

Exploring the Relationships among Self-Efficacy, Writing Motivation and Writing Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Writing remains one of the most challenging skills for many English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, especially in higher education settings. This study examined university ESL learners' perceptions of writing self-efficacy, writing motivation, and writing strategies, as well as the relationships among these variables across gender, faculty, and SPM English achievement. A quantitative survey design was employed involving 318 university students from different faculties in a Malaysian public university. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, independent samples t-test, and one-way ANOVA. The findings revealed that students generally demonstrated positive perceptions towards writing self-efficacy, writing motivation, and writing strategy use. Students appeared more confident when given sufficient time to complete writing tasks and frequently relied on revising, editing, peer support, and self-encouragement during the writing process. Strong positive relationships were also found between self-efficacy, writing motivation, and writing strategies. In addition, no significant differences were found across gender and faculty. However, significant differences were identified across SPM English achievement, particularly in students' self-efficacy and writing motivation. Interestingly, students from different achievement groups appeared to use writing strategies at relatively similar levels. These findings suggest that writing performance may be influenced not only by students' knowledge of writing strategies, but also by their confidence and motivation towards writing. The study highlights the importance of creating supportive ESL writing environments that help students develop both writing skills and self-confidence.

Keywords: Writing Self-Efficacy, Writing Motivation, Task Value, Writing Strategies, ESL Learners, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a skill that is essential for learners, especially those who are in the context of English as a Second Language (ESL). In academic settings, these ESL learners are often required to express their ideas and elaborate their opinions, complete assignments, and communicate knowledge effectively through writing. However, writing in English can be a big hurdle to many learners because it requires not only linguistic knowledge, but also confidence, motivation, as well as the ability to apply appropriate writing strategies. As a result, many researchers continue to investigate factors that may influence learners' writing development and performance.

One important factor that is associated with writing performance is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to a learner's belief about his/her capabilities in completing and accomplishing specific tasks (Hussain & Ali Khan, 2022). When it comes to academic writing, learners possessing higher self-efficacy are more likely to be confident in completing their writing tasks, expressing their ideas, and overcoming difficulties faced during the writing process. Fang et al. (2025) elaborated that learners who are confident with their writing abilities have higher tendencies to remain motivated and engaged in writing activities done in class. Similarly, self-efficacy

encourages learners to remain motivated during rather challenging or complex writing tasks. In ESL learning environments, some students with limited vocabulary, grammatical concerns, and fear of making mistakes, may find writing tasks stressful and challenging. Thus, it is important to understand learners' self-efficacy, as it may be a contributing factor to their level of writing motivation and the strategies they utilise when completing their writing tasks and assignments.

Another crucial factor in academic writing is learners' writing motivation. Writing motivation refers to the learners' willingness, drive, and interest to be engaged in writing activities and to complete writing tasks assigned (Noman & Younus, 2025). ESL learners who are highly motivated are often more willing to take part in writing activities. They are also the type of learners who will invest effort in improving their writing skills, and will remain motivated even when the tasks are challenging. According to Fang et al. (2025), learners' motivation in writing is associated with the value and importance they place on writing tasks, as well as their confidence in completing them successfully. Writing motivation is important when it comes to ESL contexts as some learners may experience anxiety, lack of confidence, or little interest when writing in English. Therefore, if these students are able to be motivated in writing tasks, they will be more likely to view writing as meaningful and useful, which will eventually encourage greater engagement and better writing performance among these learners.

Besides self-efficacy and writing motivation, writing strategies are also important in helping learners cope with the challenges of academic writing. Writing often involves more than simply transferring ideas onto papers, hence it is often considered a difficult skill because learners are required to generate and brainstorm for ideas, organise their content, apply accurate grammatical knowledge and express their thoughts clearly in their second or foreign language. So, learners often need to rely on a variety of writing strategies throughout their writing process. According to Anyau et al. (2025), learners employ different strategies in writing such as metacognitive, cognitive, social, affective and effort regulation strategies in order to support their writing development. These strategies include planning ideas, revising drafts, monitoring progress, seeking feedback from peers, and managing emotions during writing tasks. Effective use of writing strategies during these tasks could help learners to produce more organised and meaningful writing, while boosting their confidence in academic tasks completion. Understanding how learners use writing strategies are thus seen as important to ensure that they are able to write effectively.

The relationship between self-efficacy, writing motivation, and writing strategies remains significant in ESL writing research because these factors determine how learners approach writing tasks. Learners who are confident in their writing abilities are often more motivated and more willing to apply effective writing strategies during the writing process. Despite years of learning English, many ESL learners still struggle with academic writing, frequently facing persistent difficulties with low confidence, writing anxiety, and organizing and developing ideas in English writing tasks (Li, 2022). In addition, writing in a second language is a demanding process where learners must manage linguistic knowledge, emotions, and strategic thinking at the same time, meaning that some students may understand writing concepts in theory but remain unable to consistently apply effective writing strategies during actual academic tasks (Raoofi et al., 2017). Therefore, understanding the relationship between self-efficacy, writing motivation, and writing strategies may help educators improve writing instruction and better support learners in higher education contexts.

Statement of Problem

Previous studies have elaborated on the crucial importance of self-efficacy, writing motivation, and writing strategies in learners' writing development. Even studies from 2014 by Zhang et al. reported that learners who possess stronger confidence in their writing abilities are generally more motivated and engaged during writing tasks that they're assigned with. Similarly, Raoofi et al. (2017) later also found that ESL learners depend mostly on multiple writing strategies such as metacognitive, cognitive, social, affective, and effort regulation strategies throughout the writing process. Research by Mastan et al. (2017) in the same year supported this by highlighting that effective writing strategies may assist ESL learners in improving their writing performance. More recent studies further revealed that learners with higher writing self-efficacy are more likely to use self-regulated learning strategies and perform better in academic writing tasks (Teng & Zhang, 2021; Li, 2022).

Despite these findings, which have put the focus on how high self-efficacy and utilisation of writing strategies in improving and assisting with writing tasks, many ESL learners still experience difficulties in academic writing. Previous studies reported that some learners still, and often, struggle with low confidence, writing anxiety, limited motivation, and difficulties in organising and developing ideas in English writing tasks (Li, 2022). In addition, writing in a second language is often deemed a demanding process where it requires learners to manage linguistic knowledge, emotions, and strategic thinking at the same time. Studies also found that some learners may understand writing concepts but are unable to consistently apply effective writing strategies during academic writing tasks (Raoofi et al., 2017).

Recent studies have suggested the need to further examine how self-efficacy and self-regulated writing strategies interact in influencing learners' writing experiences across different educational contexts (Teng & Zhang, 2021). While we know that students who believe in themselves generally use better writing strategies and achieve higher proficiency scores (Chen, Yan, & Guo, 2026; Chen, Zhang, & Chen, 2022), the actual connection between these factors is a lot more complex than it initially appears. Recent research shows that self-regulated strategies often act as the crucial middleman, turning a student's inner confidence into actual classroom engagement and performance (J. Zhou et al., 2022). Furthermore, this relationship isn't one-size-fits-all; a student's emotional state, baseline performance, and underlying writing motivation, particularly how much "task value" they place on writing, can completely shift how they regulate their own writing (Shen & Tao, 2024; H. Zhou et al., 2025).

Despite these insights, most of the current literature focuses on high schoolers or short-term training experiments (Moussaid, 2024; J. Zhou et al., 2022). Therefore, we need a deeper look into how self-efficacy, specific motivational drivers like task value, and a broad spectrum of writing strategies, ranging from metacognitive and cognitive to social and affective management, collide specifically in higher education. Unpacking how these factors interact, and whether they fluctuate across demographic lenses like gender, faculty, and prior academic achievement, will give university educators the practical insights they need to design more tailored, empathetic writing instruction for ESL learners.

Objective of the Study and Research Questions

This study was conducted to explore the relationships between self-efficacy, writing motivation, and writing strategies among ESL learners. Specifically, this research aims to understand the psychological dynamics of university writers by answering the following three research questions:

RQ1	:	How do university ESL learners perceive their (a) writing self-efficacy, (b) their writing motivation (task value), and their (c) use of writing strategies?
RQ2	:	Is there a significant relationship between learners' writing self-efficacy, their writing motivation, and their choice of writing strategies? - H01: There is no significant relationship between learners' writing self-efficacy and their writing motivation. - H02: There is no significant relationship between learners' writing self-efficacy and their use of writing strategies.
RQ3	:	Is there a significant relationship between (a) self-efficacy, (b) writing motivation, and (c) writing strategies across gender, faculties, and SPM results? H03: There is no significant relationship between (a) self-efficacy, (b) writing motivation, and (c) writing strategies across (i) gender, (ii) faculties, and (iii) SPM results.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Self- Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to a learner deeply held belief in their own capability to successfully complete and master a specific task (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). This concept is rooted in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which proposes that learners' beliefs about their capabilities influence their motivation, persistence, and performance. In an academic writing setting, this confidence acts as a mental buffer. When students possess high self-efficacy, they do not just write better; they are more likely to face complex assignments head-on, stay resilient when they run into vocabulary or grammar hurdles, and maintain their focus without giving up. Essentially, self-efficacy is the psychological foundation, in which if a student does not believe they can execute a writing task, they are far less likely to activate the effort or strategies needed to do it well.

Writing Motivation

Writing motivation refers to learners' willingness, interest, and effort in engaging with writing tasks. In ESL learning contexts, motivation plays an important role in influencing how students approach the writing process and respond to writing challenges. This concept is commonly explained through Expectancy-Value Theory, which suggests that learners are more motivated when they believe they can succeed and when they perceive a task as valuable or meaningful. According to Zhang et al. (2014), students are generally more motivated to write when they view writing activities as useful for achieving their academic or personal goals. Previous studies also suggest that learning environments, peer interaction, and classroom experiences may influence students' motivation towards writing. Learners with stronger writing motivation are often more willing to persist during difficult writing tasks and are more likely to apply effective writing strategies throughout the writing process.

Writing Strategies

Writing strategies refer to the techniques learners use to manage and regulate the writing process when completing academic writing tasks. The use of writing strategies can be understood through Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) theory, which emphasises learners' ability to plan, monitor, regulate, and evaluate their own learning processes (Teng & Zhang, 2021). In ESL writing contexts, learners often apply different strategies to organise ideas, revise drafts, manage emotions, and overcome writing difficulties. Raoofi et al. (2017) categorised writing strategies into five domains: metacognitive, cognitive, effort regulation, social, and affective strategies. To explain further, firstly, metacognitive strategies involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating writing progress. Secondly, cognitive strategies focus on the direct process of generating ideas, organising content, and applying language knowledge. Next, effort regulation strategies help learners maintain focus and persistence during difficult writing tasks. Social strategies involve seeking feedback, assistance, or collaboration from others, and lastly, affective strategies help learners manage emotions such as stress and anxiety during the writing process. Effective use of these strategies may help learners become more engaged, confident, and organised during writing tasks, which can contribute positively to their writing performance.

Past Studies

Past Studies on Self- Efficacy in Writing

Many studies have been conducted to investigate how self-efficacy directly shapes a learner's writing development, academic achievement, and emotional state during the composing process.

The study by Chen, Zhang, and Chen (2022) was done to investigate the relationship between self-regulated learning strategies, self-efficacy, and actual writing achievement. This quantitative research focused on a large sample of L2 learners using latent profile analysis to see how individual confidence levels clustered with strategy use. The findings revealed that students categorized into "efficacious self-regulator" profiles scored the highest on writing tests, implying that high self-efficacy acts as a vital spark for superior performance. Next, the study

by J. Zhou et al. (2022) also looked at the structural relationships between writing anxiety, self-efficacy, self-regulated strategies, and writing engagement. Surveying high schoolers using structural equation modeling (SEM), this research explored how confidence balances out negative writing emotions. Their findings indicated that self-efficacy exerts a strong direct positive effect on student engagement—even stronger than the negative effects of anxiety—suggesting that building a student's confidence is key to keeping them actively involved in writing tasks.

Another study by Chen, Yan, and Guo (2026) was done to investigate self-efficacy and self-regulated learning strategies specifically as predictors of English writing proficiency. This empirical survey involved Chinese EFL senior high school students to map out how psychological beliefs translate into language mastery. Their findings demonstrated that stronger writing self-efficacy consistently and significantly predicts both more frequent strategy deployment and higher overall writing scores, which implies that a student's internal confidence directly dictates their outward strategic behavior.

Next, the study by H. Zhou et al. (2025) also looked at the relationship patterns of motivation and strategy use across different writing performance groups. This study surveyed learners grouped by low, mid, and high writing achievement to see if motivation fluctuates based on grades. The data revealed that while interest and boredom affected students differently depending on their performance level, self-efficacy remained the single most consistent predictor of strategy use across all performance groups, implying that confidence is a universal necessity for all levels of writers.

These previous researches highlighted above demonstrates that writing self-efficacy is not just a passive trait, but a highly active catalyst that directly improves engagement, strategy utilisation, and final grades while addressing writing anxiety. While these past studies confirm that a student's belief in their capability is influential to their success, these studies however heavily focus on secondary education or generalized language learning contexts.

This supports the focus of the current study which explores the influence of self-efficacy on writing motivation and writing strategies, because it highlights the clear need to see if these exact psychological dynamics behave the same way when university ESL students navigate higher education demands.

Past Studies on Writing Motivation

Numerous studies have examined the role of motivation in second language writing and its influence on learners' engagement, persistence, and overall writing development.

The study by Zhang et al. (2014) investigated the effects of blog-mediated peer feedback on learners' motivation, collaboration, and course satisfaction in a second language writing course. Using an experimental design, the researchers found that learners demonstrated higher levels of motivation when writing activities involved interaction and meaningful feedback from peers.

The findings suggest that learners' willingness to participate in writing tasks increases when they perceive writing as valuable and socially meaningful. Next, the study by Teng and Zhang (2021) explored the relationship among motivational beliefs, self-efficacy, and self-regulated learning strategies in EFL writing. Using survey data collected from language learners, the researchers found that students with stronger motivational beliefs were more likely to engage actively in self-regulated learning behaviours during writing tasks. The study highlighted that motivation and self-efficacy are closely interconnected and jointly contribute to students' engagement in writing.

Another study by Zhou et al. (2025) examined motivation and self-regulated writing strategy use among learners with different levels of writing performance. The findings revealed that motivational factors differed across achievement groups, and learners with stronger motivation demonstrated greater engagement in writing-related activities. The study also showed that motivation contributes to learners' willingness to persist when facing challenging writing tasks.

Similarly, Noman and Younus (2025) investigated the effects of technology-enhanced collaborative instruction on ESL learners' writing motivation. Employing a quasi-experimental design, the researchers reported that collaborative and technology-supported learning environments significantly improved students' motivation towards writing. Their findings imply that supportive classroom environments can positively influence learners' attitudes and engagement in writing activities.

The studies reviewed above demonstrate that writing motivation plays an important role in encouraging learners to participate actively in writing tasks and remain persistent when difficulties arise. Previous research consistently shows that motivated learners are more willing to engage in writing activities, apply appropriate learning strategies, and value writing as an important academic skill. These findings support the focus of the present study because they suggest that learners' motivation may be closely associated with their confidence in writing and their use of writing strategies in higher education ESL contexts.

Past Studies on Writing Strategies

Many studies have been conducted to investigate how learners utilize various writing strategies to improve their academic performance and overcome linguistic challenges.

The study by Rahmat et al. (2022) was done to investigate the relationship between metacognitive strategies and writing achievement among university students. This research involved 150 undergraduate respondents who completed a quantitative survey based on the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ). The findings revealed that students who frequently planned and monitored their work achieved higher grades, implying that explicit strategy instruction is vital for academic success. Next, the study by Ibrahim and Mansor (2023) also looked at social and affective writing strategies.

This research explored how 200 ESL learners used peer discussion and anxiety-reduction techniques to complete essays. Using a Likert-scale instrument, the study found that social strategies significantly reduced writing anxiety, suggesting that collaborative learning environments foster better writing outcomes.

The study by Tan (2024) was done to investigate the impact of digital writing tools on cognitive writing strategies. This research focused on 120 secondary school students using a mixed-methods approach involving surveys and writing logs. The findings indicated that digital platforms help students organize ideas more effectively during the drafting stage. Implications of this study suggest that integrating technology can streamline the cognitive load for young writers.

Next, the study by Fisher (2025) also looked at effort regulation and metacognitive awareness. This research surveyed 318 participants from various technical faculties to see how they persisted through difficult writing tasks. Using a 5-point Likert scale instrument, the findings showed a strong correlation between high effort regulation and the use of revision strategies. This implies that student persistence is a key predictor of whether they will engage in deep editing rather than just surface-level corrections.

To conclude, the previous research highlighted above demonstrates that writing strategies, whether metacognitive, social, or cognitive, are essential tools that allow learners to navigate the complexities of academic writing. While these studies confirm that strategy use leads to better performance and lower anxiety, they also suggest a clear link between a learner's internal drive and their strategic choices. This supports the focus of the current study, as it suggests that knowing how to write (strategies) is often dependent on the student's belief in their own capability (self-efficacy).

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study. This study investigates self-efficacy, writing motivation, and writing strategies. Learners need self-efficacy to believe that they can be successful in their learning. In higher institutions, academic writing is not only a single course students have to master, but it is also a vehicle to complete all written assignments. According to Zhang et al (2014), what motivates learners to write is (a) their self-efficacy and (b) task value.

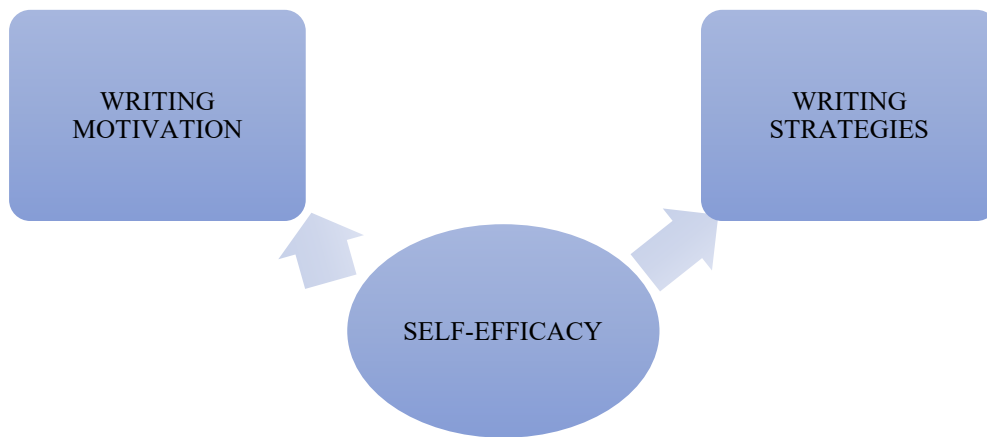


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The Influence of Self-Efficacy on Writing Motivation and Writing Strategies

Successful writers are known to use different types of writing strategies when they write (Rahmat, 2021). When it comes to academic writing, learners rely on their knowledge of writing strategies (Khairuddin et al., 201) to complete each stage of the composing process. Similarly, Raoofi (et.al., 2017) listed several writing strategies that have helped writers in their writing tasks. The strategies are metacognitive, effort regulation, cognitive, social, and affective writing strategies. This study, therefore, explores the relationship between self-efficacy and writing motivation as well as writing strategies.

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study was conducted to examine the relationships between self-efficacy, writing motivation, and writing strategies. A convenient sample of 318 participants responded to the survey. The instrument used is a 5 Likert-scale survey and is rooted from Zhang,et.al (2014) and Raoofi, et. al., (2017). 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 Indicators	Total items	CA
B	Writing Motivation (Zhang,et.al. , 2014)	Self-Efficacy	5		.872
	Writing Motivation (Zhang,et.al. , 2014)	Task value scale	4		.832
C	Writing Strategies (Raoofi,et.al., 2017)	Metacognitive	10	28	.959

		Effort Regulation	5		
		Cognitive	6		
		Social	4		
		Affective	3		
		Total		37	.966

Table 2 outlines how the survey items are systematically distributed across the different variables and constructs measured in this study. To ensure academic rigor, the research instrument was adapted from two well-established frameworks in second language writing research.

Section B is rooted in the writing motivation framework developed by Zhang et al. (2014). This section contains a total of **9 items**. It is subdivided into two distinct motivational constructs: **Self-Efficacy**, which consists of 5 items assessing learners' confidence in their writing capabilities, and the **Task Value Scale**, which uses 4 items to gauge how important and useful students find academic writing.

Next, Section C utilises the comprehensive Writing Strategy Scale for Undergraduate Students designed by Raoofi et al. (2017). This section captures a wider operational footprint with a total of **28 items** dedicated entirely to uncovering how students self-regulate their writing process. It explores five unique strategy types: **Metacognitive** (10 items), **Effort Regulation** (5 items), **Cognitive** (6 items), **Social** (4 items), and **Affective** (3 items).

When combining both sections, the final instrument encompasses a grand total of 37 items. This structural balance ensures that the survey can thoroughly capture both the underlying psychological drivers (motivation) and the active practical behaviors (strategies) that university ESL students use when tackling their academic writing tasks.

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

In order 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 table is adapted from Ahmad et.al., (2024). The analysis shows a Cronbach alpha of .872 for self-efficacy, .832 for writing motivation, .959 for writing strategies. Overall. Cronbach alpha for all 37 items is .966; thus, revealing a good reliability of the instrument chosen/used. 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

participants' 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	43%
		Female	57%
2	Faculty	Faculty of Art & Design	12%
		Department of Built Environment Studies & Technology	76%
		Others	12%
4	SPM English	A+, A, A-	39%
		B+, B, B-	38%
		C+, C, C-, D	23%

Table 4 presents a descriptive breakdown of the participants' demographic profiles across three primary lenses: gender, faculty affiliation, and prior English academic achievement. Looking first at the gender distribution, female students make up the majority of the sample at 57% (n=182), while male students account for the remaining 43% (n=136). In terms of academic faculties, the sample is heavily represented by students from the Department of Built Environment Studies & Technology, who comprise 76% (n=241) of the total sample. The remaining participants are distributed equally between the Faculty of Art & Design at 12% (n=37) and various other faculties at 12% (n=40). Finally, the data regarding prior achievement shows a relatively balanced spread in baseline language proficiency based on national examination (SPM English) results. High achievers (A+, A, or A-) represent the largest portion at 39% (n=122), closely followed by mid-performing students (B+, B, or B-) at 38% (n=122), while the remaining 23% (n=74) scored within the C+, C, C-, or D range. This diverse distribution offers a broader perspective on how students' individual backgrounds may influence their writing motivation and use of writing strategies at the university level.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to describe and summarise the overall patterns of data collected throughout this study. According to Vetter (2017), the mean (M) represents the average, or centre of a data set, while the standard deviation (SD) indicates how closely the data are distributed around the mean scores. A lower SD suggests that the responses obtained are more consistent and clustered near the mean, whereas a higher SD indicates greater variability among participants' responses, which may provide deeper insight and knowledge into differences in students' perceptions and experiences. In this case, reporting the mean and SD helps provide a clearer understanding of students' overall perceptions or writing self-efficacy, writing motivation, as well as their writing strategies.

Perceptions of Writing Self-Efficacy

This section presents data to answer research question 1 (a): How do university ESL learners perceive their writing self-efficacy?

Table 5. Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) for Self-Efficacy (SE)

ITEM	M	SD
SEQ1 I am sure I can learn the skills taught in WRITING class well.	3.97	0.70
SEQ2 I can do the hardest work in my WRITING class if I try.	3.91	0.71
SEQ3 I can do almost all the work in WRITING class if I do not give up.	4.13	0.67

SEQ4 If I have enough time, I can do a good job in all my WRITING work.	4.11	0.65
SEQ5 Even if the work in WRITING is hard, I can learn it	4.10	0.70

As displayed in Table 5, the overall mean scores reflect a high level of confidence among the 318 participants, with all five items scoring well above the neutral mid-point of 3.00. The highest level of agreement was recorded for item SEQ3, *“I can do almost all the work in writing class if I do not give up”* (M=4.13, SD=0.67), where learners expressed strong confidence that they could complete almost all tasks if they did not give up. This is closely followed by item SEQ4, *“If I have enough time, I can do a good job in all my writing work”* (M=4.11, SD=0.65), indicating that students feel highly capable of delivering high-quality work provided they are given adequate time to complete it.

Conversely, the lowest mean score, though still noticeably positive, was found in item SEQ2, *“I can do the hardest work in my writing class if I try”* (M=3.91, SD=0.71), which measured their perceived ability to tackle the single hardest aspects of their writing coursework.

Overall, these findings suggest that while these higher education learners are universally resilient and confident when managing normal task volume and timelines, they feel slightly more taxed when facing extreme task difficulty, pointing to a need for structured task design and appropriate pacing from instructors.

Perceptions of Writing Motivation (Task Value)

This section presents data to answer research question 1 (b): How do learners perceive their writing motivation? In the context of this study, this is measured by task value.

Table 6. Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) for Task Value scale (TV)

ITEM	M	SD
TVQ1 I think learning WRITING is important.	4.55	0.64
TVQ2 I find WRITING interesting.	4.07	0.71
TVQ3 What I learn in WRITING is useful.	4.40	0.67
TVQ4 Compared to other subjects, WRITING is useful.	4.25	0.67

As displayed in Table 6, the descriptive statistics reveal exceptionally strong motivation among the participants, with every single item scoring well into the upper agreements of the 5-point Likert scale. The highest mean score by a notable margin was recorded for item TVQ1, *“I think learning writing is important”* (M=4.55, SD=0.64), where students strongly agreed that learning how to write effectively is important. This deep awareness of value is strongly supported by item TVQ3 *“What I learn in writing is useful”* (M=4.40, SD=0.67), which shows that students view what they learn in writing class as highly useful to them.

Apart from that, item TVQ4 *“Compared to other subjects, writing is useful”* (M=4.25, SD=0.67), demonstrated the third highest score, which actually suggests that the participants definitely perceive writing as a valuable skill. Interestingly, although the learners know the importance and usefulness of writing in academic settings, the item TVQ2, *“I find writing interesting”* (M=4.07, SD=0.71), scored the lowest in this section.

Collectively, these findings indicate that university ESL learners are primarily driven by pragmatic, goal-oriented motivation; they value writing deeply because they know it is an indispensable asset for their higher education success, even if they do not always find the actual process of composing essays inherently entertaining.

Perceptions of Writing Strategy Usage

This section presents data to answer research question 1 (c): How do learners perceive their writing strategies? In the context of this study, this is measured by (i) metacognitive, (ii) effort regulation, (iii) cognitive, social, and (iv) affective writing strategies.

Table 7. Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) for METACOGNITIVE (MWS)

ITEM	M	SD
MWSQ1 Before I start writing, I organise/arrange my ideas	4.06	0.75
MWSQ 2 I revise and re-check my writing to make sure that it includes everything I want to discuss in my writing.	4.19	0.69
MWSQ 3 I check my spelling when I write.	4.21	0.75
MWSQ 4 I check my writing to make sure it is grammatically correct.	4.09	0.75
MWSQ 5 I evaluate and re-evaluate the ideas/points I used in my essay.	4.04	0.70
MWSQ 6 I monitor and evaluate my progress in writing. (How much I have written, which part to fix, which part to add, etc)	3.94	0.79
MWSQ 7 I revise and edit an essay two or more times before I hand it in to my lecturer. (I don't just write in one go and submit. I will take my time to go through it, to find any errors/mistake and make sure I follow my lecturer's instruction)	4.06	0.77
MWSQ8 I go through the planning stages in my writing. (I draft/make outline first, either in bullet points or mind map)	3.87	0.83
MWSQ9 I go through the drafting stages in my writing (I will write a simple draft on a different paper before I write properly)	3.85	0.83
MWSQ10 I go through the revising and editing stages in my writing.	3.95	0.76

As displayed in Table 7, the descriptive statistics indicate that the 318 participants are highly active metacognitive self-regulators, with all ten items scoring well above the neutral baseline of 3.00. The highest level of agreement was recorded for item MWSQ3, “*I check my spelling when I write*” (M=4.21, SD=0.75), demonstrating that students place a strong emphasis on editing surface-level mechanics like spelling when they write. This is closely supported by item MWSQ2, “*I revise and re-check my writing to make sure that it includes everything I want to discuss in my writing*” (M=4.19, SD=0.6), which reveals that learners are highly conscientious about checking their overall content to ensure all intended talking points are completely addressed.

Interestingly, while students report high scores for overall revision for item MWSQ10, “*I go through the revising and editing stages in my writing*” (M=3.95, SD=0.76) and editing multiple times before submission for item MWSQ 7, “*I revise and edit an essay two or more times before I hand it in to my lecturer*” (M=4.06, SD=0.77), they scored the lowest on the formal, structured stages of the writing process. Specifically, item MWSQ9, “*I go through the drafting stages in my writing (writing a separate rough draft on a different piece of paper)*”, recorded the lowest mean score (M=3.85, SD=0.83), followed closely by item MWSQ8, “*I go through the planning stages in my writing (creating explicit outlines or mind maps during the planning stage)*” (M=3.87, SD=0.83).

These findings show that students tend to focus more on revising and correcting their writing after completing a draft, while activities such as planning outlines and preparing rough drafts before writing were less commonly practised.

Table 8. Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) for EFFORT REGULATION (ERS)

ITEM	M	SD
ERSQ 1I write a lot to develop my writing skills.	3.56	0.81
ERSQ 2I often work hard to do well in my writing even if I don’t like English writing tasks.	3.85	0.80
ERSQ 3Even if the writing activities are difficult, I don’t give up but try to engage in them.	4.10	0.67
ERSQ 4I concentrate as hard as I can when doing a writing task.	4.07	0.69
ERSQ 5 I spend a lot of time and energy on writing good English assignments.	3.93	0.71

As shown in Table 8 above, the results reveal a clear pattern in how students manage their effort, showing a distinct contrast between their determination during tasks and their independent writing habits. On one hand, students show high levels of persistence and focus when facing difficult work, as seen in the highest mean scores for not giving up on tough activities based on item ERSQ 3, *“Even if the writing activities are difficult, I don’t give up but try to engage in them”* ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.67$), and concentrating as hard as they can during tasks as indicated in item ERSQ 4, *“I concentrate as hard as I can when doing a writing task”* ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.69$). They also demonstrate good self-control by putting time and energy into their assignments even when they do not particularly like English writing tasks, as seen in item ERSQ 5, *“I spend a lot of time and energy on writing good English assignments”* ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.71$), and item ERSQ 2, *“I often work hard to do well in my writing even if I don’t like English writing tasks”* ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.80$).

However, a noticeable drop occurs in ERSQ 1, *“I write a lot to develop my writing skills,”* which obtained the lowest mean score ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.81$), indicating that while students have the drive to push through mandatory classroom assignments, they are less likely to proactively write on their own to improve their skills.

The results suggest that students tend to put more effort into writing when it is related to assignments or grades, but they are less likely to practise writing on their own or independently outside the classroom.

Table 9. Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) for COGNITIVE (CWS)

ITEM	M	SD
CWSQ1 I use memorized grammatical elements such as singular and plural forms, verb tenses, prefixes and suffixes, etc, in my writing	3.77	0.81
CWSQ 2I put newly memorized vocabulary in my sentences.	3.92	0.72
CWSQ 3In order to generate ideas for my writing, I usually engage myself in brainstorming.	3.92	0.72
CWSQ 4I use different words that have the same meaning.	3.78	0.82
CWSQ 5I use my experiences and knowledge in my writing.	4.14	0.62
CWSQ 6I try to use effective linking words to ensure clear and logical relationship between sentences or paragraphs	4.11	0.72

Results in Table 9 display that the participants use multiple strategies within the cognitive domain. The highest score was recorded in item CWSQ 5, *“I use my experiences and knowledge in my writing”* ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.62$), which suggests that the participants rely a lot on their prior knowledge and experience in their writing. Item CWSQ 6, *“I try to use effective linking words to ensure clear and logical relationship between sentences or paragraphs”* recorded the second highest mean score ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.72$), which indicates that the participants are able to relate their ideas in a logical manner in their writing. They also seem to display efforts in using new words and spend time in brainstorming their ideas when it comes to writing tasks as shown in item CWSQ 2, *“I put newly memorized vocabulary in my sentences,”* and item CWSQ 3, *“In order to generate ideas for my writing, I usually engage myself in brainstorming,”* which both recorded the third highest score ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.72$).

On the other hand, the findings show a slight decrease for items related to mechanical and linguistic variety. Item CWSQ 4, *“I use different words that have the same meaning”* recorded a lower mean score ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.82$), showing that while participants try to integrate new vocabulary, they face some challenges with using synonyms for lexical variety. Finally, the lowest mean score was obtained by item CWSQ 1, *“I use memorized grammatical elements such as singular and plural forms, verb tenses, prefixes and suffixes, etc, in my writing”* ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.81$), which indicates that participants rely less on consciously applying memorized grammar rules compared to drawing from their personal knowledge and logical structuring.

In sum, this suggests that the students' cognitive strategies are strongest when using conceptual skills, such as brainstorming, logical formatting, and reflecting on personal experiences, but they engage less with technical language mechanics and vocabulary variation.

Table 10. Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) for SOCIAL (SWS)

ITEM	M	SD
SWSQ1 In order to generate ideas for my writing, I usually discuss the writing topic with a friend or classmate.	3.92	0.82
SWSQ 2 After revising and editing my essay thoroughly, I ask a friend or my classmate to read and comment on it.	3.85	0.88
SWSQ 3 I try to identify friends or classmates whom I can ask for help in my writing.	4.02	0.78
SWSQ 4 When I have trouble writing my essay, I try to do it with my classmates or friends.	4.03	0.84

The data presented in Table 10 illustrate the learners' perceptions of social writing strategies used to support their writing process. The highest mean score was recorded for item SWSQ4, "*When I have trouble writing my essay, I try to do it with my classmates or friends*" (M = 4.03, SD = 0.84), suggesting that many students feel more comfortable managing writing difficulties when they are able to work with people around them. A similarly high score was also found for item SWSQ3, "*I try to identify friends or classmates whom I can ask for help in my writing*" (M = 4.02, SD = 0.78). This reflects how students do not approach writing as a completely individual task, but often depend on trusted peers for guidance, reassurance, and support throughout the writing process.

The findings also suggest that discussion plays an important role in helping students develop their ideas before writing. Item SWSQ1, "*In order to generate ideas for my writing, I usually discuss the writing topic with a friend or classmate*" (M = 3.92, SD = 0.82), indicates that students seem to think through their ideas more confidently when they are able to talk about them with others first. In addition, students appeared generally open to receiving feedback after revising their work, as shown in item SWSQ2, "*After revising and editing my essay thoroughly, I ask a friend or my classmate to read and comment on it*" (M = 3.85, SD = 0.88).

These findings highlight how important peer support can be in students' writing experiences. Beyond helping with ideas and feedback, collaboration with classmates may also give students a sense of reassurance and encouragement when dealing with academic writing tasks.

Table 11. Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) for AFFECTIVE (AWS)

ITEM	M	SD
AWSQ1 I try to write an essay in class with confidence and ease.	3.88	0.71
AWSQ2 I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of writing.	4.06	0.70
AWSQ3 I encourage myself to write even when I am afraid of making mistakes	4.15	0.70

Results in Table 11 display that the participants actively employ multiple self-encouragement strategies within the affective domain to manage their emotions during writing tasks. The highest score was recorded in item AWSQ 3, "*I encourage myself to write even when I am afraid of making mistakes*" (M = 4.15, SD = 0.70), which suggests that the participants possess a high level of resilience and rely heavily on positive self-talk to overcome their writing anxieties. Similarly, item AWSQ 2, "*I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of writing*" recorded a high mean score (M = 4.06, SD = 0.70), which suggests that the participants are capable of using conscious relaxation techniques to handle emotional stress when faced with writing difficulties.

However, a slight decrease is observed in item AWSQ 1, "*I try to write an essay in class with confidence and ease*", which obtained the lowest mean score (M = 3.88, SD = 0.71). This drop indicates that while students are highly capable of motivating themselves and managing fear when they are under pressure, they still find it somewhat challenging to feel completely confident and at ease during timed, in-class writing tasks.

These findings suggest that students generally try to manage writing anxiety by encouraging and calming themselves during writing tasks. However, feeling fully confident during classroom writing activities still appeared to be challenging for some students.

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.

Findings for the Relationship between Self-Efficacy and Writing Motivation

This section presents data to answer research question 2 (a): Is there a significant relationship between learners' writing self-efficacy and their writing motivation?

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between learners' writing self-efficacy and their writing motivation.

To determine if there is a significant association in the mean scores between metacognitive, effort regulation, cognitive, social, and affective strategies, data is analysed using SPSS for correlations. Results are presented separately in Table 12 and 13.

Table 12. Correlation between self-efficacy and writing motivation

		Self-efficacy	Writing motivation
Self-efficacy	Pearson (Correlation	1	.675**
	Sig (2-tailed)		<.000
	N	318	318
Writing motivation	Pearson (Correlation	.675**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	<.000	
	N	318	318

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

Table 12 shows there is an association between self-efficacy and writing motivation. Correlation analysis shows that there is a high significant association between self-efficacy and writing motivation ($r=.675^{**}$) and ($p=.000$). According to He (2024), coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a strong positive relationship between self-efficacy and writing motivation.

Findings for the Relationship between self-efficacy and writing strategies

This section presents data to answer research question 2 (b): Is there a significant relationship between self-efficacy and writing strategies?

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between learners' writing self-efficacy and their use of writing strategies.

Table 13. Correlation between self-efficacy and writing strategies

		Self-efficacy	Writing strategies
Self-efficacy	Pearson (Correlation	1	.759**
	Sig (2-tailed)		<.000
	N	318	318
Writing strategies	Pearson (Correlation	.759**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	<.000	
	N	318	318

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

Table 13 shows there is an association between self-efficacy and writing strategies. Correlation analysis shows that there is a high significant association between self-efficacy and writing strategies ($r=.759^{**}$) and ($p=.000$). According to He (2024), coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a strong positive relationship between self-efficacy and writing strategies.

Inferential Statistics

According to Shah (2023), there are three main functions of a T-test. Firstly, T-tests 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, a T-test is done to test hypotheses. Researchers use t-tests 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 is done to identify significant differences. The output of a t-test provides a p-value (significance value). If this p-value is below a pre-determined threshold (often 0.05), it indicates a statistically significant difference, allowing researchers to conclude the populations from which their samples were drawn. However, a one-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) is a statistical method used to compare the means of three or more independent (unrelated) groups to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between them. It is a parametric test that evaluates the effect of a single independent variable (the factor) on a dependent variable.

This section presents data to answer research question 3: Is there a significant relationship between (a) self-efficacy, (b) writing motivation, and (c) writing strategies across gender, faculties, and SPM results?

H₀₃ : There is no significant relationship between (a) self-efficacy, (b) writing motivation, and (c) writing strategies across (i) gender, (ii) faculties, and (iii) SPM results.

Inferential Analysis Across Gender

Table 14. T-Test on Self-Efficacy, Writing Motivation & Writing Strategies across Gender

Group Statistics										
	Q1:GENDER	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean					
SELF_EFFICACY	MALE	136	4.0103	.57003	.04888					
	FEMALE	182	4.0692	.54927	.04071					
WRITING_MOTIVATION	MALE	136	4.2445	.55483	.04758					
	FEMALE	182	4.3736	.53905	.03996					
WRITING_STRATEGIES	MALE	136	3.9328	.51504	.04416					
	FEMALE	182	4.0077	.52729	.03909					

Independent Samples Test										
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances					t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance One-Sided p Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
SELF_EFFICACY	Equal variances assumed	.333	.564	-.931	316	.176 .352	-.05894	.06327	-.18343	.06555
	Equal variances not assumed			-.926	284.994	.177 .355	-.05894	.06362	-.18415	.06628
WRITING_MOTIVATION	Equal variances assumed	1.011	.315	-2.087	316	.019 .038	-.12914	.06187	-.25087	-.00741
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.079	286.349	.019 .039	-.12914	.06213	-.25143	-.00685
WRITING_STRATEGIES	Equal variances assumed	.331	.566	-1.265	316	.103 .207	-.07488	.05918	-.19131	.04155
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.270	294.527	.103 .205	-.07488	.05898	-.19095	.04119

A two-sample t-test (Table 14) was performed to compare self-efficacy, writing motivation, and writing strategies across gender. There were no significant differences for self-efficacy ($p=0.352$) and writing strategies ($p=0.207$) across gender. The null hypothesis is accepted for H_{03ia} and H_{03ic} . There were no significant differences in writing motivation across gender ($p=.30$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted for H_{03ib} .

Inferential Analysis Across Faculties

Table 15. One-Way ANOVA on Self-Efficacy, Writing Motivation and Writing Strategies across Faculties

		Descriptives							
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
SELF_EFFICACY	FAC ARTS & DESIGN	37	4.0919	.51120	.08404	3.9215	4.2623	3.00	5.00
	DPET BUILT ENVT ST	241	4.0456	.57045	.03675	3.9733	4.1180	1.60	5.00
	3.00	40	3.9900	.53195	.08411	3.8199	4.1601	2.40	5.00
	Total	318	4.0440	.55812	.03130	3.9824	4.1056	1.60	5.00
WRITING_MOTIVATION	FAC ARTS & DESIGN	37	4.3581	.48067	.07902	4.1978	4.5184	3.50	5.00
	DPET BUILT ENVT ST	241	4.3174	.56676	.03651	4.2455	4.3893	1.75	5.00
	3.00	40	4.2875	.50494	.07984	4.1260	4.4490	2.75	5.00
	Total	318	4.3184	.54873	.03077	4.2579	4.3789	1.75	5.00
WRITING_STRATEGIES	FAC ARTS & DESIGN	37	3.9768	.43049	.07077	3.8333	4.1204	3.00	4.89
	DPET BUILT ENVT ST	241	3.9704	.54796	.03530	3.9008	4.0399	1.68	5.00
	3.00	40	4.0063	.44709	.07069	3.8633	4.1492	2.96	5.00
	Total	318	3.9756	.52259	.02931	3.9180	4.0333	1.68	5.00

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SELF_EFFICACY	Between Groups	.202	2	.101	.323	.724
	Within Groups	98.541	315	.313		
	Total	98.744	317			
WRITING_MOTIVATION	Between Groups	.097	2	.048	.160	.852
	Within Groups	95.353	315	.303		
	Total	95.450	317			
WRITING_STRATEGIES	Between Groups	.044	2	.022	.081	.923
	Within Groups	86.528	315	.275		
	Total	86.573	317			

A one-way ANOVA (Table 15) was performed to compare self-efficacy, writing motivation, and writing strategies across Faculties. There were no significant differences for self-efficacy ($p=0.724$), writing motivation ($p=.852$), and writing strategies ($p=0.923$) across faculties. The null hypothesis is accepted for H_{03iia} , H_{03iib} and H_{03iic} .

Inferential Analysis Across SPM English Results

Table 16. One-Way ANOVA on Self-Efficacy, Writing Motivation & Writing Strategies across SPM results

Descriptives									
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
SELF_EFFICACY	A	122	4.1590	.50905	.04609	4.0678	4.2503	3.00	5.00
	B	122	4.0213	.60127	.05444	3.9135	4.1291	1.60	5.00
	C	74	3.8919	.52675	.06123	3.7699	4.0139	2.80	5.00
	Total	318	4.0440	.55812	.03130	3.9824	4.1056	1.60	5.00
WRITING_MOTIVATION	A	122	4.4324	.48109	.04356	4.3461	4.5186	3.00	5.00
	B	122	4.2582	.61063	.05528	4.1487	4.3676	1.75	5.00
	C	74	4.2297	.51974	.06042	4.1093	4.3501	2.75	5.00
	Total	318	4.3184	.54873	.03077	4.2579	4.3789	1.75	5.00
WRITING_STRATEGIES	A	122	4.0337	.50437	.04566	3.9433	4.1241	2.82	5.00
	B	122	3.9804	.58810	.05324	3.8750	4.0858	1.68	5.00
	C	74	3.8721	.41767	.04855	3.7753	3.9689	2.82	5.00
	Total	318	3.9756	.52259	.02931	3.9180	4.0333	1.68	5.00

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SELF_EFFICACY	Between Groups	3.389	2	1.694	5.597	.004
	Within Groups	95.355	315	.303		
	Total	98.744	317			
WRITING_MOTIVATION	Between Groups	2.609	2	1.304	4.426	.013
	Within Groups	92.841	315	.295		
	Total	95.450	317			
WRITING_STRATEGIES	Between Groups	1.207	2	.603	2.226	.110
	Within Groups	85.366	315	.271		
	Total	86.573	317			

A one-way ANOVA (Table 16) was conducted to examine differences in self-efficacy, writing motivation, and writing strategies across students' SPM English achievement groups. The findings revealed significant differences in self-efficacy ($p=0.004$) and writing motivation ($p=0.013$) across the groups. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected for H_{03iia} and H_{03iib} . However, no significant difference was found in writing strategy use across SPM English achievement groups ($p = 0.110$). Thus, the null hypothesis was accepted for H_{03iic} .

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings and Discussions

Perceptions of Writing Self-Efficacy, Motivation, and Strategy Use

The first objective of this study was to identify the overall profile of university ESL learners' self-efficacy, writing motivation, and writing strategies. Based on the findings from the 318 participants involved, the students generally showed positive perceptions across all three areas of self-efficacy, writing motivation and writing strategy. In terms of writing self-efficacy, students appeared to feel more confident when they were given enough time to complete writing tasks and when they relied on continuous effort to improve their writing. However, they seemed slightly less confident when dealing with highly difficult writing tasks. This may explain why some learners are willing to persist during writing activities but still feel overwhelmed when facing more difficult academic writing tasks. Past studies by Hussain et al. (2022), Li (2022), and Zhou et al. (2022) similarly

highlighted the role of self-efficacy in helping learners manage writing anxiety, remain persistent, and maintain confidence throughout the writing process.

For writing motivation, students showed a particularly high awareness of the importance and usefulness of writing tasks, although their personal enjoyment and interest in writing were comparatively lower. This suggests that many university ESL learners may approach writing more as an academic responsibility and useful skill rather than something they personally enjoy doing. This may reflect the reality experienced by many university students, where writing is often closely connected to assignments, assessments, and future academic or career needs. A similar pattern was observed by Zhang et al. (2014), who found that second language learners are more motivated to write when they see clear academic value in these writing tasks. Noman and Younus (2025) also noted in their study that writing motivation is often closely related to learners' academic performance and classroom engagement, rather than for personal enjoyment.

The findings on writing strategies further showed that students frequently relied on metacognitive strategies, particularly revising and checking their writing for spelling and content-related errors. However, formal pre-writing activities such as planning outlines or preparing rough drafts appeared to be used less frequently. This suggests that while students are generally aware of strategies that may help them during writing, they may feel more comfortable revising and correcting their work after writing rather than spending time planning before they begin. Consistent with Raoofi et al. (2017), students in the present study relied more heavily on revising than on pre-writing planning. However, unlike previous studies that highlighted planning as a dominant strategy, the present findings suggest that university ESL learners may prioritise post-writing revision over pre-writing preparation. The students in this study also demonstrated strong effort regulation and frequently relied on peer support and self-encouragement during writing tasks. This reflects how writing, especially in ESL contexts, is not only a cognitive activity but also an emotional process where reassurance, persistence, and support from others can influence learners' confidence and engagement during writing tasks.

Correlational Interactions of Self Efficacy, Writing Motivation and Writing Strategies Used

The second research question examined the relationships between writing self-efficacy, writing motivation, and writing strategies among university ESL learners. Based on the Pearson correlation analysis, significant positive relationships were found between self-efficacy and both writing motivation and writing strategies. Students who demonstrated higher confidence in their writing abilities also appeared to show stronger motivation and greater use of writing strategies during the writing process.

The strong relationship between self-efficacy and writing motivation suggests that confidence appears to be closely associated with how students approach writing tasks. Learners who believe they are capable of completing writing tasks successfully may be more willing to engage with writing activities, persist through difficulties, and place greater value on writing itself. Similar observations were reported by Teng and Zhang (2021), Li (2022), and Zhou et al. (2022), who highlighted the close relationship between self-efficacy, motivation, and learners' emotional responses during second-language writing tasks.

An even stronger relationship was found between self-efficacy and writing strategies. This finding may suggest that students who feel more confident in their writing abilities are also more comfortable applying strategies such as revising, planning, seeking feedback, and regulating their emotions during writing tasks. Interestingly, the findings of this study also showed that many students already possessed awareness of various writing strategies, yet their confidence levels appeared to be associated with how actively and comfortably these strategies were used. This is in accordance with the observations made by Raoofi et al. (2017), Teng et al. (2022), and Chen, Zhang, and Chen (2022), who emphasised that self-regulated writing strategies are often closely connected to learners' self-beliefs and confidence in their writing abilities.

Taken together, these findings suggest that writing development in ESL contexts may involve more than simply teaching writing techniques or strategies. Students' confidence, emotional readiness, and perceptions towards writing may also influence how effectively they engage with the writing process and apply the strategies they already know.

Differences in Self-Efficacy, Writing Motivation, and Writing Strategies Across Gender, Faculties, and SPM Results

The third research question examined whether there were significant differences in students' writing self-efficacy, writing motivation, and writing strategies across gender, faculties, and SPM English achievement. Based on the findings, no significant differences were found across gender and faculty. This suggests that students from different genders and academic disciplines may share relatively similar writing experiences and approaches within the university learning environment.

Interestingly, the findings revealed that significant differences were more closely linked to students' SPM English achievement rather than demographic background. Students with stronger SPM English results appeared to demonstrate higher confidence and stronger motivation towards writing tasks compared to lower-achieving students. However, differences in writing strategy use were far less noticeable across the groups.

This finding is particularly significant because it suggests that lower-achieving students may not necessarily lack awareness of writing strategies. Instead, the more noticeable difference appears to lie in how confidently and comfortably they apply those strategies during writing tasks. In other words, students may already know what to do when they write, but their previous academic experiences may be associated with how they feel about writing. Similar observations were reported by Li (2022) and Zhou et al. (2022), who found that learners' self-efficacy and emotional responses towards writing are often shaped by earlier writing experiences and writing anxiety.

The findings also support Teng and Zhang (2021) and Chen, Zhang, and Chen (2022), who highlighted the important role of self-efficacy in influencing learners' engagement with writing tasks and self-regulated learning strategies. From a teaching perspective, these findings highlight the importance of supporting students emotionally as well as academically during the writing process. While some learners may already possess useful writing strategies, they may still need reassurance, encouragement, and opportunities to rebuild confidence in their writing abilities over time.

IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Theoretical and Conceptual Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study supports the relevance of Expectancy-Value Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory in explaining learners' writing motivation and use of writing strategies in ESL contexts. The findings suggest that students' motivation and strategy use are very closely connected to how confident they feel about their writing abilities. Besides that, learners who demonstrated stronger self-efficacy also appeared more motivated and more willing to engage actively in different writing strategies throughout the writing process.

One particularly interesting finding of this study is that differences in academic achievement seemed to be reflected more clearly in students' confidence and motivation rather than in their knowledge of writing strategies. Although students from different proficiency levels appeared to use similar writing strategies, their levels of self-efficacy and writing motivation differed noticeably. This may suggest that many students already know useful writing strategies, but their confidence influences how comfortably and consistently they apply those strategies during real writing tasks.

In this sense, the findings of this study highlight that writing development in ESL contexts may involve more than simply teaching writing techniques or language skills. Psychological and emotional factors appear to be closely related to how students experience the writing process and respond to writing challenges in academic settings.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study offer several useful implications for ESL writing instruction in higher education. Since

many students appear to value writing more for its academic and practical importance rather than for personal enjoyment, writing activities may become more meaningful when lecturers connect them to real-world communication, workplace expectations, and authentic academic situations. Helping students understand the relevance of writing beyond grades and assignments may encourage greater engagement and motivation during writing tasks.

The findings also suggest that many students may already possess knowledge of various writing strategies but may not always feel confident applying them in actual writing situations. Therefore, writing instruction should focus not only on developing language and writing skills, but also on strengthening learners' confidence and providing emotional support throughout the writing process.

Several classroom practices may help support students more effectively. First, lecturers may break large writing assignments into smaller and more manageable stages, such as brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising, and editing, while providing continuous feedback at each stage. This gradual approach may reduce anxiety and make difficult writing tasks feel less overwhelming for learners. Second, greater emphasis may be placed on pre-writing activities, such as guided brainstorming sessions, mind mapping, and outline preparation. Since the findings showed that students relied more heavily on revising after writing rather than planning before writing, explicit instruction on pre-writing techniques may help students organise their ideas more effectively before composing. Third, lecturers may incorporate peer-review activities and collaborative writing discussions into classroom practice. As many participants appeared to depend on peer support during writing tasks, structured peer feedback sessions may provide students with opportunities to exchange ideas, receive constructive feedback, and develop greater confidence in their writing abilities. In addition, low-stakes writing activities, reflective journals, and short writing exercises may help students develop writing confidence without the pressure associated with high-stakes assessments. Providing positive and constructive feedback may also help learners gradually build stronger self-efficacy and become more willing to experiment with different writing strategies.

Overall, the findings suggest that effective ESL writing instruction should address not only the cognitive aspects of writing, but also the motivational and emotional dimensions that shape learners' writing experiences in higher education.

Suggestions for Future Research

Although this study provides useful insights into university ESL learners' perceptions of writing self-efficacy, motivation, and writing strategies, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample distribution across faculties was uneven, with most respondents originating from the Department of Built Environment Studies and Technology. Although participants from other faculties were included, the imbalance in representation may limit the generalisability of the findings to the wider university population. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution, as they may not fully reflect the experiences of students from different academic disciplines.

Future studies may consider employing more balanced sampling procedures and involving participants from a wider range of faculties and institutions to improve representativeness. In addition, future studies may consider using a longitudinal design to examine whether students' self-efficacy, motivation, and writing strategy use change throughout their university years. This may provide a clearer understanding of how university writing experiences influence learners from different academic backgrounds over time.

Second, since this study employed a quantitative approach, future researchers may consider using mixed-method designs that include interviews, classroom observations, or think-aloud protocols to gain deeper insight into students' writing behaviours and decision-making processes. Such approaches may help researchers better understand why some learners avoid independent writing practice or rely less on pre-writing planning activities.

Finally, future studies may also explore the influence of generative AI tools on ESL writing. As AI- assisted

writing becomes increasingly common in higher education, it would be valuable to investigate how these tools affect learners' writing self-efficacy, motivation, peer interaction, and use of self-regulated writing strategies.

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APPENDIX

Writing Motivation and Writing Strategies

(This instrument is adapted from Raoofi,et.la , 2017) and Zhang,et.al. ,2014)

SECT	VARIABLE	CONSTRUCTS	No of Items Indicators	Total
B	Writing Motivation (Zhang,et.al. , 2014)	Self-Efficacy	5	9
	Writing Motivation (Zhang,et.al. , 2014)	Task value scale	4	
C	Writing Strategies (Raoofi,et.al., 2017)	Metacognitive	10	28
		Effort Regulation	5	
		Cognitive	6	
		Social	4	
		Affective	3	
		Total		37

Survey

Section B: Writing Motivation (Zhang,et.al, 2014)

Self-Efficacy (SE)

ITEM
SEQ1I am sure I can learn the skills taught in WRITING class well.
SEQ2I can do the hardest work in my WRITING class if I try.
SEQ3I can do almost all the work in WRITING class if I do not give up.
SEQ4 If I have enough time, I can do a good job in all my WRITING work.
SEQ5 Even if the work in WRITING is hard, I can learn it

Task Value scale (TV)

ITEM
TVQ1 I think learning WRITING is important.
TVQ2 I find WRITING interesting.
TVQ3 What I learn in WRITING is useful.
TVQ4 Compared to other subjects, WRITING is useful.

Section C: Writing Strategies

(i) Metacognitive (MWS)

ITEM
MWSQ1 Before I start writing, I organise/arrange my ideas
MWSQ2 I revise and re-check my writing to make sure that it includes everything I want to discuss in my writing.
MWSQ3 I check my spelling when I write.
MWSQ4 I check my writing to make sure it is grammatically correct.
MWSQ5 I evaluate and re-evaluate the ideas/points I used in my essay.
MWSQ6 I monitor and evaluate my progress in writing. (How much I have written, which part to fix, which part to add, etc)
MWSQ7 I revise and edit an essay two or more times before I hand it in to my lecturer. (I don't just write in one go and submit. I will take my time to go through it, to find any errors/mistake and make sure I follow my lecturer's instruction)

MWSQ8 I go through the planning stages in my writing. (I draft/make outline first, either in bullet points or mind map)
MWSQ9 I go through the drafting stages in my writing (I will write a simple draft on a different paper before I write properly)
MWSQ10 I go through the revising and editing stages in my writing.

Effort Regulation (ERS)

ITEM
ERSQ 1 I write a lot to develop my writing skills.
ERSQ 2 I often work hard to do well in my writing even if I don't like English writing tasks.
ERSQ 3 Even if the writing activities are difficult, I don't give up but try to engage in them.
ERSQ 4 I concentrate as hard as I can when doing a writing task.
ERSQ 5 I spend a lot of time and energy on writing good English assignments.

Cognitive (CWS)

ITEM
CWSQ1 I use memorized grammatical elements such as singular and plural forms, verb tenses, prefixes and suffixes, etc, in my writing
CWSQ 2 I put newly memorized vocabulary in my sentences.
CWSQ 3 In order to generate ideas for my writing, I usually engage myself in brainstorming.
CWSQ 4 I use different words that have the same meaning.
CWSQ 5 I use my experiences and knowledge in my writing.
CWSQ 6 I try to use effective linking words to ensure clear and logical relationship between sentences or paragraphs

Social (SWS)

ITEM
SWSQ1 In order to generate ideas for my writing, I usually discuss the writing topic with a friend or classmate.
SWSQ 2 After revising and editing my essay thoroughly, I ask a friend or my classmate to read and comment on it.
SWSQ 3 I try to identify friends or classmates whom I can ask for help in my writing.
SWSQ 4 When I have trouble writing my essay, I try to do it with my classmates or friends.

Affective (AWS)

ITEM
AWSQ1I try to write an essay in class with confidence and ease.
AWSQ2I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of writing.
AWSQ3I encourage myself to write even when I am afraid of making mistakes