Grammar Self-Efficacy as a Predictor of Academic Writing Performance of BAELS Freshmen in Cavite State University: A correlational study

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between grammar self-efficacy and the academic writing performance of sixty-eight first year students enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies program at Cavite State University. Many beginning college students often feel unsure about their grammar skills, and this uncertainty can influence how well they organize and express their ideas in writing. To better understand this connection, the study assessed students across four areas of grammar self-efficacy which include morphology, syntax, grammar usage, and editing. Their levels of confidence were then compared with the actual quality of their written work based on an analytic rubric. The research used a descriptive correlational design, and data were gathered through a researcher made questionnaire.

The findings showed that students generally possessed a moderate level of grammar self-efficacy. However, their academic writing performance still fell within the developing range, suggesting that they continue to encounter difficulties in coherence, structure, and consistent grammar use. The results of the Pearson correlation revealed a positive and significant relationship between grammar self-efficacy and writing performance. Among the areas assessed, syntax and grammar usage showed the strongest connections to the quality of student's essays. These results indicate that students who feel more confident in their grammar skills tend to produce clearer and better written work. The study recommends the use of focused grammar instruction, regular feedback, and writing support programs to help strengthen students' confidence and improve their academic writing.

Keywords: grammar self-efficacy, academic writing performance, syntax, grammar usage, editing skills, morphology, language competence, freshmen students, writing development, English language studies

INTRODUCTION

Writing effectively in academic contexts is an essential skill for students, particularly those studying English language. Beyond possessing knowledge of grammar rules, students' confidence in their own grammar abilities referred to as grammar self-efficacy can significantly influence how they approach writing tasks. Rooted in Bandura's social-cognitive theory, self-efficacy reflects a learner's belief in their capability to perform a specific task successfully (Bandura, 1997). In the context of writing, students with higher grammar self-efficacy are more likely to take on challenging assignments, revise their work thoroughly, and persist despite difficulties.

Research consistently emphasizes the connection between self-efficacy and writing performance. For instance, Yuda, Rasuki, and Fathurrochman (2024) found a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.64$) between writing self-efficacy and descriptive writing ability among Indonesian secondary students, indicating that students who believe in their writing competence tend to produce higher-quality work. Conversely, Husna, Ningrum, and Rohmah (2021) reported no significant correlation in a similar population, suggesting that self-belief alone may not guarantee improved writing outcomes. More recent studies have explored the interaction of self-efficacy with other factors, such as metacognition and growth mindset. Prihandoko, Morganna, and Amalia (2024) found that self-efficacy mediated the effect of growth mindset on academic writing performance,

highlighting that both belief in one's ability and cognitive regulation are important. Additionally, research indicated that teachers' motivational practices can significantly enhance students' writing self-efficacy, emphasizing the influence of classroom environment and instructional strategies (Fachrunnisa et al., 2025)

Despite these insights, gaps remain, particularly concerning specific populations. Binnendyk, Patty, and Jamil (2024) examined self-efficacy as a predictor of writing performance among Indonesian secondary students and found a weak but significant positive correlation ($r = 0.297$, $p = .011$). They suggested that other factors such as prior writing instruction, motivation, or cognitive skills may moderate writing outcomes, implying that self-efficacy alone cannot fully explain performance. Moreover, most studies focus on secondary students or adult university learners, leaving first-year BA in English Language Studies (BAELS) undergraduates underexplored. These freshmen face unique academic writing challenges, such as adapting to university-level discourse and formal writing expectations, making their grammar self-efficacy and its predictive role particularly relevant.

Addressing this gap, the present study investigated grammar self-efficacy as a predictor of academic writing performance among BAELS freshmen. Hence, by focusing on this population, the research seeks to determine whether confidence in grammar skills translates into tangible writing success. Understanding this relationship has practical significance for instructors, curriculum developers, and writing support programs. If grammar self-efficacy is a key predictor of writing performance, targeted interventions, such as guided practice, scaffolding, and metacognitive strategies could enhance students' confidence and improve their academic writing outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the extent to which grammar self-efficacy predicts the academic writing performance of Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies (BAELS) students. In particular, it examined whether students' confidence in their grammatical knowledge and skills is significantly associated with, and can serve as a predictor of, their actual writing outcomes.

In line with this, the study answered the following questions:

1. What is the level of grammar self-efficacy of BAELS students?
   1.1. Morphology
   1.2. Syntax
   1.3. Grammar usage and conventions
   1.4. Editing and error correction

2. What is the level of academic writing performance of BAELS students?
   2.1. Content and development
   2.2. Organization and cohesion
   2.3. Grammar and language use
   2.4. Mechanics (punctuation, capitalization, spelling)

3. Is there a significant relationship between grammar self-efficacy and academic writing performance?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to determine whether grammar self-efficacy predicts academic writing performance among BAELS freshmen. A correlational approach is appropriate because the study seeks to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between two measurable variables, students' grammar self-efficacy (predictor variable) and their academic writing performance (criterion variable).

This design is commonly used in language education research to establish predictive relationships among cognitive, linguistic, and affective variables. It is also consistent with previous studies exploring self-efficacy and writing (Binnendyk et al., 2024; Prihandoko et al., 2024), making it a suitable framework for the present investigation.

Participants

The participants of this study were the sixty-eight (68) BA in English Language Studies (BAELS) freshmen enrolled at the College of Arts and Sciences in Cavite State University during the Academic Year 2025–2026. The sample size (n = 68) was determined using the Raosoft sample size calculator with a confidence level of 95% and a margin error of 0.5%, which yielded the required number of respondents for the target population. Students were identified and selected from the official roster using simple random sampling to ensure each freshman had an equal chance of inclusion. Participation was voluntary; informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection. To protect confidentiality, all questionnaires and written essays were coded with ID numbers and stored securely; only aggregated data are reported. Inclusion criteria were (a) current enrollment as a BAELS first-year student in the specified academic term and (b) willingness to participate and provide written consent. Students who did not complete the self-efficacy questionnaire or who failed to submit the academic essay were excluded from the final analysis.

Instrumentation

The researchers utilized survey instruments in this study divided into two:

Grammar Self-Efficacy Questionnaire

The primary instrument for measuring the predictor variable was a 20-item Grammar Self-Efficacy Scale, developed based on Bandura's self-efficacy theory and adapted from existing grammar and writing self-efficacy tools used in previous studies. The instrument was divided into four dimensions: a. Morphology (Items 1–5): word forms, affixes, root identification, b. Syntax (Items 6–10): sentence construction, clauses, SVA, c. Grammar Usage & Conventions (Items 11–15): verb tense, articles, modifiers, d. Editing & Error Correction (Items 16–20): proofreading, self-correction

Students rated each statement using a 4-point Likert scale (4 = Strongly Agree; 1 = Strongly Disagree). Higher scores indicated stronger grammar self-efficacy. The questionnaire underwent content validation by three language experts and achieved a high reliability coefficient (Cronbach's $\alpha \approx .85–.90$), indicating internal consistency.

Academic Writing Performance Rubric

To measure the dependent variable students' academic writing performance, the researchers required all participants to produce a 300–500-word academic essay on a relevant and timely topic. The students' essays were evaluated using a 4-point analytic writing rubric, which allowed the researchers to assess writing in a structured and systematic manner. An analytic rubric was chosen because it breaks writing into several components, enabling a more precise evaluation of specific strengths and weaknesses rather than relying on a single holistic score.

The rubric consisted of four key criteria, widely recognized in academic writing assessment:

Content and Development - evaluates the depth, clarity, and support of ideas.

Organization and Cohesion - assesses the logical flow of ideas, paragraph unity, and effectiveness of transitions.

Grammar and Language Use - measures accuracy and appropriateness of grammatical structures.

Mechanics - refers to surface-level correctness such as punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.

Each criterion was rated using a 4-point scale, aligned with standard writing performance descriptors: 4 - Excellent, 3 - Satisfactory, 2 - Developing, and 1 - Needs Improvement. This scale provided enough range to distinguish varying levels of performance while ensuring clarity for raters.

To maintain the integrity and reliability of scoring, two trained raters independently evaluated all essays. This procedure minimized individual bias and ensured that scores reflected consistent judgment. Inter-rater reliability was reinforced through independent scoring; whenever discrepancies arose between the two raters' evaluations, these were resolved either through discussion and consensus or, when needed, by consulting a third rater. This process ensured that the final scores were fair, accurate, and grounded in a standardized assessment approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Profile of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	20	29.41%
Female	48	70.59%
Total	**68**	**100%**
Have you taken any advanced grammar or writing courses?	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Yes	8	11.88%
No	60	88.2%
Total	**68**	**100%**

The table shows the profile of the respondents who participated in this study. Out of the 68 freshmen students from the Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies (BAELS) program at Cavite State University, majority were female, with 48 students representing 70.59% of the sample, while male respondents accounted for 20 students or 29.41%. This indicates that the program's freshman cohort is predominantly composed of female students.

In terms of prior experience with advanced grammar or writing courses, the table reveals that only a small number of respondents, 8 students (11.88%), have taken such courses. The overwhelming majority, 60 students (88.2%), reported having no previous exposure to advanced grammar or writing. This implies that most of the participants may be approaching academic writing tasks with limited formal preparation in grammar, which could influence their confidence and ability in producing well-structured written work.

Furthermore, the profile highlights a largely female population with minimal prior training in advanced grammar or writing courses, providing an important context for understanding the relationship between grammar self-efficacy and academic writing performance among the respondents.

Table 2: Grammar Self-Efficacy of the Respondents

A. Morphology (Word Forms, Affixes, Structure of Words)		Mean	Interpretation
1	I can correctly identify root words, prefixes, and suffixes.	2.91	Agree
2	I can determine the correct form of a word when writing.	3.16	Agree
3	I can change words into their appropriate grammatical forms (ex., adjective to adverb).	2.94	Agree
4	I can avoid errors in pluralization and verb inflection.	2.77	Agree
5	I feel confident using newly learned word forms in my writing.	2.96	Agree

SUBMEAN		**2.94**	**Agree**
B. Syntax (Sentence Structure and Grammar Rules)			
6	I can construct grammatically correct complex sentences.	2.75	Agree
7	I can identify and correct run-on sentences and fragments.	2.79	Agree
8	I can apply subject–verb agreement correctly in writing.	2.89	Agree
9	I can arrange sentence elements (phrases and clauses) logically.	2.89	Agree
10	I can detect incorrect sentence structure when proofreading.	3.05	Agree
SUBMEAN		**2.86**	**Agree**
C. Grammar Usage and Conventions			
11	I can choose appropriate grammatical structures for academic writing.	3.06	Agree
12	I can use verb tenses consistently throughout a text.	3	Agree
13	I can avoid common grammatical errors such as misplaced modifiers.	2.84	Agree
14	I can correctly use articles (“a,” “an,” “the”) in sentences.	3.21	Agree
15	I am confident in applying grammar rules when revising drafts.	2.81	Agree
SUBMEAN		**2.99**	**Agree**
D. Editing and Error Correction			
16	I can spot grammatical errors in my own writing.	3.13	Agree
17	I can provide accurate grammatical corrections when peer-editing.	2.81	Agree
18	I can edit a paragraph to improve clarity and correctness.	3.06	Agree
19	I feel confident proofreading for grammar independently.	2.89	Agree
20	I can explain the grammar rules behind the corrections I make.	2.81	Agree
SUBMEAN		**2.92**	**Agree**
OVERALL MEAN		**2.93**	**Agree**

The table shows the grammar self-efficacy of the respondents across four key domains: morphology, syntax, grammar usage and conventions, and editing and error correction. The overall mean of 2.93 indicates a moderate level of confidence in their grammatical abilities, suggesting that while students feel somewhat capable, there is still room for growth in applying grammar effectively in academic writing.

In the morphology domain, which deals with word forms, affixes, and structure, the submean of 2.94 shows that respondents are moderately confident in identifying root words, prefixes, and suffixes, determining the correct forms of words, and using newly learned word forms in their writing. This aligns with studies highlighting that morphological awareness supports students' ability to manipulate language accurately, which can contribute positively to writing performance (Zheng & Zhang, 2024).

Regarding syntax, the respondents' submean of 2.86 reflects slightly lower confidence in constructing complex sentences, correcting run-ons and fragments, and applying subject-verb agreement. Syntax requires a deeper understanding of how sentence elements interact, and moderate self-efficacy in this area suggests that some students may struggle with producing grammatically sophisticated sentences. Research has shown that strong syntactic understanding is crucial for writing clarity and overall academic writing performance (Link, 2022).

For grammar usage and conventions, the highest submean of 2.99 indicates that students feel comparatively more confident in applying grammatical rules such as verb tense consistency, article use, and general grammar

conventions in their writing. This supports prior findings that grammar competence and self-efficacy in applying grammatical rules are positively correlated with writing outcomes (Belmekki, 2023; Salering & Tantiado, 2025).

In the domain of editing and error correction, the submean of 2.92 shows that students are moderately confident in identifying and correcting grammatical errors, both in their own writing and when peer-editing. Confidence is slightly lower in peer-editing, suggesting hesitation in applying grammatical knowledge to others' work. Literature suggests that higher self-efficacy in editing enhances students' willingness to revise and improve drafts, leading to better writing performance (Jiang, 2025).

Moreover, the moderate level of grammar self-efficacy observed in the respondents indicates a foundation of confidence that can be further strengthened. Given that self-efficacy influences motivation and task engagement, the results suggest that interventions targeting grammar skills particularly in syntax and peer-editing, may help improve students' academic writing performance. This supports the premise of the study that grammar self-efficacy can serve as a meaningful predictor of writing outcomes among BAELS freshmen.

Table 3: Academic Writing Performance of the Respondents

Criteria	Mean	Interpretation
Content and Development	2.0	Developing
Organization and Cohesion	2.49	Developing
Grammar and Language Use	2.46	Developing
Mechanics (Punctuation, Spelling, Capitalization)	2.58	Satisfactory
Overall Mean	**2.38**	Developing

The results in Table 3 show that BAELS freshmen are performing at a developing level in academic writing overall (mean = 2.38). Their strongest performance is in Mechanics (mean = 2.58), which means they are relatively more comfortable with basics like punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. On the other hand, Content and Development (mean = 2.0) is their weakest area, students are having trouble fully developing their ideas, supporting them with evidence, or creating depth in their essays. Their Organization and Cohesion (2.49) and Grammar & Language Use (2.46) are also in the developing range, suggesting that they struggle not just with grammar accuracy, but also with structuring their thoughts logically.

These patterns make sense when you consider their moderate grammar self-efficacy (from Table 2). When students believe in their grammar ability, they tend to be more willing to revise, self-edit, and apply grammatical rules, which can improve technical elements of writing like mechanics. But confidence in grammar alone doesn't guarantee well-developed ideas or strong structure. This aligns with existing research. For example, Belmekki (2023) found a significant positive correlation between students' grammar competence and their academic writing performance, suggesting that grammar knowledge plays a clear role in how well students write. Meanwhile, studies on writing self-efficacy emphasize that confidence in grammar is only part of the story: it is equally important that students can generate ideas and organize them meaningfully. A review by Dan Li (2024) argues that self-efficacy in writing involves multiple dimensions, including grammar, usage, mechanics, and metacognitive regulation.

Intervention studies also support this. For instance, a recent project that used self-efficacy-based writing instruction showed that when students were given structured feedback, scaffolding, and opportunities to self-regulate, both their self-belief and writing quality significantly improved. In another study, self-regulated learning (SRL)-based instruction helped students with moderate self-efficacy make strong gains in writing skills.

Taken together, these findings suggest that to help BAELS freshmen write more effectively, going beyond grammar drills should be done. They also need structured support in developing ideas, organizing essays, and

thinking about their own writing process. Strengthening both their confidence and their thinking as writers could lead to more meaningful and better-written work.

Table 4: Test of Significant Relationship between Grammar Self-efficacy and Writing Performance

Variables	Test	r	p	Interpretation
Morphology & Academic Writing Performance	Pearson Correlation	.258	.034	Significant
Syntax & Academic Writing Performance	Pearson Correlation	.329	.006	Significant
Grammar Usage & Conventions & Academic Writing Performance	Pearson Correlation	.301	.013	Significant
Editing & Error Correction & Academic Writing Performance	Pearson Correlation	.285	.019	Significant

As gleaned from the table, it shows that there is a consistent, positive relationship between self-efficacy particularly in grammar and writing, and students' academic writing performance. Students who feel more confident in their grammar skills tend to perform better in academic writing. Although the strength of the correlations varies across the four domains, all relationships are positive and statistically significant, which means that grammar self-efficacy plays a meaningful role in shaping how well students write. Among the domains, syntax shows the strongest correlation (r = 0.329), suggesting that students who feel capable of constructing well-formed sentences and applying grammar rules are more likely to produce organized, coherent written work. Morphology and editing also show small but significant correlations, indicating that confidence in identifying word forms and correcting errors also contributes to writing performance, although to a lesser extent. Grammar usage and conventions exhibit a moderate correlation, which highlights the influence of correct tense use, article application, and general grammatical accuracy on the overall quality of student writing.

These findings echo what many scholars have emphasized over the years. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (1997) explains that when students believe they can succeed in a task, they are more motivated, more persistent, and generally more successful. This is supported by the work of Pajares and Johnson (1996), who found that students with higher confidence in their writing abilities tend to produce clearer and better structured essays. Recent studies continue to strengthen this claim, showing that writing performance improves when learners trust their own grammatical knowledge. However, scholars such as Bruning et al. (2013) also remind us that writing self-efficacy is multidimensional. Confidence in grammar alone cannot guarantee strong writing if students struggle with generating ideas, organizing thoughts, or maintaining coherence. Therefore, while the results of this study confirm that grammar self-efficacy is an important predictor of writing performance, they also suggest the need for holistic instruction that nurtures both specific grammatical skills and broader writing abilities.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that BAELS freshmen generally possess a moderate level of grammar self-efficacy across morphology, syntax, grammar usage, and editing skills. While students express confidence in applying basic grammatical rules, their self-efficacy is noticeably lower in more complex areas such as constructing advanced sentence structures and providing accurate peer-editing. These patterns are reflected in their academic writing performance, which remains at a "Developing" level. Although students can express their ideas, many struggle with organizing content, applying grammar consistently, and minimizing mechanical errors.

The Pearson r results further strengthen this observation. All grammar self-efficacy domains demonstrated positive and significant correlations with academic writing performance, with syntax and grammar usage showing the strongest relationships. This indicates that students who feel more capable in grammar tend to

perform better in writing tasks, supporting Bandura's theory and a long line of studies emphasizing the role of self-efficacy in academic success.

These findings carry clear implications for teaching and policy development. From a pedagogical perspective, instructors should design targeted interventions that focus on enhancing students' confidence and mastery in complex grammatical areas, such as advanced sentence construction and peer-editing exercises. Integrating structured grammar exercises into the curriculum and providing regular feedback can help students translate their growing self-efficacy into measurable improvements in academic writing. At the policy level, the results underscore the need for institutional support for continuous professional development for teachers, provision of teaching resources, and the integration of self-efficacy-enhancing strategies within writing programs. Finally, enhancing students' grammar self-efficacy is not only key to improving writing performance but also to fostering lifelong language competence and academic success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results, several practical recommendations are proposed to help strengthen both grammar self-efficacy and academic writing performance among BAELS freshmen:

1. **Integrate Targeted Grammar Instruction in Writing Classes.** Since syntax and grammatical accuracy show strong links to writing outcomes, instructors may incorporate short, focused grammar lessons within writing activities rather than teaching grammar in isolation. Contextualized instruction using students' own drafts as examples can help reinforce correct usage.
2. **Provide Regular, Constructive, and Timely Feedback.** Students benefit from clear explanations of their errors. Feedback that highlights both strengths and areas for improvement can boost confidence and deepen grammatical understanding. Guided revision tasks should also be encouraged to help learners internalize corrections.
3. **Implement Peer-Editing Activities with Structured Guidelines.** Because respondents showed lower confidence in peer-editing skills, teachers may offer checklists or editing rubrics to guide the process. These tools can help students practice identifying errors, build grammar awareness, and strengthen collaborative learning.
4. **Offer Writing Workshops and Remedial Sessions.** Considering that most students have not taken advanced grammar or writing courses, the department may organize supplemental workshops focusing on common writing difficulties such as sentence construction, paragraph development, and mechanics.
5. **Develop Writing Support Programs (ex., Writing Centers, Online Modules).** Establishing a writing support system can help students seek assistance beyond classroom hours. Online modules, video lessons, and sample annotated essays can give additional support to students who need individualized help.
6. **Encourage Self-Regulated Learning Strategies.** Students should be trained to set writing goals, monitor their progress, and evaluate their drafts independently. Such strategies can enhance not only grammar accuracy but also overall writing confidence, as demonstrated by research on writing self-efficacy.

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