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PORTRAYING EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SELF EFFICACY ACROSS IDEATON, CONVENTION, AND SELF-REGULATION: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION

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Abstract: Writing self-efficacy plays a crucial role in shaping EFL students' engagement, strategic behavior, and confidence in academic writing. This qualitative study investigates how university EFL students construct their writing self-efficacy through three interrelated dimensions: ideation, convention, and self-regulation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with undergraduate EFL students and analyzed using thematic analysis supported by NVivo. The findings reveal that students' self-efficacy in ideation is strengthened by topic familiarity, the use of planning strategies, and access to external resources, enabling them to generate and organize ideas more confidently. In terms of convention, students' confidence is closely associated with their perceived control over grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics, often supported by digital tools as mediational resources. Self-regulation emerges as a dynamic dimension, reflected in students' ability to manage focus, set goals, and sustain motivation, although their efficacy frequently fluctuates due to reliance on external demands such as deadlines. The results indicate that writing self-efficacy is a multidimensional and context-dependent construct shaped by the interaction of cognitive, linguistic, and regulatory processes. These findings highlight the importance of integrating strategic instruction, linguistic support, and self-regulatory guidance to foster sustainable writing self-efficacy in EFL higher education contexts.

Keywords: *writing self-efficacy; EFL students, ideation; self-regulation; thematic analysis.*

INTRODUCTION

Writing in a second or foreign language is often perceived by learners as one of the most challenging academic skills. Through writing, students learn not only how to compose texts but also how to critically process and develop ideas within a specific domain (Isgiarno, Cahyono and Rahmaningtyas, 2020; Fahmi and Rachmijati, 2021; Waruwu, 2022). In addition, empirical studies in EFL contexts have documented that learners frequently encounter difficulties in composing academic texts, such as structuring introductions, articulating problem statements, and organizing ideas, which further reflects the multifaceted challenges faced by EFL writers (Amri and Salmiati, 2024; Song and Song, 2023; Williyan *et al.*, 2025). Moreover, writing is considered as a recursive process rather than a linear one, as writers repeatedly return to different stages of planning, drafting, and revising during composition (Tarchi *et al.*, 2023; Ishchenko, Verkhovtsova and Lunn, 2025; Riwayatiningsih *et al.*, 2025). The challenge does not arise only from limited linguistic knowledge, but also from the learners' confidence in their ability to express concept and handle the effective writing process. Students' writing success in EFL contexts is closely correlated to psychological factors which affect how they approach writing tasks, how much effort they put in, and how they respond to challenges. Among these elements, self-efficacy has been identified as a crucial concept

influencing students' writing habits and persistence (Usher *et al.*, 2023; Martinez, 2022; Apriliyani and Usuludin, 2023). Recent empirical evidence further indicates that writing self-efficacy in EFL contexts is dynamic and task-dependent rather than fixed, fluctuating across different writing tasks and over time (Ye and Xu, 2024; Zhang *et al.*, 2025; Alghasab, 2020).

Writing is a complex cognitive task that involves multiple skills and processes (Hiluf and Alemu, 2024) and demands extensive and continuous practice (Yerni, 2021). In EFL context, writing self-efficacy has been widely known as a key psychological factor affecting students' engagement and performance in writing. Based on Bandura's social cognitive theory, self-efficacy is the belief that people have in their ability to do certain things well (Bandura, 2020). These beliefs influence students' task approaches, the effort of their levels, and their persistence in overcoming challenges in writing.

Studies on writing self-efficacy has consistently demonstrated its strong correlation with motivation, strategy use, and self-regulated learning. Pratiwi, Suharsih and Fargianti (2022) emphasize those students' perception about their writing abilities affect their ideas generation, the implementation of writing strategies, and the assessment of their progress. Similarly, Lee (2023) argues that students with higher self-efficacy beliefs are likely to demonstrate stronger motivation and better writing performance. Positive correlations among writing self-efficacy, writing performance, and strategic behavior are indicated in empirical studies of EFL contexts which corroborate these claims (Binnendyk, Patty and Jamil, 2024; Setyowati *et al.*, 2024). Students who believe in their writing skills are more confident, more strategic, and more resilient when they face writing challenges (Sun and Wang, 2020). Writing self-efficacy, moreover, has been identified as significantly related with self-regulated learning behaviors, including planning, monitoring, and revising written texts (Xu and Xu, 2025; Li, 2022; Tang and Zhu, 2024).

Furthermore, Writing self-efficacy comprises three interconnected dimensions: ideation (the confidence to generate and develop ideas), conventions (the confidence to use appropriate linguistic rules and standards), and self-regulation (the confidence to manage one's writing process and emotions) (Teng and Wang, 2023; Su *et al.*, 2023). It is emphasized that self-efficacy in English writing is based on writers' beliefs about their abilities, which involve multiple skills, strategies, and knowledge in specific contexts (Djatmika, Prihandoko and Nurkamto, 2022). Additionally, English writing self-efficacy is linked to writers' confidence in their ability to perform specific writing tasks (Shehzadi, Shoukat and Kharal, 2021).

Research has also indicated that students with high self-efficacy in English writing tend to focus more on learning for improvement and understanding when acquiring writing skills (Vandermeulen *et al.*, 2024). Moreover, Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to perform the necessary actions to produce a given level of performance in a specific task or context (Waddington, 2023). It is evident that writing self-efficacy plays a crucial role in students' writing performance, with a stronger relationship observed between English self-efficacy beliefs and writing performance compared to general self-efficacy (Basaffar and Alzahrani, 2022).

Students have confidence in their writing abilities can write effectively and show higher motivation, greater engagement, and more motivated, involved, and strategic during the writing (Duha, 2023; Dalman, 2020; Helaluddin and Awalludin, 2020). Previous studies have shown that high writing self-efficacy correlates with the employment of effective writing strategies and develop self-regulated learning practices (Zhang and Hanks, 2024; Akteruzzaman, Sattar and Anwar, 2023; Shi, Li and Xing, 2025). In EFL learning contexts, writing self-efficacy is often referred as a multidimensional construct encompassing confidence in idea generation (ideation), the application of linguistic and textual conventions (convention), and the autonomous management of the writing process (self-regulation) (Zumbrunn *et al.*, 2020; Errabo *et al.*, 2024; Ajideh, Zohrabi and Khojand, 2024).

Zumbrunn et al. (2020) in their research that three major findings emerged from the study that support the multidimensionality of writing self-efficacy (WSE) and provide a more cohesive understanding of WSE in natural classroom settings. First, the study confirmed that WSE is not a single, unified construct but rather consists of distinct dimensions; ideation, conventions, and self-regulation. This underscores the complexity of writing self-efficacy and the need to address these different components separately. Second, there were positive correlations between students' efficacy beliefs in each of these dimensions and their actual writing performance, suggesting that

confidence in specific aspects of writing contributes to overall writing success. Finally, the findings demonstrated that the multidimensional model of WSE is applicable and relevant in natural classroom settings, implying that educators can effectively use this model to assess and support students' writing development by focusing on these distinct areas of self-efficacy.

Recent studies have consistently highlighted writing self-efficacy as a crucial psychological factor influencing EFL learners' writing performance and strategic engagement. Empirical evidence indicates that learners with higher writing self-efficacy tend to employ more effective self-regulated learning strategies and demonstrate stronger persistence when facing challenging writing tasks (Sun and Wang, 2020; Yaman, Arif and Chenxi, 2025). Moreover, instructional approaches that explicitly target learners' self-efficacy beliefs have been shown to significantly enhance students' confidence and overall writing quality in higher education contexts (Jiang, 2025).

Research over the past decade has further underscored the significant role of writing self-efficacy in students' writing development. Learners with higher levels of self-efficacy are generally more willing to engage in writing tasks, persist when encountering difficulties, and revise their writing more carefully (Su *et al.*, 2023; Xu, Li and Yang, 2024). However, much of the existing research has relied on quantitative survey-based methods which, while effective in identifying general patterns, provide limited insight into how students personally experience and construct their confidence in writing.

In the Indonesian EFL context, writing is still a hard skill. Students frequently report difficulties in generating ideas, organizing their writing, and maintaining confidence throughout the writing process (Hamdani and Abid, 2025; Tsao, 2021). Research in the Indonesian context has shown that these challenges are inherent to EFL writing tasks, with learners struggling not only due to linguistic constraints but also because of low self-efficacy and lack of confidence in their writing abilities (Mohammadzadeh, Ahour and Saeidi, 2020; Warren *et al.*, 2020; Yaman, Arif and Chenxi, 2025). These challenges indicate that writing problems may not only be related to linguistic constraints, but also with students' perceptions of their own writing abilities. Even so, qualitative studies that explore Indonesian EFL students' writing self-efficacy from the learners' own perspectives are still not many, especially studies that examine multiple dimensions of writing self-efficacy in a more holistic way.

A significant portion of the current literature predominantly employs quantitative questionnaire-based methodologies despite these contributions, which tend to capture general trends but offer limited insight into how learners experience and the construction of their writing self-efficacy. In response, recent studies have increasingly framed writing self-efficacy as a multidimensional construct, indicating that learners' confidence may fluctuate across various facets of the writing process (Teng and Wang, 2023). From this viewpoint, the current study examines three aspects of writing self-efficacy: ideation, convention, and self-regulation. These dimensions are conceptually aligned with the writing self-efficacy framework proposed by Zumbrunn (2020). This study uses a conceptual guide for formulating interview questions as the framework. Enabling a qualitative investigation of how EFL university students perceive and experience their writing self-efficacy across these dimensions rather than as a quantitative measurement instrument.

To address this gap, the current study adopts a qualitative interview methodology to investigate how EFL university students develop and experience their writing self-efficacy across three essential dimensions: ideation, convention, and self-regulation. Drawing on the conceptual framework of writing self-efficacy proposed by Bruning et al. and the dimensional structure outlined in Zumbrunn's (2020) instrument, these dimensions are utilized as an analytical lens, rather than as a tool for quantitative measurement. By centering on the students' perspectives, this research seeks to provide a more profound understanding of writing self-efficacy within the context of Indonesian higher education and offer valuable pedagogical insights for EFL writing instruction. The study is guided by the following research question: How do EFL university students perceive their writing self-efficacy in relation to ideation, convention, and self-regulation?

METHOD

This research adopted a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews to investigate the writing self-efficacy of EFL university students. A case-study methodology was deemed suitable as the focus of the study was to gain insight into how students perceive and experience their writing confidence, rather than quantifying self-efficacy. Qualitative research is particularly effective in

exploring participants' interpretations and lived experiences in greater depth (Tisdell, Merriam and Struckey-Peyrot, 2025). The study was conducted in one of Islamic State University in Jambi city where English Education is one of the study programs. Twelve undergraduate students of Fifth semester majoring in English education participated in the study and were selected by purposive sampling to ensure they have appropriate qualification in this study, one of requirements was students had achieved grades of A or B+ in all previous writing-related courses were included. This number of participants was considered adequate for qualitative research, enabling extensive and in-depth data collecting while maintaining analytical rigor.

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews designed to capture students' perspectives on their writing self-efficacy across three key dimensions: ideation, convention, and self-regulation. The interview protocol was adapted from the Writing Self-Efficacy instrument by Zumbrunn et al. (2020), which encompasses these three dimensions. Originally developed for quantitative research utilizing Likert-scale questionnaires, the instrument was modified for qualitative purposes by converting the items into open-ended interview questions. This modification enabled the researcher to collect rich, narrative data on students' writing self-efficacy. The interview guide was validated by an expert lecturer, ensuring its clarity, relevance, and linguistic appropriateness. His feedback refined the questions, aligning them with the study's aims and ensuring their suitability for the participants. Each interview lasted between 40 and 60 minutes and was conducted in Indonesian, the participants' preferred language, to facilitate honest and meaningful responses. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and subsequently analyzed.

Table 1. *Interview guide for survey research*

Writing Self-Efficacy by Zumbrunn (2020)	
Ideation	1. I can think of many ideas for my writing.
	2. I can put my ideas into writing.
	3. I can think of many words to describe my ideas.
	4. I can think of a lot of original ideas.
	5. I know exactly where to place my ideas in my writing
Conventions	6. I can spell my words correctly.
	7. I can write complete sentences.
	8. I can punctuate my sentences correctly.
	9. I can write grammatically correct sentences.
	10. I can begin my paragraphs in the right spots.
Self-regulation	11. I can focus on my writing for at least one hour.
	12. I can avoid distractions while I write.
	13. I can start writing assignments quickly.
	14. I can control my frustration when I write.
	15. I can think of my writing goals before I write.
	16. I can keep writing even when it's difficult.

Table 2. *Interview guide for qualitative research*

Aspects	Interview Guide
Ideation	How do you usually find your ideas for your writing?
	How confident are you about your ideas in writing?
	How do you find the right words to express your ideas in writing?
	Please give me an example of an original idea you have used in your writing?
	How do you usually organize your ideas in writing?
Convention	What methods do you use to ensure correct spelling?
	What do you focus on when constructing complete sentences?
	How do you check your punctuation?
	What resources or strategies do you use to ensure grammatical accuracy?
	How do you decide the starting point of a paragraph?
Self-Regulation	How do you keep your focus while writing?
	What methods do you use to avoid distractions in order to stay concentrated in writing?
	What helps you get started writing quickly?

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How do you control your frustration when you write? How do you set you writing goals before writing? How do you keep writing even when it's difficult? What motivates you to continue?

The interview questions presented in table 2 were carefully adapted from the Writing Self-Efficacy instrument by Zumbrunn et al. (2020) to suit a qualitative approach. Each question was designed to explore students' confidence, strategies, and self-perceived abilities in writing across the dimensions of ideation, convention, and self-regulation.

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis with the assistance of NVivo 12 software. The analysis followed the framework proposed by Braun and Clark (2022), which conceptualizes thematic analysis as a flexible approach for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. The analytical process involved six steps; familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and refining themes, and defining and naming the final themes. The use of NVivo software helped reseracher to ensuring the dependability and confirmability of the findings, as every coding decision and interpretation could be clearly traced. As noted by Oe, Yamaoka and Ochiai (2022), NVivo provides an effective way to manage and analyze qualitative data rigorously, allowing researchers to maintain consistency and strengthen the overall credibility of their research.

The three aspects of writing self-efficacy served as an analytical framework, while the analysis remained open to inductively emerging topics to thoroughly encapsulate participants' experiences. To ensure reliability, credibility was bolstered through meticulous transcribing and continuous interaction with the data, while member verification was performed to validate the precision of critical interpretations. An audit trail of the research process made it more trustworthy and incorporating direct quotes from participants made it easier to corroborate (Sugiyono, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study explored EFL university students' writing self-efficacy based on interview data, revealing varying levels of confidence that shaped how students approached writing tasks. The result findings indicate that students' writing self-efficacy is a multidimensional construct encompassing ideation, convention, and self-regulation. These three aspects interacted dynamically during the writing process and influenced students' ability to generate ideas, manage linguistic accuracy, and regulate their writing behavior. To provide a clearer overview of how these finding dimensions are conceptually related, the interaction among these aspects is visually represented in Figure 1.

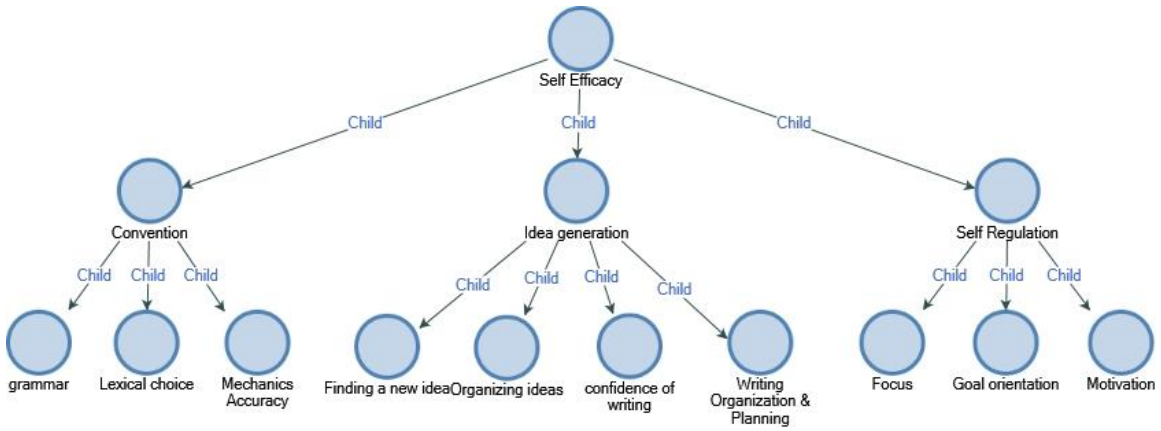


Figure 1. *Thematic representation of EFL students' writing self-efficacy based on NVivo analysis*

The diagram illustrates the hierarchical structure of writing self-efficacy among EFL students. At the highest level is Self-Efficacy, which is conceptualized into three main components: Idea Generation, Convention, and Self-Regulation. Idea Generation encompasses aspects such as generating new ideas, organizing ideas, confidence in writing, and writing organization and planning, highlighting students' competence in developing, structuring, and expressing their ideas effectively. Convention reflects students' mastery of grammar, lexical choice, and mechanics accuracy, indicating their ability to use language correctly in writing. Self-

Regulation includes focus, goal orientation, and motivation, representing students' capacity to manage the writing process and sustain motivation throughout. This thematic map was derived from NVivo analysis, offering a clear visual representation of the key dimensions and sub-dimensions that contribute to students' perceived writing competence. Guided by this thematic structure, the following sections discuss each dimension in detail, beginning with ideation as the foundational component of writing self-efficacy.

Writing self-efficacy in ideation

Drawing on the thematic analysis results, the first dimension examined is ideation. The first aspect of writing self-efficacy in this study was ideation, which referred to the students' confidence in generating and organizing ideas during the writing process. This aspect reflects how well students can produce relevant ideas and structures them coherently in their writing. This conceptualization aligns with previous research suggesting that higher level of ideational self-efficacy enables students to express their thoughts more clearly and effectively (Zhang and Zhang, 2024). The themes in ideation aspects include finding ideas, organizing ideas, writing organization and planning, and confidence of writing ideas. These findings are consistent with cognitive–motivational models of writing, which emphasize that writers' confidence in idea generation plays a foundational role in initiating and sustaining the writing process (Hafner and Ho, 2020; Wang and Chiu, 2024).

Interview data consistently indicated that ideation was perceived as the strongest dimension of students' writing self-efficacy. This finding aligns with earlier studies showing that learners tend to feel more confident at the idea-generation stage than in linguistic accuracy or mechanics, particularly in EFL contexts. Most students reported higher confidence when writing topics were familiar or closely related to their personal experiences and background knowledge. Topic familiarity enabled students to initiate writing more easily and reduced hesitation in the early stages of composing. In line with Zhou, Chen and Hou (2022), greater familiarity with content and sources supports stronger ideational self-efficacy by reducing cognitive load and enabling more fluent idea generation. To further illustrate the internal structure of ideational self-efficacy, Figure 2 presents the NVivo thematic map derived from the interview data.

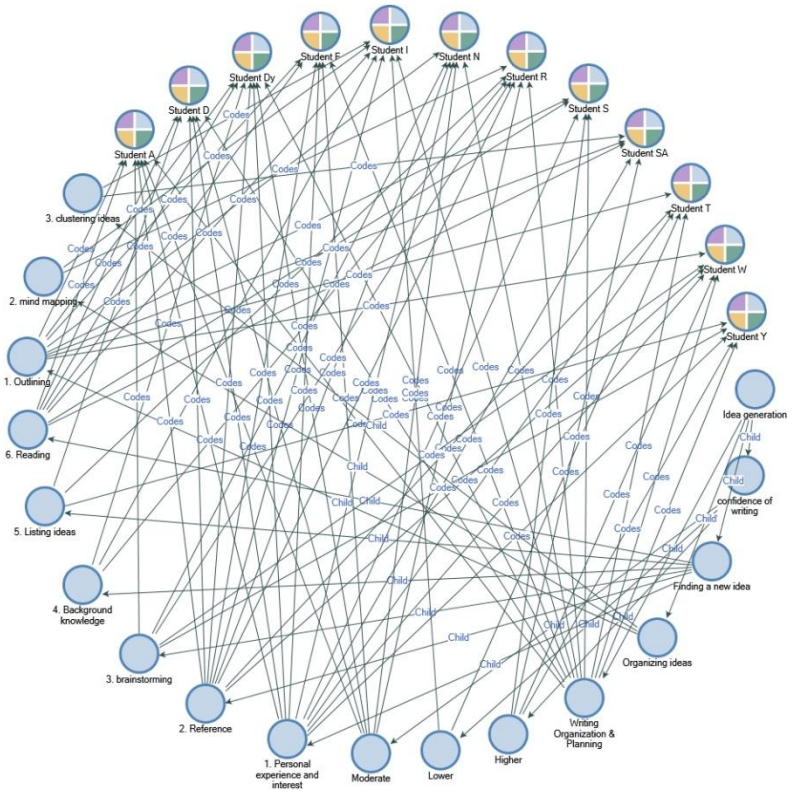


Figure 2. *NVivo thematic mapping of ideational writing self-efficacy among students*

Figure 2 illustrates the NVivo thematic mapping of ideational writing self-efficacy derived from the interview data. The visualization shows the relationships between participants and

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the sub-themes associated with ideation, including idea generation, organizing ideas, writing organization and planning, and confidence in writing ideas. This visual evidence supports the argument that ideational self-efficacy is multidimensional constructed through multiple sources, such as personal experience and interest, background knowledge, reading activities, and the use of references.

The mapping also highlights the strategies students employed to support idea development, including brainstorming, mind mapping, outlining, listing ideas, and clustering ideas. Extending previous research on writing self-efficacy, the density of coding links indicates that ideation was supported by both cognitive resources and strategic behaviors, suggesting that students actively engaged in planning and idea exploration prior to drafting. In addition, variation in self-efficacy levels (higher, moderate, and lower) reflects differences in how confidently students perceived their ability to generate and organize ideas, reinforcing the view that ideational self-efficacy is context-dependent rather than fixed. As one participant explained:

> "When I know the topic well, I feel more confident to start writing because the ideas come naturally." (Participant 4)

This finding reflects Bandura (2021) notion of mastery experience, suggesting that prior knowledge and familiarity strengthen students' beliefs in their writing capability. Beyond spontaneous idea generation, students also demonstrated ideational self-efficacy through deliberate efforts to develop and refine their ideas. Students also demonstrated ideational self-efficacy by actively seeking ideas through reading, online searches, and reference consultation.

> "I also searched on Google about the material I wanted to write." (Participant 1)

Such behaviors extend the concept of ideational self-efficacy beyond intuitive idea generation indicating that confident writers are also strategic and resourceful in developing content, as suggested by (Ishchenko, Verkhovtsova and Lunn, 2025).

In addition, students frequently employed planning strategies such as brainstorming, listing, outlining, and mind mapping before drafting. This finding is consistent with self-regulated learning theory, in which planning and goal setting are central components of effective writing (Zimmerman, 2000). According to Bandura (2020), these planning behaviors demonstrate self-regulatory efficacy, indicating that individuals believe they can manage complex tasks through deliberate organization. Similarly, Al-Inbari *et al.* (2023) reported that both electronic and manual mind-mapping techniques functioned as effective mediating tools in the EFL writing process, suggesting that visual mapping enhances organization, idea generation, and overall writing quality. These findings suggest that the ability to externalize one's thoughts through such tools strengthens the belief in one's own competence.

Despite this generally strong ideational confidence, students' self-efficacy was not uniformly experienced across contexts. Some students expressed hesitation when topics were unfamiliar or when they perceived limitations in vocabulary. This variation supports Bandura (2020) assertion that self-efficacy fluctuates based on task demands and perceived competence, highlighting the situational nature of ideational self-efficacy in EFL writing.

Writing self-efficacy in convention

While students demonstrated relatively strong confidence in generating ideas, they reported greater challenges when dealing with linguistic accuracy. Writing conventions can be defined as the rules that most people follow when they write, like spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence structure. These conventions give writers a way to get their ideas across in a clear and effective way. When these conventions were examined in relation to students' experiences, a noticeable decline in self-efficacy was evident (Zhang, Fan and Jia, 2022; Golparvar and Khafi, 2021; Sun and Wang, 2020). Compared to ideation, students generally reported lower confidence in writing convention, particularly grammar, vocabulary choice, and sentence structure. This finding corroborates previous research suggesting that linguistic accuracy often represents a major challenge for EFL writers, even when ideas are well developed.

Even when students had clear ideas, concerns about linguistic accuracy often constrained their expression. This pattern highlights a mismatch between content knowledge and linguistic confidence, indicating that students' ability to articulate ideas was frequently limited by fear of making errors. The complexity of students' experiences with writing conventions is further

illustrated in Figure 3, which displays the NVivo thematic mapping of convention-related self-efficacy.

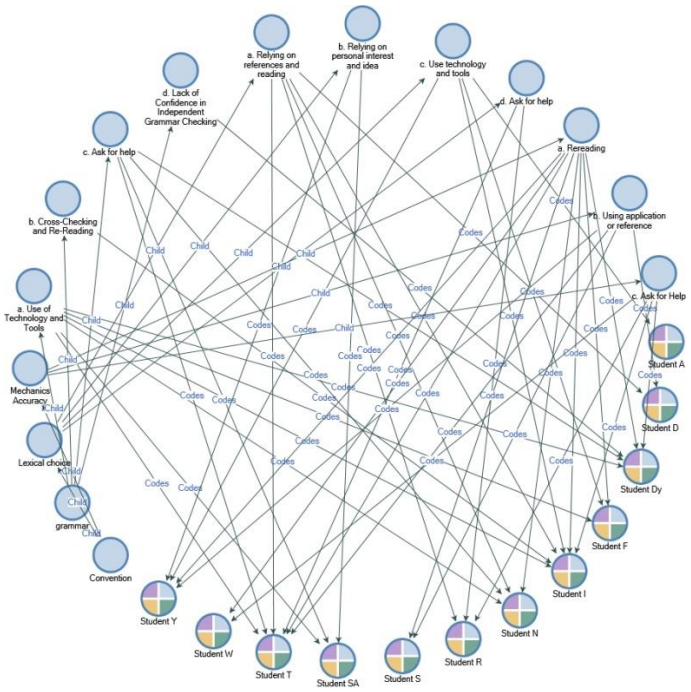


Figure 3. *NVivo thematic map of writing convention self-efficacy.among students*

Figure 3 presents the NVivo thematic mapping of students' writing convention self-efficacy based on the interview data. The visualization depicts the interconnections between participants and convention-related sub-themes, including grammar accuracy, vocabulary use, sentence structure, and writing mechanics. This visual representation reinforces the finding that concerns about linguistic accuracy were widely shared among students, even when they reported confidence in generating ideas.

The figure also illustrates the strategies students employed to manage convention-related challenges, such as rereading their drafts, consulting digital dictionaries, using grammar-checking applications, and seeking feedback from lecturers or peers. Extending previous studies on writing self-efficacy, the density and distribution of coding links suggest that students' convention self-efficacy was often mediated by external resources rather than solely by internalized linguistic confidence. This pattern reflects an evolving form of self-efficacy in which students demonstrated awareness of their limitations while actively engaging in compensatory strategies to improve linguistic accuracy. One participant stated:

> "I usually know what I want to say, but I am afraid of making grammar mistakes." (Participant 7)

This finding aligns with Fahmi and Rachmijati (2021), who argue that limited confidence in linguistic accuracy can restrict written output despite adequate content knowledge. To cope with these challenges, students adopted various compensatory strategies, students relied on rereading, grammar-checking applications, digital dictionaries, and feedback from lecturers or peers.

"I used a grammar application to check whether the grammar was already correct." (Participant 8)

These behaviors indicate developing convention-related self-efficacy, where students recognized their limitations but remained proactive in improving accuracy. The frequent use of technological tools suggests that students' confidence in writing conventions was partially mediated by external resources. This supports Slovic (2019) concept of affordance awareness, in which learners actively utilize available tools to support performance. However, reliance on external validation also indicates that students' self-efficacy in managing conventions independently was still evolving.

The findings related to students' ideation and convention further collectively support prior research indicate that writing self-efficacy is closely linked to learners' ability to generate ideas, manage linguistic resources, and maintain accuracy in academic writing. Studies have shown

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that when learners perceive themselves as capable writers, they are more willing to experiment with ideas and attend to linguistic form, leading to improved writing outcomes (Teng and Wang, 2023; Zhang, Zhang and Zhu, 2023).

Writing self-efficacy in self-regulation

Beyond ideation and linguistic accuracy, students' writing self-efficacy was also shaped by their ability to regulate the writing process. Consistent with contemporary models of self-regulated writing, this dimension encompasses the strategies students use to maintain focus, set goals, and sustain motivation throughout the writing process (Shen *et al.*, 2024). In this study, self-regulatory writing self-efficacy was reflected through three central themes: focus, goal orientation, and motivation. These themes demonstrated how students monitored and controlled their cognitive and emotional processes while engaging in writing tasks, reflecting the regulatory aspects of their self-efficacy.

In this sense, self-regulation functioned as a mechanism that supported students in managing both ideational and linguistic challenges. This finding extends previous research by showing that students who demonstrated confidence in planning, monitoring, and revising their writing reported greater persistence and control during writing tasks. Figure 4 visualizes the thematic structure of self-regulatory writing self-efficacy as identified through NVivo analysis.

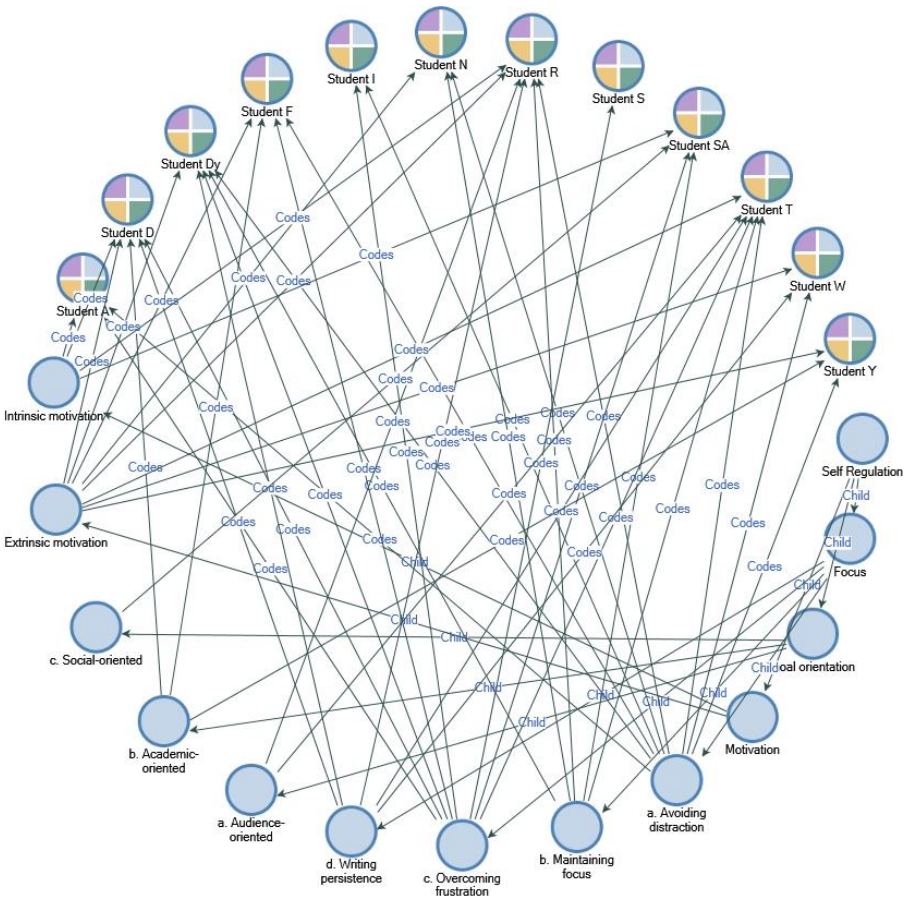


Figure 4. *NVivo thematic map of self-regulation in writing among students*

Figure 4 illustrates the NVivo thematic mapping of self-regulated writing self-efficacy derived from the interview data. The visualization presents the relationships between participants and the core components of self-regulation, including focus, goal orientation, and motivation. The map highlights both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational orientations, as well as students' strategies for managing attention and persistence during writing tasks.

The figure further reveals that self-regulatory strategies such as maintaining focus, avoiding distraction, overcoming frustration, and sustaining writing persistence were closely interconnected. These variations suggest that in goal orientation audience-oriented, academic-oriented, and social-oriented goals reflect differences in how students framed the purpose of writing activities. The density of coding links suggests that self-regulation functioned as a mediating mechanism

that enabled students to sustain engagement and cope with writing difficulties, particularly when challenges related to linguistic accuracy or task complexity emerged. One participant noted:

> "Even if it is difficult, I feel more confident because I know what to do step by step." (Participant 2)

Students regulated focus by managing their environment, such as seeking quiet spaces, limiting technology use, and negotiating social distractions. These behaviors are consistent with environmental structuring and affective regulation, which are core components of self-regulated learning (Schunk and DiBenedetto, 2020). However, focus and persistence were often situational and externally driven, particularly during exams or when deadlines approached.

In addition to behavioral regulation, students' self-efficacy was also shaped by their goal orientations. Goal orientation further differentiated students' self-regulatory efficacy. Many students viewed writing primarily as an academic obligation, indicating extrinsic motivation. In contrast, a smaller number articulated socially oriented goals, viewing writing as a means of expression and contribution beyond coursework. These students demonstrated stronger intrinsic motivation and higher self-efficacy, consistent with Bandura (2020) view that meaningful goals enhance sustained engagement.

Overall, motivation was more strongly influenced by external factors such as deadlines and grades than by intrinsic interest. While some students showed persistence driven by internal responsibility, most writing behavior remained conditionally regulated by situational demands.

> "Writing at university is mainly to fulfill assignments." (Participant 9)

This pattern supports Bandura (2021) arguments that lower self-efficacy increases dependence on external regulation, whereas higher self-efficacy enables greater autonomy. Collectively, the three dimensions illustrate the dynamic nature of students' writing self-efficacy. Students' writing self-efficacy is a multidimensional concept that includes cognitive, linguistic, and regulatory processes that work together in a dynamic way while they are writing. First important part of self-efficacy is ideation is a key part of this belief system. It shows that the learners are confident in coming up with and developing ideas based on their own experiences, interests, and knowledge. The second important part of students' writing self-efficacy was convention, which is their belief that they can use correct grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Students who were more aware of grammar said they were more confident and fluent in writing. The last dimension in self-efficacy is self-regulation, included students' ability to keep their attention on the task at hand, set goals, and stay motivated throughout the writing process. Most participants articulated intentional strategies to regulate their environment and emotions

Taken together, the findings indicate that students' writing self-efficacy developed unevenly across ideation, convention, and self-regulation. Confidence in idea generation was relatively strong and supported by personal relevance and strategic planning, whereas confidence in writing conventions remained a persistent challenge. Self-regulation emerged as a compensatory mechanism that enabled students to manage difficulties and sustain engagement despite linguistic limitations. These results support a multidimensional and context-sensitive view of writing self-efficacy, where belief, behavior, and environment interact dynamically within the EFL writing context.

In line with previous research, the present findings also emphasize the pivotal role of self-regulation in shaping students' writing self-efficacy. Learners who are able to plan, monitor, and evaluate their writing processes tend to develop stronger efficacy beliefs, which in turn support sustained engagement in academic writing tasks (Su *et al.*, 2023). This reciprocal relationship highlights self-efficacy as both a product and a driver of self-regulated writing behavior.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings suggest that EFL writing instruction should move beyond a sole focus on linguistic accuracy and incorporate systematic support for developing students' writing self-efficacy. Instructional practices such as strategy training, scaffolded feedback, and self-assessment activities have been shown to effectively strengthen learners' confidence and autonomy in writing (Jiang, 2025).

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that EFL students exhibit a moderately strong level of writing self-efficacy across the dimensions of ideation, convention, and self-regulation. Students generally

demonstrated confidence in generating and organizing ideas, utilizing strategies such as brainstorming, outlining, and consulting references, which reflects a positive level of ideational self-efficacy. The use of digital tools and external resources also suggests an awareness of personal limitations and a willingness to improve their writing performance. However, students' self-efficacy was not consistently developed across all dimensions. While ideation was relatively strong, confidence in writing conventions and self-regulation was more situational and often dependent on external support and academic pressure. Specifically, motivation appeared to be largely influenced by deadlines and institutional requirements, indicating that students' self-efficacy fluctuated based on external demands rather than being fully internalized.

These findings suggest that students' writing self-efficacy is still developing rather than stable. To foster more sustained and independent writing confidence in EFL contexts, it is essential to strengthen students' autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and self-regulatory strategies. The study's results point to the importance of addressing writing self-efficacy as a multidimensional construct that includes ideation, convention, and self-regulation in EFL writing instruction. Pedagogically, this means offering greater support during the ideation stage by activating students' background knowledge, providing topic familiarity, and explicitly teaching planning strategies such as brainstorming and outlining. At the same time, instruction should go beyond error correction and focus on helping students develop confidence in writing conventions through guided practice, formative feedback, and the strategic use of digital tools, rather than relying excessively on external correction.

Moreover, fostering students' self-regulation through activities like goal-setting, time-management strategies, and reflective writing practices could help shift motivation from externally driven compliance toward more autonomous engagement. By integrating cognitive, linguistic, and regulatory support, writing instruction can more effectively strengthen students' writing self-efficacy and encourage sustained confidence in EFL academic writing.

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of writing self-efficacy by highlighting its multidimensional and context-dependent nature, which challenges the more linear, trait-like views commonly found in quantitative models. The qualitative approach allows for a deeper exploration of the dynamic interplay between cognitive, linguistic, and regulatory factors in shaping writing self-efficacy.

However, several limitations of this study should be noted. First, the research was conducted within a single institution, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study focused on students at a specific grade level, and it would be valuable to explore how writing self-efficacy develops across different academic stages. Future research could expand on these findings by including a broader range of institutions, grade levels, and student populations to gain a more comprehensive understanding of writing self-efficacy in diverse contexts. Furthermore, longitudinal studies could explore how writing self-efficacy evolves over time, as students gain more writing experience and encounter various academic challenges.

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