

Unlocking Potential: How Self-Efficacy Shapes Writing Skills In University Students

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the relationship between self-efficacy and college students' writing skills. Self-efficacy plays an important role in developing students' confidence in writing, encompassing creativity, technical competence, and strategic approaches. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, using a Likert-scale questionnaire and in-depth interviews with 25 English Education students selected through purposive sampling. The questionnaire revealed that 44% of students felt able to apply creativity in writing scientific papers, while 24% experienced difficulties. Regarding technical skills, 64% were confident in spelling words correctly, but only 28% felt comfortable expressing concepts and grammar academically. Furthermore, 56% were able to utilize feedback to enhance their writing, although 16% still encountered challenges. Interview results supported these findings, showing that high self-efficacy students employed strategies such as outlining, consulting with lecturers, and using AI tools in structuring their work. Conversely, students with lower self-efficacy struggled with grammar and organization. Overall, self-efficacy contributes significantly to students' writing skills, though challenges persist in technical and argumentative aspects. Therefore, targeted interventions, including academic writing workshops, digital tool integration, and comprehensive guidance, are needed to enhance writing quality. These efforts may strengthen both students' confidence and technical proficiency, contributing to improved academic performance.

Keywords: Self-efficacy; Writing Skills; Writing Ability; Qualitative Research

1. INTRODUCTION

The ability to write is an important skill for students, both in academic and professional contexts. Academically, writing is a means of conveying ideas and reflecting an understanding of the material. Professionally, this ability supports effective communication through various written documents. In addition, writing helps students to think critically and analytically through organizing ideas in a logical and structured manner. Students with writing skills can articulate their opinions convincingly and clearly [1]-[3]. This ability also reflects depth of thought and organized work. Therefore, developing writing skills is essential for students[4].

The students often face challenges in writing, such as lack of motivation, confidence, and academic pressure [5]-[7]. These difficulties often cause many students to hesitate before starting or completing writing assignments. In this case, self-efficacy plays an important role as a psychological factor that influences their belief in their abilities [8]-[10]. Students with high self-efficacy tend to be more confident and persistent in completing writing tasks. In contrast, low self-efficacy can lead to postponement or failure [11]. This factor also affects their mindset and attitude during the writing process. Therefore, self-efficacy is a crucial element in enhancing students' writing abilities.

Self-efficacy plays an important role in students' academic performance, motivation, and stress management. Research shows that high self-efficacy is associated with career adaptability, academic achievement, and career interest [12]. Students with high self-efficacy are likely to set higher goals and achieve better results [13], [14]. Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to use adaptive learning strategies, such as self-regulation. In contrast, low self-efficacy leads to decreased motivation and academic performance [15]-[17]. The importance of self-efficacy highlights its potential as a target for educational interventions to improve students' academic success and career development.

English writing ability among students is influenced by factors such as teaching methods, media exposure, and the relationship with other language skills. Watching English movies has been shown to improve narrative writing [18], while lack of vocabulary and resources is a major challenge in descriptive

writing [19], [20]. Common errors, such as grammar (48%) and content organization (38%), highlight the need for more targeted instruction [21]. Mind mapping techniques and collaborative learning models are proven to significantly improve writing skills [22], [23]. Additionally, vocabulary acquisition and interest in English demonstrate a positive correlation with writing ability. An integrated approach involving speaking, listening, and writing has been shown to effectively improve overall language proficiency [23]-[25].

The relationship between self-efficacy and writing skills in higher education suggests that self-efficacy beliefs can predict writing performance in various academic contexts. Self-efficacy is a multidimensional construct that includes the efficacy of linguistic knowledge, self-regulation, and writing performance, which collectively have a positive impact on students' writing ability [27]. Research shows that high self-efficacy correlates with better writing outcomes, including in the completion of academic tasks such as thesis, as well as improving time management and motivation [28], [29]. However, there is a difference between self-efficacy and actual performance, which can lead to mechanical errors in writing [30]. Previous experience is also a significant factor in building endurance and readiness to face writing challenges [31]. These findings highlight the importance of educational strategies that support the development of self-efficacy to improve students' writing skills and academic success.

Although previous studies have shown that self-efficacy plays an important role in improving writing skills, there is still a gap in understanding how specific dimensions of self-efficacy, such as self-regulation and linguistic efficacy, affect overall writing skills as they exist in writing [27]. In addition, the difference between the perceived self-efficacy and actual performance has not been widely studied in terms of its impact on writing quality [30]. Research is also limited to specific contexts, without considering variations across cultures or different educational environments. Therefore, more in-depth studies are needed that explore the direct and indirect correlations between self-efficacy and writing ability, providing more comprehensive guidance in developing effective learning strategies.

The present study aims to analyse the relationship between self-efficacy and students' writing ability in the context of higher education, focusing on specific dimensions of self-efficacy, such as self-regulation and linguistic efficacy, which affect overall writing skills. This study also aims to explore the differences between perceived self-efficacy and actual performance, as well as their impact on the quality of writing. In addition, this study aims to identify variations in these relationships across different cultural contexts and educational environments, so as to provide comprehensive guidance in developing effective learning strategies to improve students' self-efficacy and writing ability.

2. METHOD

This study aims to explore how self-efficacy influences writing ability by focusing on 25 English Education students. A descriptive qualitative research design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the relationship between students' self-efficacy and their writing performance.

Data were collected using two main instruments: a Likert-scale questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire consisted of 10 items designed to measure students' levels of writing self-efficacy, adapted from previous research [32], [33]. The interviews, consisting of 10 corresponding questions, were conducted to explore students' writing strategies, motivational beliefs, and challenges encountered during the writing process.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, involving 25 English Education students who met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The collected data were then analyzed thematically. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were used to identify trends in students' self-efficacy levels. In contrast, qualitative data from interviews provided more profound insights into personal experiences and the contextual factors that affect their writing abilities. The final stage of the research involved compiling the findings, interpreting the results, and discussing their implications for writing instruction in English language education programs.

3. FINDINGS

This section presents the results of a study that aims to understand how self-efficacy affects students' writing skills. Findings were obtained through analyzing data from Likert scale questionnaires and in-depth interviews. 25 English education students were purposively selected as subjects. The results not only provide an in-depth picture of the relationship between self-efficacy and writing skills, but also reveal the factors that support or hinder the development of students' writing skills. The questionnaire included 10

statements. Respondents gave responses by choosing five categories, namely 5 for strongly agree (SA), 4 for agree (A), 3 for neutral (N), 2 for disagree (D), and 1 for strongly disagree (SD). To facilitate the discussion, the results are grouped into three main themes, namely Creativity and Uniqueness in Writing, Technical and Language Skills in Writing, and Writing Processes and Strategies. The discussion will begin with an exploration of the first sub-chapter, namely, creativity and uniqueness in writing.

Creativity and Uniqueness in Writing

Creativity and Uniqueness in Writing focuses on students' ability to generate original and interesting ideas in their written work. Data related to this theme is presented in Table 1, which contains the results of the questionnaire regarding students' self-efficacy perceptions in the aspect of writing creativity.

Table 1. Creativity and Uniqueness in Writing

No	Statement	Responses				
		SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I can use my creativity when writing a scientific paper.	12%	32%	32%	24%	0%
2	I can expand my own writing.	12%	52%	24%	8%	4%
3	I can find ways to write my assignments to make them original or unique, even with very detailed assignments and specific guidelines.	8%	32%	52%	0%	8%

The data in Table 1 shows that in the first statement, 'I can use my creativity when writing a scientific paper,' 44% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, 32% were neutral, and 24% disagreed, with no one strongly disagreeing. On the second statement, 'I can expand my own writing,' the majority of respondents (64%) agreed or strongly agreed, 24% were neutral, while 8% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed. On the third statement, 'I can find ways to write my assignments to make them original or unique, even with very detailed assignments and specific guidelines,' most of the respondents chose neutral (52%), followed by 40% who agreed or strongly agreed, and 8% disagreed, with no one strongly disagreeing. Overall, these results indicate that students tend to have positive confidence in their writing creativity, particularly in the aspect of developing ideas independently. However, some respondents remain neutral or less confident in their ability to produce original work within certain limits.

In line with the data results from the questionnaire, the interview results revealed that each subject employed a different approach. However, all remained consistent with the theme of creativity and uniqueness in writing. The results of the interviews with the subjects are shown below:

"I usually use unique ideas when writing, find new perspectives on the topic, and connect relevant theories or literature to the context of my title. I also try to use interesting structures and visual presentation of data such as graphs, tables or diagrams" MIC 1

"I am capable of developing my writing although there are still many weaknesses and the way I develop my writing is by composing a sentence as the topic and then with the help of AI to elaborate it and I will explain it again using my own language" MIC 2

"I try to highlight my personal writing style and focus on a distinctive perspective. While guidelines are specific, I often look for ways to incorporate experiences, viewpoints, or references that are rarely used by others. I also use more lively language and interject arguments that are not only based on facts but also personal interpretations that remain relevant to the topic" MIC 3

Overall, all three subjects showed efforts to develop their writing skills in creative and innovative ways. Each had different ways of enriching their writing, whether through the use of technology, personal viewpoints, or visually appealing presentations. This reflects the importance of diverse approaches in enhancing creativity and uniqueness in writing.

Technical and Language Skills in Writing

In writing, technical and language skills play an important role in producing clear, structured, and effective writing. These skills encompass aspects of grammar, cohesion, coherence, the selection of appropriate vocabulary, and the use of proper sentence structure. Additionally, technical skills such as adhering to academic writing format and maintaining consistency in writing style are also factors that affect

the quality of writing. To understand the extent to which students master these skills in their writing process, the following are the results of data analysis obtained from questionnaires and interviews.

Table 2. Technical and Language Skills in Writing

No	Statement	Responses				
		SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I can comfortably express concepts, language and grammar in English for writing assignments.	12%	16%	52%	16%	4%
2	I can spell properly all the English words in my writing.	12%	52%	28%	4%	4%
3	I can write an argumentative paragraph in English.	8%	44%	36%	8%	4%

Based on the data in Table 2 above, students' technical and language skills in writing show variations in confidence levels. In the first statement, "I can comfortably express concepts, language, and grammar in English for writing assignments," only 28% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. In comparison, the majority (52%) chose neutral, and 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This shows that most students feel quite doubtful about their ability to express concepts, language, and grammar in academic writing. In the second statement, "I can spell properly all the English words in my writing," the level of confidence was higher, with 64% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, 28% were neutral, and only 8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This shows that the majority of students feel quite confident in spelling English words. Meanwhile, on the third statement, "I can write an argumentative paragraph in English," 52% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed, 36% were neutral, and 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This data indicates that although most students feel capable of writing argumentative paragraphs, there are still a number of students who are not fully confident in this skill. Overall, these results indicate that students have varying levels of confidence in their technical and language skills, with spelling being the most mastered aspect, while grammar and argumentative writing skills still require improvement. As for the results of the interview, they can be seen below:

"I'm quite comfortable writing in English, although it sometimes takes me longer to make sure my grammar and word choice are correct. I also use tools like Grammarly to check for grammar mistakes" MIC 1

"Usually after writing, I always read it over and over again. And also sometimes use the grammarly application" MIC 2

"For now, I think I can do it, but my weakness is in the grammar, which is still messy" MIC 3

Overall, the results of these interviews confirm the findings from the data in Table 2 above that students have higher confidence in technical aspects, such as spelling, but still face challenges in aspects of grammar and writing structure. The use of tools like Grammarly demonstrates students' efforts to enhance their writing skills, although some still struggle to develop arguments effectively in academic writing.

Writing Processes and Strategies

Writing is not just about expressing ideas in text, but also involves a series of systematic processes and strategies. Every writer has a different approach to writing, from the planning stage to organizing ideas, writing drafts, revising, and editing. Strategies used may include brainstorming, outlining, using references, and utilizing supporting technology such as grammar checking applications or AI. To understand how university students manage their writing processes and strategies, the following results are analyzed from questionnaires and interviews conducted.

Table 3. Writing Process and Strategies

No	Statement	Responses				
		SA	A	N	D	SD
1	When I receive feedback on my writing, no matter how I feel, I can use that feedback to improve my writing in the future.	24%	32%	28%	4%	12%
2	Even when writing is difficult, I can find ways to overcome my writing difficulties.	12%	52%	28%	4%	4%
3	I can plan what I want to convey before I start writing.	20%	40%	28%	4%	8%
4	I can think of the right words to describe my ideas.	16%	40%	32%	8%	4%

Based on the data obtained, the majority of students employ a fairly effective strategy for writing, particularly when facing challenges and planning the content of their writing. As many as 56% of respondents were able to utilize feedback to improve their writing, although 16% still found it challenging. In addition, 64% of respondents claimed to be able to overcome obstacles in writing, and 60% stated that they were able to plan the content of the writing before starting to write. In the aspect of word choice, 56% of students felt confident, but there were still 12% who experienced difficulties. Overall, although students have a fairly good writing strategy, there are still some aspects that need to be strengthened, especially in processing feedback and choosing the right words to convey ideas effectively. As for the results of the interviews with 4 interviewees, that can be seen below:

“I take feedback as an opportunity to learn and improve. I read each comment carefully, try to understand the criticism, and use it to revise my writing to make it better in the future” MIC 1

“I often ask my lecturers and friends, and I also often use AI to ask questions and ask for a little explanation of what I don't understand” MIC 2

“Before I start writing, I usually create an outline that contains the main points I want to cover. This outline helps me to stay focused on the flow of the writing. I also do some preliminary research to ensure that I have enough references to support my ideas. After that, I decide on the tone or style of language to use” MIC 3

“I pay attention to the audience of my writing. If the audience is more general, I use simple and easy-to-understand language. However, for a more academic audience, I choose a more formal and technical vocabulary. I also usually look for references that are relevant to my writing” MIC 4

Overall, these interviews corroborate the findings in Table 3 that students have various strategies in writing, ranging from utilizing feedback, seeking help when experiencing difficulties, designing an outline before writing, to adjusting language to the audience. However, there is still room for further development, especially in deepening their understanding of grammar and improving the communication effectiveness of their writing.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of this study highlight the significant role of self-efficacy in shaping students' writing skills in higher education. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, it was found that students' confidence in their writing abilities influenced various aspects of the writing process, including creativity, technical skills, and writing strategies.

Students are generally aware of their ability to use their creativity in writing. Survey data revealed that 44% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they could use creativity when writing scientific papers, while 24% had difficulty in this aspect. This finding is in line with the interview results, where students emphasized the importance of a unique point of view, integration of relevant theories, and the use of interesting structures such as tables, graphs, or diagrams. Previous studies, such as [34] [35], were shown that self-efficacy and exposure to diverse perspectives play a crucial role in enhancing students' writing originality. However, there are still students who experience problems in creating original writing, as reflected in the 52% of respondents who were neutral to statements related to the uniqueness of their writing. These findings suggest that although many students strive to innovate in their writing, additional support or guidance, such as structured writing interventions or creativity workshops, is still needed to enhance their creativity [36].

Students' confidence levels in technical writing skills, such as grammar, spelling, and argumentation, are mixed. Survey data revealed that 64% of respondents felt capable of spelling English words correctly, while only 28% felt very comfortable expressing concepts and using grammar academically. This finding aligns with interviews indicating that students often rely on tools like Grammarly and peer feedback to improve their writing. Similarly, a study was found that EFL postgraduate students perceive Grammarly and peer feedback as beneficial for enhancing their academic writing skills [37]. Although some students felt they could write argumentative paragraphs well, 36% remained neutral, indicating a need for improvement in constructing arguments and conveying ideas more fluently in English. This is consistent with research, which suggests that engaging in peer feedback can help students revise documents and

improve their writing skills [38]. These findings highlight the importance of providing additional support and resources to help students develop greater confidence and proficiency in technical writing.

The study also revealed variations in the writing strategies used by students. The majority of respondents (56%) reported effectively utilizing feedback to improve their writing, although 16% still experienced difficulties in this regard. This finding aligns with research, which emphasizes the critical role of feedback from various sources, including peers and AI-based tools, in enhancing learning [39]. Interview results supported this, with students indicating that they actively seek clarification from lecturers and peers and utilize artificial intelligence-based tools to gain additional insights. In addition, 60% of respondents stated that they plan the content of their writing before they start, a strategy emphasized in the interviews through the creation of outlines, initial research, and adjusting language according to the audience. This approach is supported, which highlights various prewriting strategies, such as brainstorming and clustering, to generate and organize ideas before drafting [40]. However, challenges remain in choosing words and conveying ideas effectively, as indicated by 32% of respondents being neutral about their ability to choose the right words. This suggests a need for further support in developing students' vocabulary and expression skills to enhance their writing proficiency.

The results of this study highlight the need for more targeted interventions in improving students' writing skills. Universities and educators can provide more structured guidance in fostering creativity, improving technical skills, and deepening academic writing strategies. Training on originality, argumentation, and grammar reinforcement can help students increase their confidence in writing. Additionally, integrating artificial intelligence-based tools into learning to write can provide benefits in bridging the gap in students' understanding.

Overall, although students showed a fairly good level of self-efficacy in writing, there are still aspects that need further development, especially in terms of originality, argumentation, and technical accuracy. Efforts to improve these aspects can contribute significantly to improving students' writing skills and academic success.

5. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that self-efficacy significantly shapes students' writing skills in higher education, as it influences not only their creativity and originality but also their ability to plan, organize, and respond effectively to challenges during the writing process. The findings indicate that students with higher levels of self-efficacy are generally more confident in generating ideas, developing arguments, and utilizing feedback, while those with lower self-efficacy struggle with technical aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, and coherence. Although many students demonstrate the ability to expand their writing and employ strategies such as outlining, peer consultation, or the use of AI tools, the persistent difficulties in technical accuracy highlight the gap between perceived self-efficacy and actual writing performance. These results suggest that enhancing self-efficacy alone is not sufficient to guarantee writing proficiency; rather, it must be accompanied by targeted instructional support, such as academic writing workshops, grammar reinforcement, and structured feedback mechanisms. Accordingly, educational institutions and lecturers are encouraged to design interventions that foster both self-confidence and technical competence, while students are advised to engage actively in self-reflection, peer collaboration, and continuous practice. By integrating psychological factors with practical training, universities can create more comprehensive strategies that not only strengthen students' writing abilities but also contribute to their long-term academic success.

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