to elaborate and justify viewpoints with relevant examples in MUET Writing Task 2*” received 80.9% ($m=4.04$, $SD= 0.77$), indicates that respondents make an effort to explain and clarify their point of view to fulfill the task requirements in writing.

Notably, statements B11 ($m=3.80$, $SD= 0.84$), B2 ($m=3.83$, $SD= 0.88$), and B6 ($m=3.83$, $SD=0.84$) received the lowest score from the rest of the statements asked to the respondents. Statement B11, “*I work on improving my access to online or offline resources (websites/ books or printed materials) to practice my MUET Writing skills*”, received a relatively lower score 76.1% possibly due to respondents' lack of awareness of MUET resources that are available online or offline. The other significant statement worth mentioning is the B2 statement “*I deal with the challenge of mastering subject-verb argument and tenses in MUET Writing Task 2*” This statement also received a low score 76.6%, due to respondents' lack of understanding of linguistic errors that they made in writing. Similarly statement B6, “*I develop the skills of taking a clear stand on the given issue in MUET Writing Task 2*”, also recorded a score of 76.6% on challenge towards students. This is due to fewer problems faced by respondents in expressing their thoughts on the topic given in MUET Writing Task 2.

Table 4: Overall Mean Score on MUET Writing Task 2 Challenges

	N	Mean	Percentage
MUET Writing Task 2 Challenges	84	3.9665	79.32%

The table above illustrates the overall mean score of challenges respondents face on MUET Writing Task 2. Overall, the challenges on MUET Writing Task 2 are statistically significant, with 79.32% over 100. This aligns with the findings of Parnabas et al. (2022), who stated that students face challenges in MUET extended writing (MUET Writing Task 2) due to the scoring demands and the level of proficiency required. Similarly, Ghani and Paramalingam (2023) highlighted the need for students to master specific skills to achieve good scores in writing.

Section C: Needs of Instructional Blog on MUET Writing Task 2

Figure 2: Analysis of percentage on the needs of a Theory- Instructional blog on MUET writing task 2

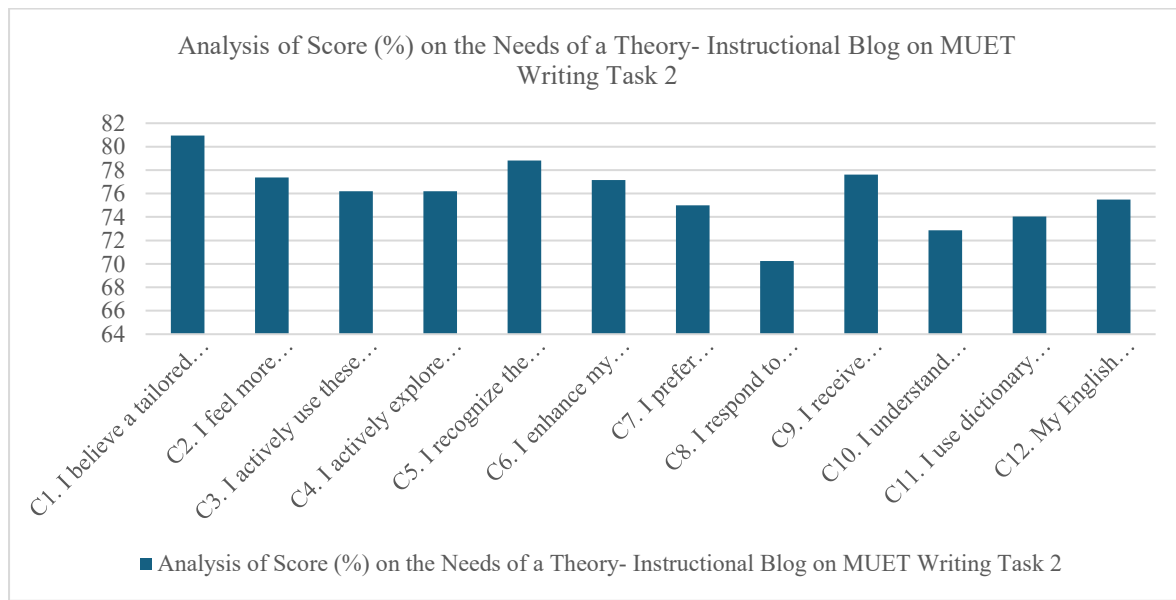


Figure 2 shows a compilation of statements on the need for an instructional blog on MUET Writing Task 2. The statement C1, “I believe a tailored theoretically-enabled online instructional blog will significantly enhance my understanding of MUET Writing Task 2, beyond other resources or platforms”, received the highest score with 80.9% agreement ($m=4.04$, $SD=0.87$). This indicates that respondents believe a tailored, theory-enabled instructional blog designed for MUET Writing Task 2 would greatly improve their comprehension. The second-highest score was for statement C5, “I recognize the importance

of a comprehensive theoretically-enabled online instructional blog to support learners in mastering MUET Writing” that received 78.8% (m=3.94, SD=0.85). This shows that respondents agree on the need for a comprehensive theory-enabled instructional blog as supplementary material to assist them in mastering MUET Writing. The third-highest score was for statement C9, “I receive additional information on specific topics by reading comments from others on the blog” with 77.6% agreement (m=3.88, SD=0.92). Respondents agreed that reading comments from others on blogs provided extra information on topics discussed.

The fourth-highest score is 77.3% (m=3.86, SD=0.95) was for statement C2, “I feel more encouraged to read in English and expand my vocabulary by using free online instructional blogs, such as MUET Tutorial, MUET My Way, etc.”. This suggests that respondents believe their vocabulary and reading habits could improve through available free online instructional blogs. Lastly, the fifth-highest score was for statement C6, “I enhance my critical thinking for MUET Writing Task 2 by reading academic texts from blogs, more so than from other online platforms” with 77.1% agreement (m=3.85, SD=0.98). This shows that respondents prefer reading academic content on blogs rather than other platforms to enhance critical thinking skills for MUET Writing Task 2. The rest of the statements from the table above received a high score (ranging from m = 3.20 to m = 3.6 out of 5.00 value).

Considering a theoretically-enabled instructional blog may function positively in assisting students with improving writing skills, the researcher asked respondents about their needs for Instructional Blog on MUET Writing Task 2 and the score is recorded and tabulated into percentage scores as shown in the table below.

Table 5: Overall Mean Score on The Needs of a Theory-enabled Instructional Blog on MUET Writing Task 2

	N	Mean	Percentage
Needs Of a Theoretically- enabled Instructional Blog On Muet Writing Task 2	84	3.7996	75.99%

The table above depicts the overall score of respondents towards their needs of a theory-enabled instructional blog on MUET writing task 2 (m = 3.7996, 75.99%) and is categorised as high. This concluded that respondents believe there is a need to develop a theory-enabled instructional blog in the future, especially to assist students with writing tasks specifically in preparation for the MUET writing. According to Chowdhury et al. (2022), the use of blogs in writing can increase students’ motivation to write effectively as they can get interactive feedback compared to traditional ways of teaching. The analysis of this paper proved that the respondents need another form of assistance besides instructor, self-learning, and printed materials to better equip them with the upcoming Malaysian University English Test (MUET).

In summary, all of the tables and figures above analysed the challenges and need for an instructional blog for MUET writing task 2. The survey's statistical analysis signifies that the respondents faced challenges in MUET writing Task 2 and that a web-based instructional tool is needed.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the challenges faced by ESL undergraduates in MUET Writing Task 2 and explored their perceived needs for theory-enabled instructional blog to support their writing performance. Based on Research Question 1: 1) What are the challenges faced by ESL undergraduates in MUET Writing Task 2?, the findings revealed that the MUET Writing Task 2 challenges resulted in a score of 79.32%, which is high. Based on the respondents' MUET

performance, the majority only achieved bands 3 to 3.5, categorising them as B1 Independent Users, below the B2 level of 4 to 4.5 and C1 to C+, which categorise as Proficient Users, following the new MUET alignment with the CEFR starting in 2021. The respondents realised that they were at an average level, which might indicate potential issues in their writing skills. The findings identified challenges related to psychology, linguistic competence, and task fulfillment.

In the psychological aspect, the findings of challenges faced by ESL undergraduates in MUET Writing reveal that respondents try to improve their English proficiency in order to reduce anxiety and boost confidence in MUET Writing Task 2. This suggests that a good level of English proficiency can increase the student's confidence and ease their anxiety in writing. David et al. (2018) stated that anxiety in writing exists mostly among lower proficiency students who are dealing with the challenge of stating ideas on paper, mainly because of their poor command of the target language. Other than that, the respondents also faced post-exam anxiety after submitting MUET Writing Task 2. According to Wahyuni and Umam (2017), when students are too concerned with weak performance and negative evaluation, they tend to feel anxious because of the fear of getting bad results. The study by Mah and Khor (2015) found that writing anxiety contributes to poor writing performance among ESL undergraduates in tertiary-level education.

Another challenge that has been faced by ESL undergraduates in MUET Writing Task 2 is vocabulary, which is the linguistic competence aspect. Based on the findings, the respondents attempt to expand their knowledge of vocabulary through reading to gain a variety of appropriate vocabulary to be used in their writing. The challenge in the use of vocabulary in MUET Writing was also stated by the Malaysian Examination Council (2019), where a variety of sentences were not able to be produced by the candidates due to their limited knowledge of vocabulary. Hence, reading is a key to enriching one's knowledge of vocabulary; this is supported by Mukhtar et al. (2023) and Mahmood (2022), that stated, the new vocabularies are gained through reading texts. In addition, reading improves one's knowledge of vocabulary as well as enhancing their knowledge of grammatical structures.

Other challenge in the linguistic competence aspect is the issue of using cohesive devices and linking words in writing. Kashiha (2018) mentioned that cohesion in writing is one of the linguistic challenges faced by ESL students in Malaysia. In addition, the MUET report session 1/2021 prepared by the Malaysian Examination Council (2021) stated that inaccurate cohesive devices have been used by many candidates in their extended writing, resulting in issues with linking ideas. The problem with using cohesive devices occurs when students overuse them due to uncertainty about how they impact writing (Kashiha, 2022).

In the task fulfillment aspect, the findings of challenges faced by ESL students in MUET Writing Task 2 are elaborating and justifying viewpoints. According to Joannes and Alsaqqaf (2018), ESL students in Malaysia faced difficulty in convincingly elaborating their viewpoints, specifically in argumentative essay writing. The weakness in elaborating ideas and viewpoints normally occurs when the students lack proficiency in English, which hinders their ability to express their thoughts on paper. The students struggle to choose appropriate vocabulary and construct correct sentences in their writing. Another factor that challenges students to elaborate and justify viewpoints is the lack of interpretation of the issue proposed in Task 2 writing. According to the MUET report session 3/2022 by the Malaysian Examination Council (2022), in Task 2, candidates failed to identify the main ideas relevant to the topic, resulting in insufficient information in their writing. Problems in understanding the topic discussed contribute to a failure to express ideas comprehensively.

As for Research Question 2: What are ESL undergraduates' perceived needs that could be addressed by a theory-enabled instructional blog for MUET Writing Task 2?, the findings regarding the need for a theoretically-enabled instructional blog for MUET Writing Task 2

received a score of 75.99%, indicating a strong demand. This indicates a significant need for an instructional blog to assist respondents in enhancing their writing skills, particularly in terms of communication through reading comments on the blog expanding their vocabulary, and getting ideas from academic content from online material.

The use of blogs in technology can initiate interaction among students, in which they can communicate and freely express their ideas, Aljafen (2023) found significant improvement in grammar, vocabulary, content, and context in students' writing when blogs were used as an intervention. This is also supported by Alied et al. (2022) that pointed out that, the use of blogs promotes collaborative writing as it not only encourages knowledge sharing among students but also increases students' motivation through support and consultation with peers and teachers. Sütçüi (2020) stated that students become more conscious of their writing and attempt to improve the use of vocabulary and writing style, knowing that their writing is not only read by the teacher but also by their peers.

To develop an instructional blog effectively, several elements should be emphasised, including the quality of instruction and feedback, which plays its parts as guidance on task requirement, and the quality of instruction and feedback, which plays its parts as guidance on task requirements and topic relevance. A lack of writing instruction and feedback during writing practices contributed to their unawareness of the errors in their writing. This is supported by Alias et al. (2021) on the importance of clear instruction prepared by educators for ESL students to improve literacy skills. Din et al. (2021) that stated failure to give direct feedback to students will contribute to students' lack of understanding of linguistic errors that they had done in writing exercises, resulting in repeated mistakes.

The WeCWI framework is pedagogically relevant as it aligns closely with the challenges identified in this study, particularly in the areas of psychological factors (e.g., anxiety, low confidence), linguistic competence (e.g., limited vocabulary, weak cohesion), and task fulfillment (e.g., difficulty elaborating ideas). Grounded in cognitive and interactionist learning theories, WeCWI integrates three core components: reading, writing, and discussion, which are designed to address both linguistic and non-linguistic challenges. The reading component facilitates vocabulary acquisition and grammatical awareness, with Lick (2020) emphasizing that reading is significantly more effective than conventional instruction in enhancing language development. The writing component, structured around the process genre approach, provides guided support through model essays and writing templates, helping students organise and justify their arguments effectively. This is essential for improving task fulfillment, as highlighted by Shanmugam et al. (2023), who stress the role of writing practices in fostering critical thinking. The discussion element promotes interaction through collaborative writing spaces, reducing writing anxiety and enhancing confidence, consistent with interactionist theory. Thus, WeCWI functions not merely as a digital platform but as a theory-driven instructional tool that systematically addresses the multifaceted challenges of MUET Writing Task 2.

In summary, this study emphasizes on the pressing challenges ESL undergraduates face in MUET Writing Task 2, particularly in the areas of psychological readiness, linguistic competence, and task fulfillment. The findings also underscore the necessity for a theory-based instructional blog to meet learners' needs by providing structured writing support, feedback, and opportunities for collaboration. These results support the development and implementation of a WeCWI-enabled instructional blog as a practical and pedagogically sound intervention for improving writing outcomes among Malaysian ESL undergraduates.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study aims to investigate MUET Writing Task challenges among ESL undergraduates and determine the need for an instructional blog to improve ESL undergraduates' writing skills. The findings were summarised: (1) The challenges faced by the ESL undergraduates on MUET Writing Task 2 are considered significantly difficult (2) Developing a theoretically-enabled instructional blog in the future is essential, particularly to support students in mastering writing tasks in preparation for the MUET examination.

Implementing a theoretically-enabled instructional blog is crucial for enhancing students' writing competency. According to Martin and Bolliger (2023), in order to have effective online learning, it is required to have a strong theoretical framework that is able to be a structure and guide for meaningful learning. Mah and Rahim (2019) stated that integrating features that provide access to appropriate reading materials helps to improve writing skills; students help to improve writing skills; students can expand their vocabulary and information and generate ideas for writing. Students' understanding of writing tasks will improve with clear instructions and well-structured materials, facilitating better task completion.

The findings of this study have significant implications for educators, as the exploration of challenges faced by ESL undergraduates in MUET Writing Task 2 could be an eye-opener for teachers or English Language practitioners to provide suitable academic writing and MUET writing material and practices based on the needs of ESL undergraduates. According to Ulla et al. (2022), previous researchers believe it is the responsibility of English language practitioners or teachers to develop students' understanding and achievement in writing skills by providing good materials, teaching, and learning activities, and following the implementable curriculum. In line with 21st-century learning requirements, it can be seen that the need for a theory-enabled instructional blog is crucial to enhancing students' understanding and upgrading their writing knowledge.

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