Exploring Writing Motivation and Writing Anxiety Using the Expectancy-Value Theory

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ABSTRACT

Motivation and anxiety are important emotional variables that could influence second language writing, particularly in the acquisition of Chinese as a second or foreign language, where the complexity of characters and accuracy required could cause more cognitive load on the learners. While an integration of Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT) suggests that students' expectancy for success and value of the task influence their engagement, previous studies have shown that high motivation could be related to high levels of writing anxiety in Chinese learning environments. This study therefore addresses the needs to investigate writing motivation (expectancy and value) and writing anxiety of learners drawing on EVT as a unified theoretical framework. A quantitative survey research was applied, involving 247 undergraduate learners of Chinese. Data were collected using a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire consisting of two sections: writing motivation (expectancy and task value) adapted from Zhang et al. (2014), and writing anxiety (cognitive, somatic, and avoidance behaviour) adapted from Cheng (2004). The findings show that learners attach great importance to Chinese writing and show moderate-to-high expectancy beliefs but also feel an excessive degree of writing anxiety especially in evaluative and time-limited environments. Expectancy and writing anxiety were weakly but significantly correlated, although no significant differences were identified according to years of studies. These findings indicate that high task value may not be enough to mitigate writing anxiety. The findings suggest the pedagogical need for targeted support that boosts expectancy beliefs through intervention and deals effectively with emotional resistance, to enable both continued engagement with and confidence in Chinese writing.

Keywords: Writing Motivation, Writing Anxiety, Expectancy-Value Theory

INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

Many researchers have highlighted motivation and anxiety as crucial affective factors that influence the language learning process (Piniel & Csizér, 2013; Teng & Zhang, 2018). Motivation reflects learners' willingness and effort to engage in learning tasks, while anxiety is commonly associated with feelings of worry, tension, and apprehension. These emotional states can significantly impact learners' concentration, confidence, and overall learning outcomes. In educational settings, learners often experience anxiety and fluctuating motivation, particularly when required to perform tasks involving productive language skills (Cheng, 2004).

Writing is an essential productive skill in learning Chinese as a second or foreign language, widely used in both academic settings and language assessments. However, Chinese writing presents unique challenges because learners must master Chinese characters, vocabulary, and complex sentence structures (Gong et al., 2020). As a result, many learners feel stressed and lack confidence when completing Chinese writing tasks. Research in

broader L2 contexts indicates that writing is highly sensitive to psychological factors, where anxiety can impede performance and development (Han & Hiver, 2018).

Furthermore, writing is regarded as one of the most demanding language skills due to its complex cognitive process (Graham et al., 2016). Learners are required to generate ideas, organize content, select appropriate language, and revise their work. For Chinese learners, these difficulties are exacerbated by concerns about character accuracy and the fear of making mistakes. Previous studies have demonstrated that high levels of writing anxiety may negatively affect writing performance (Han & Hiver, 2018), while low motivation can reduce learners' effort and engagement in writing activities (Teng & Zhang, 2018).

To better understand these writing experiences, motivation theories have been increasingly applied in writing research. Expectancy-Value Theory suggests that learners' motivation is influenced by their beliefs in their ability to succeed and the value they place on a task (Wigfield et al., 2009). According to this framework, learners are more likely to engage in Chinese writing when they believe they can write well and perceive writing as useful (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020). However, the presence of writing anxiety may weaken these positive beliefs. Despite existing research, the interplay between these factors in the specific context of Chinese learning requires further investigation. Therefore, this study explores writing motivation and writing anxiety among Chinese learners using the Expectancy-Value Theory.

Statement of Problem

In an ideal learning context, learners are expected to engage in writing tasks with strong motivation. According to the Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT), learners' engagement and achievement are influenced by their expectancy for success and the value they place on a task (Wigfield et al., 2009). When learners believe they can write well and perceive writing as important and useful, they are more likely to persist and perform successfully.

However, in the context of learning Chinese as a second or foreign language, this ideal situation is often disrupted. Chinese writing requires mastery of complex characters and accurate expression, which increases cognitive demands and leads to writing anxiety (Wu & Liu, 2019). Research has shown that writing anxiety, including cognitive worry and somatic tension, can negatively affect learners' confidence and willingness to write (Cheng, 2004). As a result, learners may value writing highly but still experience low expectancy for success, leading to avoidance of writing tasks.

Recent studies from 2025 reveal that high motivation does not shield learners from anxiety in Chinese learning contexts. Alghameeti et al. (2025) studied 66 CFL learners and found a distinct coexistence of high motivation and high anxiety, with no significant correlation ($p > .05$) between them. Similarly, Zhao et al. (2025) observed in a sample of 178 learners that anxiety levels persisted and even increased without specific support. These findings underscore the critical need to examine writing motivation and anxiety together within a single theoretical framework.

Therefore, this study explores learners' writing motivation (expectancy beliefs and task value) and writing anxiety within the framework of Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT). While EVT traditionally conceptualises cost as a component of task value, this study focuses specifically on writing anxiety as an affective factor that may reflect learners' perceived emotional cost in Chinese writing. By examining the relationship between expectancy beliefs and writing anxiety, the study aims to provide insights into how motivational beliefs and affective challenges coexist in Chinese writing and to inform pedagogical practices that can enhance learners' confidence while sustaining their motivation.

Objective of the Study and Research Questions

This study is done to explore learners' writing motivation and writing anxiety in Chinese writing using the Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT). Specifically, the study investigates learners' expectancy beliefs, task value, and writing anxiety as an affective cost factor in Chinese writing. The study is guided by the following research questions:

- How do learners perceive expectancy beliefs in their Chinese writing?
- How do learners perceive task value in their Chinese writing?
- How do learners perceive writing anxiety in their Chinese writing?
- Is there a significant relationship between expectancy beliefs and writing anxiety? (H1: There is no significant relationship between expectancy beliefs and writing anxiety.)
- Is there a significant difference in expectancy beliefs and writing anxiety across years of study? (H2: There is no significant difference in expectancy beliefs and writing anxiety across years of study.)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Expectancy-Value Theory

The Expectancy-Value Theory, developed by Wigfield and Eccles in 2000 and further expanded upon by Wigfield, Tonks and Klauda in 2009, represents the basis of this paper. The theory states that the choices made by students concerning their academic success, engagement in the process of education, perseverance, and achievements depend on the two basic constructs – expectancy beliefs and subjective task values. Expectancy beliefs denote a learner's perception of his/her abilities to successfully cope with the learning task. This component correlates highly with self-efficacy and confidence. Students having strong expectancy beliefs show higher activity levels and perseverance while coping with the task. The subjective task value denotes the learners' valuation of the task. Four components characterize subjective task values – attainment value (personal importance), intrinsic value (interest/enjoyment), utility value (usefulness for goals), and cost (effort or lost opportunities).

Regarding second language writing anxiety, this study does not equate writing anxiety directly with the cost construct proposed in EVT. Instead, writing anxiety is conceptualised as an affective factor that may reflect learners' perceived emotional cost associated with Chinese writing tasks. Learners may recognise the importance and usefulness of Chinese writing while simultaneously experiencing worry, tension, and fear of evaluation. Therefore, writing anxiety is examined alongside expectancy beliefs and task value to provide a more comprehensive understanding of learners' writing experiences.

The relevance of this theoretical model in the context of Chinese language acquisition can be found in the fact that the complexity of Chinese writing and evaluation can add up to the cost perception of the learner. Hence, this study will examine the interaction between expectancy beliefs, task value, and writing anxiety.

Second Language Writing Anxiety

Writing anxiety has long been recognised as a critical affective factor influencing second language (L2) writing performance. Early research on language anxiety tended to conceptualise anxiety as a unidimensional construct; however, accumulating empirical evidence suggests that anxiety is better understood as a multidimensional phenomenon that manifests cognitively, physiologically, and behaviourally. In response to this gap, Cheng (2004) developed the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI), a multidimensional instrument specifically designed to measure L2 writing anxiety.

Cheng (2004) conceptualised L2 writing anxiety as comprising three interrelated dimensions: Cognitive Anxiety, Somatic Anxiety, and Avoidance Behaviour. Cognitive anxiety refers to learners' negative expectations, worries, and preoccupations related to writing performance, such as fear of evaluation or concern over linguistic accuracy. Somatic anxiety captures the physiological manifestations of anxiety, including tension, nervousness, and physical discomfort experienced during writing tasks. Avoidance behaviour, on the other hand, reflects learners' tendency to evade writing activities or situations that require L2 writing. This tripartite conceptualisation aligns with broader psychological perspectives that view anxiety as encompassing mental, physical, and behavioural components.

Through exploratory factor analysis and reliability testing involving a large sample of Taiwanese EFL learners, Cheng (2004) demonstrated that the SLWAI possesses strong internal consistency, satisfactory test–retest reliability, and adequate construct validity. Importantly, the study also established that L2 writing anxiety, as measured by the SLWAI, is distinct from writing self-efficacy, thereby underscoring the necessity of treating anxiety as a separate affective construct rather than a mere absence of confidence. This distinction is particularly relevant for research examining the interaction between motivational beliefs and affective barriers in writing.

Past Studies

- **Past Studies on Writing Motivation**

Many studies have examined how motivation affects writing performance (Graham et al., 2015). Writing motivation has been studied through various theoretical frameworks, such as Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2020), Achievement Goal Theory (Stockinger et al., 2021), and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Among these, Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT) is widely used to explain how learners' beliefs about their ability and the value of the task influence their motivation (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020). According to EVT, motivation has two main components: expectancy (belief in one's ability) and value (importance of the task). In this study, we focus on EVT, as research consistently shows that learners who are confident and value the task perform better.

Recent empirical studies support the applicability of EVT in writing contexts. Wang et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between motivational beliefs and language proficiency. The research focused on how self-efficacy profiles and academic emotions influence outcomes in an EFL context. The respondents were 300 non-English major undergraduate learners from two universities in China. The findings showed that learners with high self-efficacy, closely aligned with the expectancy component of EVT, and positive academic emotions (reflecting high task value) achieved significantly better proficiency. This study suggests that teachers should foster positive emotional experiences and build confidence to improve performance.

Next, to further examine the role of motivational beliefs, the study by Sun and Wang (2020) examined the relationships among writing self-efficacy (closely linked to expectancy beliefs), self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies, and writing proficiency. The respondents were 319 sophomore undergraduate students from two major universities in northwest China. The findings indicated that while students generally reported moderate self-efficacy and infrequent use of strategies, both factors significantly predicted writing proficiency. This evidence suggests that to improve writing quality, educators should focus on enhancing learners' psychological confidence and self-regulation skills, as both directly support better writing outcomes.

In summary, past literature extensively applies Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT). Studies such as Wang et al. (2021) and Sun and Wang (2020) confirm that self-efficacy, which is closely linked to the 'expectancy' component of EVT, and task value are fundamental drivers of motivation that lead to better strategies and proficiency. However, the interplay between these motivational factors and writing anxiety remains largely underexplored. This study aims to bridge that gap by utilizing EVT to examine the concurrent effects of motivation (expectancy and value) and anxiety among the current respondents.

- **Past Studies on Writing Anxiety**

Many studies have been done to investigate writing anxiety, also known as writing apprehension. Daly & Miller (1975) introduced the concept with their Writing Apprehension Test (WAT), a 26-item scale measuring tendencies to avoid writing situations involving evaluation. This tool revealed that high apprehension leads to shorter, lower-quality papers and has been widely validated with high reliability. Cheng (2004) refined the framework using the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI), categorizing anxiety into cognitive (e.g., worry about evaluation), somatic (physiological symptoms), and avoidance behaviour types, with cognitive often dominant. Many studies later on suggest that writing apprehension acts as a significant barrier to student performance, often leading to a measurable decline in work quality. (Zhang, 2001; Reeves, 1997)

The study by Alghameeti et al. (2025) is done to investigate the levels of anxiety and motivation among learners of Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) and the relationship between anxiety and motivation in CFL learning. This research examines foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) and motivation among Saudi students learning Chinese as a foreign language. It explores the main factors contributing to learners' anxiety and motivation levels and determines whether a significant correlation exists between these two affective variables in the CFL context. The sample consists of 66 first-year intermediate school CFL learners. Data were collected using two questionnaires: the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Sung and Li (2019) and a motivation scale adapted by Wen (1997). The findings revealed a high impact of anxiety on CFL learning, particularly concerning the mastery of language skills and writing Chinese characters. Learners expressed high levels of Chinese class performance anxiety, while levels of confidence in their overall ability to learn the language were significantly lower. Additionally, learners exhibited high motivation to learn Chinese. No significant relationship was observed between anxiety and motivation. The study suggests that anxiety and motivation can coexist in CFL learning contexts. It highlights the need for Chinese language teachers to adopt instructional strategies that reduce anxiety—especially in character writing and skill mastery—while sustaining learners' high motivation. The findings also inform curriculum designers and policymakers about improving CFL programs, particularly in contexts where Chinese is newly introduced into the education system.

The study by Wu and Liu (2019) investigates Chinese as a foreign language writing anxiety with a focus on its nature, influencing factors, and learner experiences. This research explores the psychological characteristics of writing anxiety experienced by learners of Chinese as a foreign language, particularly examining how writing anxiety manifests in this unique language context (e.g., logographic/script specific events) and what factors influence it. The respondents are CFL learners studying Chinese as a foreign language. 204 valid questionnaire responses were analyzed; additionally, 6 students and 4 writing teachers were interviewed for qualitative insight. A Chinese as a Foreign Language Writing Anxiety Scale (CFLWAS) was developed by adapting the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) to be suitable for Chinese writing contexts (Likert-type scale). Semi-structured interviews with selected learners and teachers complemented the quantitative data. Findings from the study showed that character (personality); the ability of language expression and writing skills; fear of evaluation are the main factors that affect writing anxiety. Psychological reactions varied depending on the learner, with character writing demands being a distinct source of anxiety beyond typical alphabetic writing challenges. This study suggests writing anxiety could be reduced with a significant increase in the amount of writing exercises. This study also suggests that L2 writing instruction in Chinese should account for language-specific anxiety triggers (e.g., character complexity) and that both cognitive and affective dimensions are important for curriculum design and supportive interventions. Teachers should integrate emotion-aware pedagogies and scaffold writing tasks to reduce anxiety.

The study by Zhao, Chew, and Yap (2025) examines the effects of English–Chinese code-switching (CS) practice on writing anxiety and writing performance among beginner Chinese as a second language (CSL) learners. This research investigates whether adding English–Chinese code-switching activities into writing exercises can reduce writing anxiety and improve writing performance for CSL learners compared to traditional Chinese-only writing instruction. A total of 178 beginner-level CSL learners were purposely selected, with 67 assigned to the control group and 111 to the experimental group. Writing anxiety was assessed using a standardized second language writing anxiety questionnaire, and writing performance was measured through a short self-introduction task. The finding showed that the experimental group that practiced code-switching showed significantly lower writing anxiety over time, while the control group's writing anxiety increased. The experimental group also showed higher writing performance than the control group at the end of the study. This study suggests incorporating strategic code-switching activities in early CSL writing instruction can help reduce affective barriers like anxiety and build confidence among beginners. Pedagogically, teachers can use bilingual scaffolding to support emotional comfort and writing development. This study suggests educators should consider effective support methods (e.g., code-switching) alongside traditional L2 writing pedagogy.

Findings from CFL/CSL contexts indicate that low expectancy beliefs are triggered by character complexity, limited writing proficiency, and negative self-perceptions (Wu & Liu, 2019; Daly & Miller, 1975). High task value persists even in the presence of anxiety, as seen in learners who remain motivated despite high anxiety levels (Alghameeti et al., 2025). Instructional scaffolding (e.g., code-switching, increased practice) can raise

expectancy beliefs by making tasks feel more achievable, thereby reducing anxiety (Zhao et al., 2025). Writing anxiety can therefore be understood as an affective outcome of expectancy–value imbalance, specifically, situations in which learners perceive writing as important but doubt their ability to perform successfully. In this research, we will further explore if high value (motivation) is enough to overcome cost (writing anxiety), or teachers must actively intervene to raise expectancy to make the writing process sustainable for students.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Learners' motivation for engaging in Chinese writing tasks is associated with the expectancy beliefs about their own competence and the value of writing tasks. Based on Expectancy-Value Theory (Wigfield et al., 2009), writing learners are motivated to engage in the writing tasks if they believe themselves competent and see writing tasks valuable, necessary or fun. On the other hand, writing anxiety refers to the affective cost that learners must bear in engaging in the writing process, which may lead to a lack of confidence or low level of engagement. For Chinese writing contexts, learners experience writing anxiety in view of the complexity of characters, fear of negative evaluation and time pressure. Hence, writing anxiety must be regarded as one of the "costs" of EVT but not as "value". This current research aims to combine Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT) with writing motivation and anxiety factors. Self-efficacy will represent expectancy belief, while importance, usefulness and interest of writing tasks constitute the subjective task value. The writing anxiety will be conceptualized as affective cost made up of cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety and avoidance behaviour.

In conclusion, the conceptual framework can be formulated as follows: Learners' writing experiences are formed by the interplay between:

- Expectancy beliefs (self-efficacy)
- Task value (importance, usefulness, interest)
- Affective cost (writing anxiety – cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety and avoidance behaviour)



Figure 1- Conceptual Framework of the Study

Writing motivation and writing anxiety using the expectancy-value theory

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study is done to explore writing motivation and writing anxiety using the expectancy-value theory. A convenience sample of 247 participants responded to the survey. The instrument used is a 5-point Likert-scale survey and is rooted from Zhang, et.al (2014) and Cheng (2004) to reveal the variables in table 3 below. Table 1 below shows the categories used for the Likert scale; 1 is for Strongly Disagree, 2 is for Disagree, 3 is for Undecided, 4 is for Agree and 5 is for Strongly Agree.

Table 1- Likert Scale Use

1	Strongly Disagree
2	Disagree
3	Uncertain
4	Agree
5	Strongly Agree

Table 2- Distribution of Items in the Survey

SECT	VARIABLE	CONSTRUCTS	No Of Items		Cronbach Alpha
B	EXPECTANCY Writing Motivation (Zhang, et.al. , 2014)	Self-Efficacy	5	9	.839
		Task value scale	4		
C	Writing Anxiety (Cheng, 2004)	Cognitive	8	22	.876
		Somatic	7		
		Avoidance Behaviour	7		
		Total		31	.881

Table 2 shows the distribution of items in the survey instrument adapted from established scales. The questionnaire consists of two sections (B and C) with a total of 31 items. Section B (Expectancy – Writing Motivation) was adapted from the study of Zhang et al. (2014). The section comprises 9 items, which assessed two constructs. These constructs are self-efficacy, comprising 5 items, and task value, which comprises 4 items. The internal consistency of this section is strong, measuring $\alpha = .839$. Section C (Writing Anxiety) was adapted from the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory developed by Cheng (2004). This section consists of 22 items that construct three factors: cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoiding behaviors, which comprise 8, 7, and 7 items, respectively. Its reliability coefficient was high, with Cronbach's alpha = .876. The instrument was found to have an overall strong reliability, with the overall value of Cronbach's Alpha being .881.

Table 3- Reliability Levels, Cronbach's Alpha Ranges, and Their Interpretations

Reliability Level	Cronbach's Alpha range	Interpretation
Excellent	0.9 and above	Indicates very high internal consistency
Good	0.80-0.89	Reflects strong internal consistency
Acceptable	0.70-0.79	Indicates acceptable internal consistency
Questionable	0.60-0.69	Reflects questionable internal consistency
Poor	Below 0.6	Indicates poor internal consistency

To determine the internal reliability of the instrument, reliability analysis is conducted. Table 3 above shows the distribution and interpretation of Cronbach Alpha range. According to Ahmad, et.al.(2024), Cronbach Alpha scores between 0.7 to 0.9 is considered acceptable to excellent.

Table 2 also shows the reliability of the survey. The analysis shows a Cronbach alpha of .839 for Writing Motivation and .876 for Writing Anxiety. The overall Cronbach Alpha for all 31 items is 881; thus, revealing a good reliability of the instrument chosen. Further analysis using SPSS is done to present findings to answer the research questions for this study.

FINDINGS

Demographic Analysis

According to Zienefuss, et.al (2021), researchers report demographic data in percentages to establish sample representatives, and allow for generalizability to a larger population. The reporting also provides an overview of respondents' characteristics. Percentages offer a clear and understandable picture of the sample makeup.

Table 4- Percentage for Demographic profile

Question	Demographic Profile	Categories	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Male	6%
		Female	94%
2	Discipline	Science & Technology	1%
3		Social Sciences & Humanities	99%
4	Current Year	Year 1	34%
		Year 2	19%
		Year 3	26%
		Year 4	21%

Table 4 presents the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of gender, discipline, and current year of study. The sample was predominantly female (94%), with male respondents accounting for only 6%. In terms of academic discipline, the vast majority of respondents were from Social Sciences and Humanities (99%), while only 1% were from Science and Technology.

Regarding year of study, Year 1 students constituted the largest proportion (34%), followed by Year 3 students (26%), Year 4 students (21%), and Year 2 students (19%).

Descriptive Statistics

According to Vetter (2017), the mean (M) represents the average score of a dataset and provides an indication of the central tendency of respondents' perceptions. Standard deviation (SD) reflects the variability or dispersion of responses around the mean. A lower SD indicates that respondents' answers are relatively consistent, whereas a higher SD suggests greater variation in responses. Therefore, SD should not be interpreted as inherently "good" or "bad," but rather as an indicator of response distribution.

Findings for Expectancy

This section presents data to answer research question 1&2- How do learners perceive expectancy beliefs in their Chinese writing? How do learners perceive task value in their Chinese writing? In the context of this study, this is measured by (i) self-efficacy, and (ii) task value.

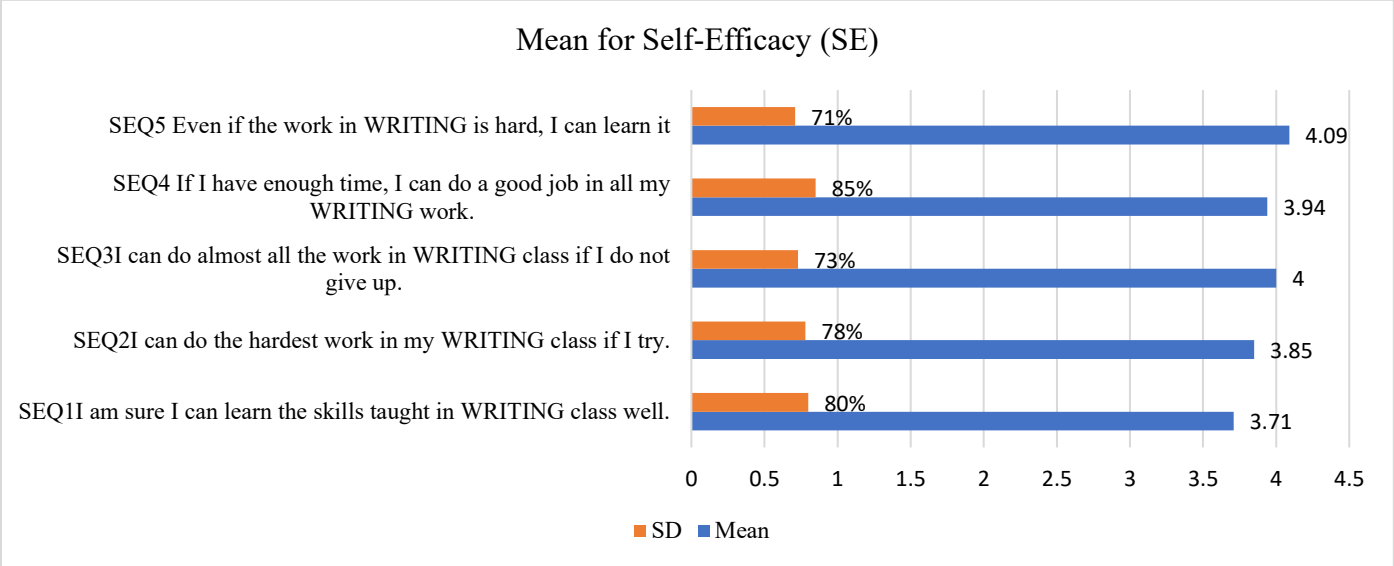


Figure 2- Mean for Self-Efficacy (SE)

Figure 2 shows the mean scores of five items related to learners' self-efficacy. The highest mean score was obtained by the item “believing in the ability to learn even when the writing work is difficult” (M=4.09, SD=0.71). This was followed by the perception that learners “can complete almost all work if they do not give up” (M=4.00, SD=0.73) and the belief that “sufficient time allows for good performance in all writing tasks” (M=3.94, SD=0.85). These results suggest a high level of resilience and confidence among learners when faced with challenging tasks. Conversely, the lowest mean score was recorded for the item “certainty in learning the skills taught in writing class well” (M=3.71, SD=0.80). This was preceded by the item “being able to do the hardest work in class with effort” (M=3.85, SD=0.78). Overall, the findings indicate that while learners are hardworking and feel confident in specific situations, they are less certain about whether they have fully mastered all the writing skills they were taught.

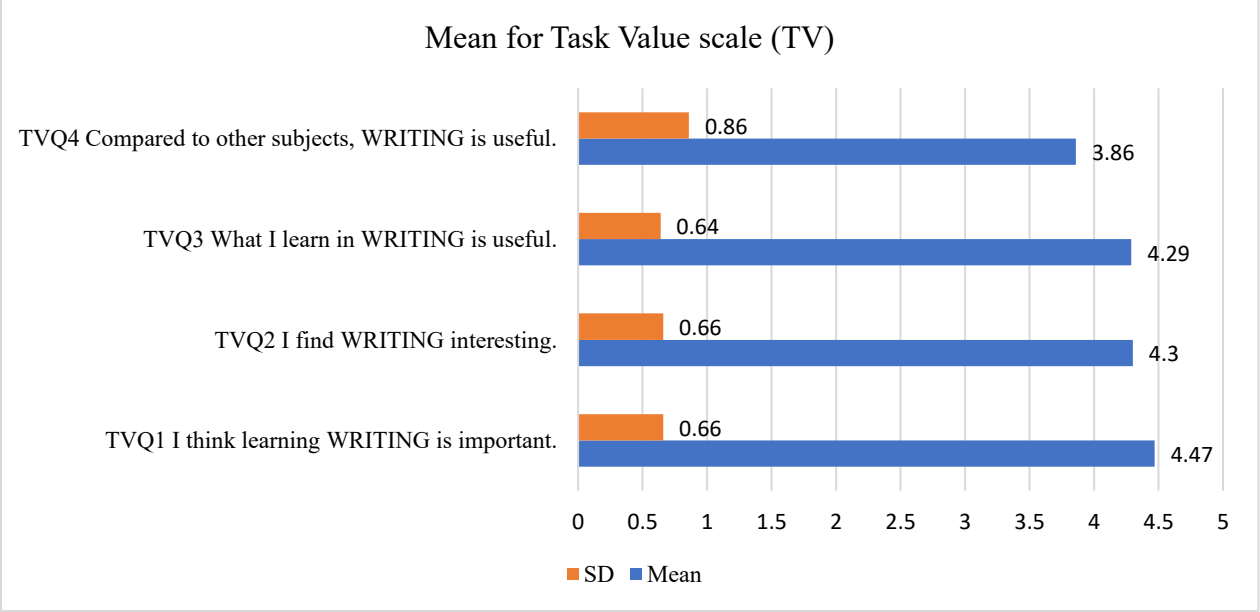


Figure 3- Mean for Task Value scale (TV)

Figure 3 presents the mean scores for the Task Value (TV) scale, indicating that respondents generally hold a very positive view of the subject. The highest mean score was recorded for the "perceived importance of learning writing" (M=4.47, SD=0.66), followed by "finding the subject interesting" (M=4.30, SD=0.66) and "its content useful" (M=4.29, SD=0.64). These results suggest that students recognize strong intrinsic and utility value in their writing education. Conversely, the lowest mean was found for the relative "usefulness of writing compared to other subjects" (M = 3.86, SD = 0.86). This suggests that while students value writing as a skill on its own, they are less sure about how it compares to other subjects in their studies.

Findings for Writing Anxiety

This section presents data to answer research question 3- How do learners perceive writing anxiety in their Chinese writing? In the context of this study, this is measured by (i) cognitive anxiety, (ii) somatic anxiety, and (iii) avoidance behaviour.

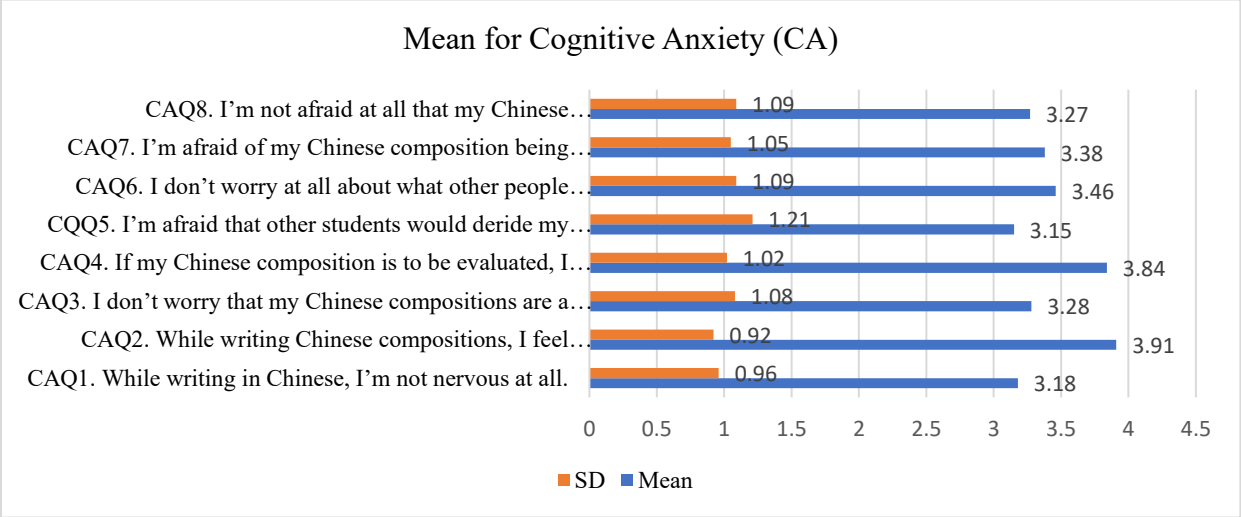


Figure 4- Mean for Cognitive Anxiety (CA)

Figure 4 presents the mean scores of Cognitive Anxiety (CA) related to Chinese writing. The results for Cognitive Anxiety (CA) related to Chinese composition indicate moderate levels of anxiety among respondents. Higher mean scores were reported for items related to fear of evaluation, including "feeling worried and uneasy when Chinese compositions are to be evaluated" (M = 3.91), and concern about "getting a very poor grade" (M = 3.84). Moderate concern was also evident regarding "peer judgment" (CAQ5, M = 3.15) and "public discussion" (CAQ6, M = 3.46) of respondents' Chinese compositions. Overall, these findings suggest that anxiety about evaluation and negative judgment plays a notable role in learners' cognitive anxiety for Chinese writing.

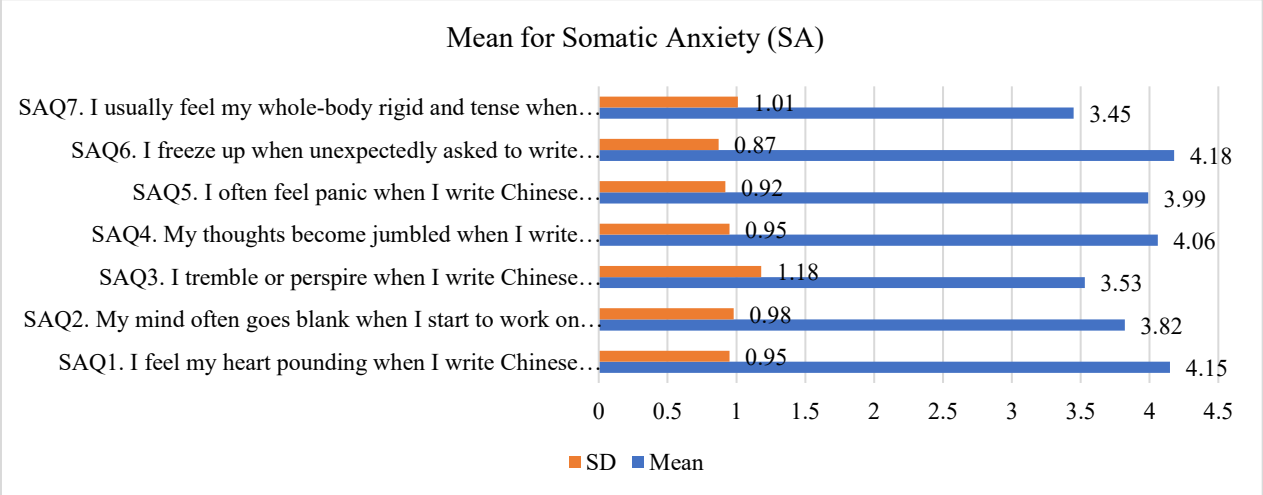


Figure 5- Mean for Somatic Anxiety (SA)

Figure 5 presents the mean scores of Somatic Anxiety (SA) related to Chinese writing composition. Overall, the results indicate a relatively high level of somatic anxiety among respondents. The highest mean scores were reported for "freezing up when unexpectedly asked to write Chinese compositions" (M = 4.18), and experiencing a "pounding heart when writing under time constraint" (M = 4.15). Similarly, respondents reported "jumbled thoughts" (M = 4.06) and "feeling panic" (M = 3.99) when writing Chinese compositions under time constraint. These findings suggest that time constraints in Chinese compositions will trigger somatic anxiety.

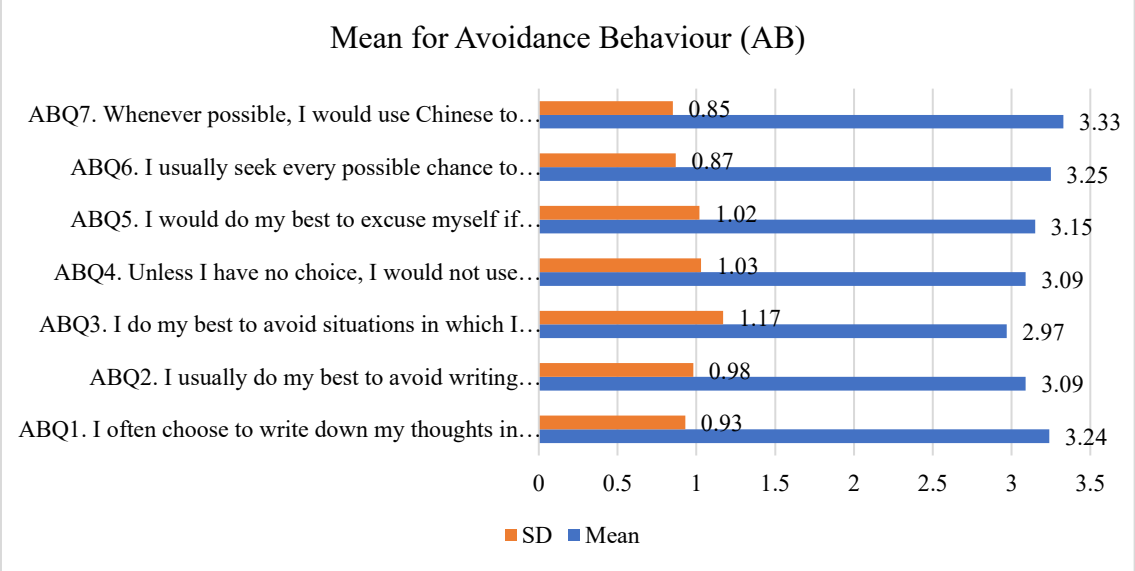


Figure 6- Mean for Avoidance Bahaviour (AB)

Figure 6 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for Avoidance Behaviour (AB) in Chinese writing composition. Overall, the mean scores for all items fall close to 3 (Uncertain), indicating that respondents neither clearly agreed nor disagreed with statements related to avoidance behaviour in Chinese writing, with mean scores ranging from 2.97 to 3.33. The highest mean score was recorded for "whenever possible, I would use Chinese to write compositions"(M=3.33), followed by "I usually seek every possible chance to write Chinese compositions outside of class" (M=3.25). While the item "I do my best to avoid situations in which I have to write in Chinese" yielded the lowest mean score (M=2.97).

Exploratory Statistics

According to He (2024), correlation is a statistical technique that shows how strongly two variables are related to each other or the degree of association between the two. It's a common tool for describing simple relationships without making a statement about cause and effect. This section presents data to answer research questions on correlation. To determine if there is a significant association in the mean scores between all factors in writing, data is analysed using SPSS for correlations. Results are presented separately in table 5 below.

Findings for Relationship between expectancy and value

Results for research question 4: Is there a significant relationship between expectancy beliefs and writing anxiety? (H1: There is no significant relationship between expectancy beliefs and writing anxiety.)

Table 5- Correlation between Social Support and Expectancy Components

		EXPECTANCY (WRITING MOTIVATION)	VALUE (WRITING ANXIETY)
EXPECTANCY(WRITING MOTIVATION)	Pearson (Correlation	1	.286**

	Sig (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	247	247
VALUE (WRITING ANXIETY)	Pearson (Correlation	.286**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	247	247

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 5 shows there is a weak yet statistically significant positive relationship between expectancy beliefs and writing anxiety ($r = .286$, $p < .001$). Using the interpretation guidelines set forth by He (2024), the coefficient above can be categorized as having a weak positive relationship. From the findings, learners who have relatively higher expectancy beliefs may still encounter writing anxiety when performing their Chinese writing.

This implies that being confident in one's ability to write does not necessarily mean the absence of anxiety especially in difficult writing conditions that require evaluation and accurate characters. In rejecting the null hypothesis because of statistical significance, it is interesting to note that from the findings, it seems that both high motivation and high anxiety are present in the same learner at once. Learners may hold Chinese writing in high regard and may even think they will succeed in writing but they still have emotions of fear and anxiety associated with writing.

Inferential Statistics

According to He (2024), there are three main functions of a T-test and ANOVA. Firstly, both are done to compare means. This test is also done to determine if the average scores (mean) or values of two groups, or one group against a known value, are different enough to be considered statistically meaningful and are not just due to random chance. Secondly, T-test and ANOVA are done to test hypotheses. Researchers use t-tests and ANOVA to test hypotheses about means, such as whether a new treatment significantly impacts a variable or if there's a difference in performance between two distinct groups. Lastly, T-test and ANOVA are done to identify significant differences. The output of a t-test provides a p-value (significance value). If this p-value is below a predetermined threshold (often 0.05), it indicates a statistically significant difference, allowing researchers to draw conclusions about the populations from which their samples were drawn.

Findings for Significant Difference

This section presents data to answer research question 5- Is there a significant difference in expectancy beliefs and writing anxiety across years of study? (H2: There is no significant difference in expectancy beliefs and writing anxiety across years of study.)

Table 6- ANOVA for Expectancy and Value across Year of Study

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
EXPECTANCY_WRITING_MOTIVATION	Between Groups	.839	3	.280	1.134	.336
	Within Groups	59.895	243	.246		
	Total	60.734	246			
WRITING_ANXIETY	Between Groups	1.813	3	.604	2.195	.089
	Within Groups	66.907	243	.275		
	Total	68.721	246			

With reference to table 6, a one-way ANOVA to determine if there is a significant difference among expectancy beliefs and writing anxiety based on years of study. There was no statistically significant difference among expectancy beliefs by years of study; F= 1.134, p = .336. There was also no statistically significant difference for writing anxiety among years of study; F= 2.195, p = .089. Based on these results, we can assume that the learners' expectancy beliefs and their writing anxiety did not differ much despite being in different years of study. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings and Discussions

The findings indicate that learners generally possess a high level of resilience and confidence regarding their ability to handle difficult writing tasks, provided they are persistent and have enough time. However, it is notable that they are less certain about the mastery of specific writing skills taught in class.

This perception aligns with the findings of Sun and Wang (2020), who noted that while learners' self-efficacy supports writing proficiency, they often report only moderate levels of confidence in their actual skill execution. Even though learners believe they can succeed through effort, their expectancy is not fully stable, supporting EVT's claim that expectancy beliefs are shaped by both personal beliefs and contextual demands (Wigfield et al., 2009).

The study also revealed that learners place high value on Chinese writing, perceiving it as important, useful, and interesting. However, this high "value" is paired with significant anxiety. Physically, learners experience high somatic anxiety, such as freezing up or feeling their hearts pound, particularly under time constraints. Mentally, they worry about grades and negative evaluations. This supports the findings of Alghameeti et al. (2025), which highlighted that high motivation often coexists with high anxiety in Chinese learning contexts.

Importantly, the correlation analysis demonstrated a weak but statistically significant positive relationship between expectancy beliefs and writing anxiety ($r = .286$, $p < .001$). This indicates that higher expectancy beliefs do not necessarily eliminate writing anxiety. Instead, learners who are highly motivated may still experience emotional pressure due to fear of evaluation, linguistic complexity, and performance expectations.

From the perspective of Expectancy-Value Theory, these findings suggest that writing anxiety should be understood as part of the "cost" dimension rather than as "value." Learners may perceive Chinese writing as highly valuable while simultaneously experiencing high emotional and cognitive costs associated with writing tasks.

Furthermore, the study found no significant differences in expectancy beliefs or writing anxiety across years of study. This indicates that anxiety does not naturally dissipate as students' progress through their degree, echoing Zhao et al. (2025), who observed that anxiety levels can persist or even increase without specific pedagogical support.

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Theoretical and Conceptual Implications

This study reinforces the utility of the Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT) in second-language writing research. The framework conceptualises writing anxiety as part of the "cost" dimension of EVT rather than treating anxiety as "value." This clarification improves the theoretical coherence of the study and provides a more accurate explanation of how learners may simultaneously value writing highly while experiencing emotional burden.

The findings further demonstrate that expectancy beliefs and writing anxiety are not mutually exclusive. Instead, learners may possess relatively high motivation while still experiencing considerable anxiety due to evaluative pressure and linguistic difficulty.

Pedagogical Implications

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that teachers should not assume that high task value will

naturally lead to confident writing performance. While learners value writing, their expectancy for success requires deliberate instructional support. Teachers should focus on strengthening learners' expectancy by providing scaffolded writing tasks, formative feedback, and low-stakes writing opportunities. Since learners feel resilient but unsure of their mastery, teachers should focus on clear skill-based feedback to raise expectancy beliefs. Reducing evaluative pressure and offering effective support can help mitigate writing anxiety and create sustained engagement and improved performance in writing.

Suggestions for Future Research

One important limitation of this study is the highly imbalanced gender distribution of the respondents, in which female participants constituted 94% of the sample. This imbalance may limit the generalisability of the findings, as learners' writing motivation and anxiety could differ across gender groups. In addition, the use of convenience sampling further restricts the representativeness of the sample population.

Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution and may not fully reflect the experiences of all Chinese language learners. The study measured expectancy beliefs and task value but did not directly assess the full cost dimension proposed in EVT. Future studies are encouraged to include more balanced demographic representation and adopt broader sampling methods to enhance external validity and generalisability.

Researchers should also consider a longitudinal approach to explore how expectancy, task value, and writing anxiety interact over time. Qualitative data such as interviews could further explore why fourth-year students continue to experience the same levels of anxiety as beginners.

Additionally, future research could examine the role of instructional interventions—such as peer feedback, code-switching, or self-regulated writing strategies—in strengthening expectancy beliefs. Expanding the scope to different proficiency levels would also enhance the generalisability of findings.

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