

# A Review of Research on Writing Self-Efficacy

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**Abstract:** This paper reviews and synthesizes research on writing self-efficacy. Firstly, it delineates the conceptual framework of writing self-efficacy. Subsequently, it meticulously analyzes and summarizes the current state of research on writing self-efficacy, including exploration of the overall level of writing self-efficacy, investigation into the relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance, examination of methods for cultivating writing self-efficacy, exploration of measurement tools for writing self-efficacy, analysis of the association between writing self-efficacy and student anxiety levels, and discussion on the relationship between writing self-efficacy and assessment methods. Finally, it critically evaluates the existing research, identifying shortcomings in research content, methods, and subjects, as well as proposes future directions for improvement.

**Keywords:** Writing, Self-efficacy, Research Content.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, writing self-efficacy has garnered significant attention among researchers as a critical concept in the field of educational psychology. It entails individuals' confidence in their ability to accomplish writing tasks and holds considerable importance in fostering students' writing proficiency and performance. With the escalating emphasis on writing proficiency in society and the ongoing reforms in education, an increasing number of studies have delved into investigating individuals' self-perception and cognitive regulation during the writing process. This paper aims to systematically review and summarize the current state of research on writing self-efficacy, delving into its conceptual delineation, influencing factors, and identified shortcomings. Building upon this foundation, it also looks ahead to future research trends. The overarching goal is to provide theoretical references and practical guidance for further exploration aimed at enhancing students' writing proficiency and nurturing their confidence in writing.

## 2. The Definition of Writing Self-Efficacy

Writing is not only one of the essential skills in English but also an organic combination of cognitive and affective activities [1]. Self-efficacy is a significant affective factor influencing writing, referring to an individual's confidence in their ability to utilize their skills to complete a task [2]. Writing self-efficacy, on the other hand, is a derivative of self-efficacy specifically in the context of writing, reflecting learners' confidence in completing writing tasks [3].

Furthermore, various scholars have offered different interpretations of writing self-efficacy, summarizing three representative definitions. First, it is learners' self-assessment of confidence in effectively using writing skills [4]. Second, it involves students' judgments of their ability to successfully complete specific writing tasks [5]. Third, it consists of two components: self-efficacy judgments based on successful use of specific writing skills and self-efficacy judgments based on successful completion of specific writing tasks [6].

Therefore, writing self-efficacy is a crucial influencing factor in the writing process. It not only impacts individuals' performance in writing tasks but also significantly influences

their writing motivation, attitudes, and persistence. Individuals with high levels of writing self-efficacy are more likely to actively confront writing challenges, willing to invest time and effort to overcome difficulties, thus achieving better writing outcomes. Conversely, individuals with lower levels of writing self-efficacy may feel discouraged and helpless when faced with writing tasks, lacking the motivation and confidence to complete them. In summary, writing self-efficacy reflects individuals' confidence and attitudes in the writing process, influencing their writing behavior and outcomes. By enhancing writing self-efficacy, individuals can better cope with writing tasks, improve their writing performance, and promote the positive development of their writing motivation and attitudes.

## 3. Review of Research on Writing Self-Efficacy

Research on "writing self-efficacy" has shown an overall increasing trend. Based on a review of relevant literature, research on writing self-efficacy can be summarized into six aspects: firstly, the exploration of the overall level of writing self-efficacy; secondly, investigating the relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance; thirdly, studying methods to cultivate writing self-efficacy; fourthly, exploring measurement tools for writing self-efficacy; fifthly, analyzing the association between writing self-efficacy and students' anxiety levels; and finally, examining the relationship between writing self-efficacy and assessment methods.

### 3.1. Overall Level of Writing Self-Efficacy

The investigation revealed that the majority of junior high school students exhibit a moderately high level of self-efficacy in English writing [7]. Surveys and English proficiency tests conducted among first-year students majoring outside of English indicated an average proficiency level among this cohort. Analysis of questionnaire responses revealed no significant disparity in self-efficacy between male and female students regarding writing tasks [8]. The survey and associated factor analysis regarding the English writing self-efficacy among non-English major college students suggested an overall moderate level of self-efficacy, with no notable discrepancies observed based on gender,

academic year, or residential status (rural or urban) [9].

### **3.2. Writing Self-Efficacy and Writing Performance**

The sense of self-efficacy in writing is closely associated with actual writing performance, aiding students in assessing their own writing abilities and adjusting their writing styles and techniques [3]. In most cases, there is a positive correlation between self-efficacy in writing and writing achievement, with students' writing performance being influenced by their varying levels of self-efficacy [10-11]. Both overall writing self-efficacy and its two components—self-efficacy in writing skills and self-efficacy in writing tasks—are significantly positively correlated with writing performance. Additionally, students tend to have slightly higher confidence in applying writing skills compared to completing writing tasks [8]. Furthermore, there is a positive correlation between students' self-efficacy in writing and their writing performance, particularly with a significant increase in task self-efficacy [12].

In summary, the research indicates that self-efficacy in writing plays a crucial role in students' writing performance. Through self-assessment and adjustment, students can more effectively apply their writing skills, thereby improving their writing achievement. The overall trend suggests that as self-efficacy increases, students' writing abilities also correspondingly enhance. Therefore, encouraging and cultivating students' self-efficacy in writing is one of the key pathways to improving their writing proficiency. Future research could further explore the influence of different factors on self-efficacy in writing and accordingly develop teaching strategies to foster students' writing development.

### **3.3. Methods for Cultivating Writing Self-Efficacy**

With the increasing attention in the field of English education on writing self-efficacy, exploring how to cultivate students' writing self-efficacy to enhance their writing proficiency has become increasingly important. Methods such as providing more choices, discussing cognitive strategies with students, offering self-assessment tools, and creating appropriate evaluation environments are considered effective [13]. Blended university English writing instruction, which combines multimedia, internet, and traditional classroom methods, contributes to cultivating students' writing self-efficacy and significantly enhances their writing proficiency [14]. Process-genre approach instruction to a certain extent improves overall writing proficiency among university students, reinforcing their abilities in writing ideation, conventions, and self-regulation of writing self-efficacy, while actively strengthening their autonomy and behavior in writing [15].

These research findings indicate that employing various effective cultivation methods can promote the development of students' writing self-efficacy, thereby enhancing their writing abilities and performance. In the current English education context, educators and instructors should actively explore and implement these methods to meet students' growing writing needs. From providing more choices and discussing cognitive strategies to adopting multimedia-blended instruction, these strategies provide students with abundant learning resources and platforms for communication, thereby stimulating their learning motivation and writing potential. Overall, the implementation of these

methods not only contributes to enhancing students' writing proficiency but also helps them achieve outstanding accomplishments in academic and professional domains. In the future, further research on how to refine and personalize these cultivation methods, as well as effectively integrate them into teaching practices, will provide deeper theoretical support and practical guidance for improving students' writing self-efficacy and performance.

### **3.4. Measurement Instruments for Writing Self-Efficacy**

In the research domain, there has been a steady increase in the number of studies on measures of writing self-efficacy. Scholars continuously validate the reliability and validity of these measures, striving to enhance their quality through iterative improvements in design [16]. These measures find increasingly widespread applications, notably in assessing self-efficacy and investigating its correlation with reading and writing performance in research [6]. Measures specifically tailored to assess self-efficacy in writing skills have emerged [17], some designed specifically for non-English major undergraduates, aiming to explore the relationship between writing efficacy and performance [8]. Additionally, measures of English writing self-efficacy for Chinese university students have been developed to facilitate research on students' self-efficacy in writing [18]. Furthermore, there are measures targeting middle school students, intending to examine the relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing strategies [10].

Overall, the development and application of these measures provide researchers with effective tools to assess and understand individual writing self-efficacy, further advancing research on the topic. By examining participants across different age groups, academic disciplines, and language proficiencies, these measures not only facilitate interdisciplinary and cross-cultural studies on writing self-efficacy but also offer valuable insights for educational practices. They provide a scientific basis for educators to formulate targeted writing teaching strategies. However, despite filling the gap in measurement tools, future research should further explore their applicability in diverse cultural and educational contexts and enhance their utilization in writing teaching and practice.

### **3.5. Writing Self-Efficacy and Student Anxiety Levels**

The research indicates a close association between writing self-efficacy and writing anxiety [10]. Generally, students with high levels of self-efficacy tend to exhibit lower levels of classroom anxiety and conceptualization anxiety regarding writing. However, despite existing studies revealing this correlation, there remains a need for further exploration into the dynamic changes and specific causal relationships between the two constructs [19]. Surveys have shown that students' anxiety levels during writing are inversely related to their self-efficacy [20]. Similar trends have been found in analogous studies. Additionally, students in lower scoring groups demonstrate significantly higher levels of writing anxiety compared to those in higher scoring groups, and they also exhibit insufficient confidence in mastering writing skills and completing writing tasks. Interestingly, self-efficacy in English writing not only serves as a mediating factor between anxiety and performance but also directly predicts performance outcomes [21].

In summary, the research suggests a negative correlation between writing self-efficacy and writing anxiety. Students with high self-efficacy often display lower levels of writing anxiety, while those with low self-efficacy are more prone to experiencing anxiety during the writing process. Furthermore, self-efficacy has been found to directly impact students' writing performance. These findings not only contribute to a better understanding of students' academic performance and psychological states but also provide guidance for educators to assist students in enhancing their writing abilities and alleviating writing anxiety. Future research should further explore the complex relationships between writing self-efficacy and other psychological factors, as well as effective strategies for promoting students' writing self-efficacy to enhance their writing performance and psychological well-being.

### **3.6. Writing Self-Efficacy and Evaluation Methods**

In recent years, research on the impact of feedback evaluation on writing self-efficacy has yet to reach a consensus [22]. Previous studies have noted the influence of peer assessment, "teacher-student collaborative assessment (TSCA)," and teacher evaluation on English writing self-efficacy. For instance, empirical studies on peer assessment conducted with non-English major college students have shown a significant improvement in their writing self-efficacy [23]. Additionally, interventions using teacher-student collaborative assessment (TSCA) with English major students, while not showing significant differences in overall levels of writing self-efficacy, have demonstrated significant enhancements in areas such as discourse organization, grammatical accuracy, and task efficacy, providing empirical support and recommendations for improving students' writing self-efficacy [19]. Comparative studies on teacher feedback and peer feedback regarding students' writing self-efficacy suggest that teacher feedback is more conducive to enhancing students' writing self-efficacy than peer feedback, with a more pronounced impact on students of intermediate to advanced proficiency levels [24].

The diversity of evaluation methods in English teaching is gradually gaining attention. However, previous research has primarily focused on the application of single-mode evaluation formats, with relatively limited exploration of multimodal evaluation formats. Different evaluation methods may have varying impacts on writing self-efficacy. In this regard, peer assessment, teacher-student collaborative assessment (TSCA), machine assessment, and teacher evaluation have garnered some research results. Although these studies have provided valuable empirical support, the potential role of multimodal evaluation formats in teacher evaluation has not been fully explored. Therefore, integrating multimodal evaluation formats with traditional single-mode teacher evaluation can provide students with richer evaluation information, thereby aiding in enhancing their writing proficiency and self-efficacy. Hence, exploring how to skillfully integrate multimodal evaluation formats to enhance students' writing self-efficacy will be one of the important directions for future research in English teaching.

## **4. Existing Limitations and Future Prospects**

Currently, researchers and scholars are witnessing a

thriving trend in the exploration of various aspects related to writing self-efficacy, such as its correlation with academic performance, pedagogical approaches, measurement tools, and student anxiety levels. Existing studies have significantly contributed to enhancing students' writing self-efficacy and improving their writing proficiency. However, through literature review and analysis, researchers have also identified several shortcomings, which will be analyzed from the perspectives of research subjects, methodologies, and content. Addressing these issues and deficiencies, potential solutions are proposed, along with an attempt to outline future research directions in this field.

### **4.1. Research Subjects**

Despite the wide range of current research subjects, which encompass student populations from preschool, elementary, middle, and high school to undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels, there has been relatively little exploration into the writing self-efficacy among different gender groups. Present research primarily focuses on freshmen in non-English majors at universities. Many scholars merely provide brief overviews of total student numbers, occasionally mentioning the distribution of male and female students, with only a handful mentioning the departments in which students are enrolled. However, there may be differences in writing self-efficacy between male and female students, as well as variations among students in different majors. Additionally, factors such as the duration of English language study, the level of English education received over time, and the diverse backgrounds of students may all influence their writing self-efficacy. Therefore, when selecting research subjects, it is advisable to either minimize the interference of certain variables according to research objectives or treat certain factors as variables to gain a deeper understanding of their impact on students' English writing self-efficacy, thereby promoting diversity and innovation in this field of study.

Further research could delve into understanding the differences in English writing self-efficacy among different gender groups. By comparing the performance of male and female students in writing tasks and their confidence levels in their writing abilities, potential gender disparities can be revealed and the underlying reasons explored. Furthermore, including students from different majors in the research scope can help investigate the impact of various academic backgrounds on writing self-efficacy. It may be discovered that students in certain majors exhibit greater confidence in writing, while those in other majors may demonstrate lower levels of writing self-efficacy. Additionally, research should also consider the potential influence of factors such as the duration of English language study, the level of English education received, and the geographical origins of students on their writing self-efficacy. Through systematic study of these factors, a more comprehensive understanding of students' self-awareness and confidence levels in English writing can be achieved, providing more precise guidance for improving students' writing abilities.

### **4.2. Research Methodology**

Scholars primarily employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating questionnaire surveys, writing tests, interviews, classroom observations, reflective journals, and action research reports to ensure the rigor of the study. In selecting research instruments, scholars designed a multidimensional and highly reliable self-efficacy questionnaire for writing

based on learner characteristics, context, and various types of writing needs. However, there are some potential areas for improvement in the current research methodology.

Firstly, while the mixed-methods approach offers diversified data sources, integrating different methods may pose certain challenges, necessitating a more systematic and organized integration of various data to ensure research accuracy and reliability. Therefore, there is a need to further explore how to better coordinate and integrate mixed-methods approaches to enhance research consistency and comparability. Secondly, studies indicate that many scholars often simply reuse existing questionnaires without modification or designing new research tools, leading to an increasingly evident mismatch between survey questionnaires and research subjects. Hence, in designing self-efficacy questionnaires for writing, it is essential to consider the diversity of learner characteristics and their writing needs to further refine questionnaire design, making it more scientific and practical. By gaining a deeper understanding of students' writing backgrounds, personality traits, and learning objectives, more precise and effective questionnaires can be designed to better reflect students' writing self-efficacy. Additionally, longitudinal studies on students' writing self-efficacy not only need to consider the length of time span but also focus on changes in research subjects at different learning stages. Therefore, extending the research time span and combining students' learning experiences and stages of writing development can facilitate a deeper exploration of the patterns of changes in students' writing self-efficacy at different stages. Lastly, case studies are a promising research direction warranting further exploration. Through in-depth tracking observation and analysis of individual students' writing self-efficacy, a better understanding of students' self-awareness and developmental trajectories in writing can be gained, providing more targeted support to enhance students' writing abilities.

### 4.3. Research Content

On one hand, there are certain limitations in the scope of most studies. Firstly, the majority of research focuses on exploring the correlation between writing self-efficacy and other factors, but pays less attention to how to effectively enhance writing self-efficacy, lacking in-depth research on specific enhancement strategies. Secondly, researchers rarely conduct comparative studies on different characteristic learners, such as gender, age, family background, and levels of writing self-efficacy, which limits researchers' comprehensive understanding of the formation and influencing factors of writing self-efficacy. Thirdly, research on the use of internet-assisted teaching to enhance writing self-efficacy is still in its infancy, lacking in-depth exploration of its potential and actual effects. On the other hand, there is room for further deepening the research content. Most studies still focus on overall writing self-efficacy, with relatively few studies on its different dimensions, which hinders researchers' comprehensive understanding of writing self-efficacy. In studies investigating the correlation between writing self-efficacy and writing strategies, writing anxiety, and writing achievement, few scholars explore the pathways of influence between different factors, indicating a need for deeper understanding of these complex relationships. Additionally, longitudinal tracking studies on the dynamic changes of learners' self-efficacy and empirical research on their change patterns are also relatively rare, making it difficult to grasp

the developmental status and trends of learners' writing self-efficacy at different stages.

Therefore, addressing the above issues, future research can attempt to expand from the following perspectives. Firstly, in-depth research on enhancement strategies, focusing on exploring specific strategies to effectively enhance writing self-efficacy. This includes but is not limited to teaching methods, feedback mechanisms, goal setting, etc. Through empirical research and case analysis, a deeper understanding can be gained of which strategies are more effective for different types of learners and how these strategies interact with other factors. Secondly, conducting comparative studies on different characteristic learners, such as gender, age, family background, etc. This can help discover differences in writing self-efficacy among different groups and unearth influencing factors to provide a basis for personalized teaching. Thirdly, strengthening research on internet-assisted teaching, delving into the potential and actual effects of internet-assisted teaching in enhancing writing self-efficacy. This includes research on developing online writing tools, establishing writing communities, designing online writing courses, etc., to meet the needs of modern learning environments. Fourthly, deepening the research content by shifting the focus from overall writing self-efficacy to the differentiation of its different dimensions, exploring the relationships between different dimensions and their impact on writing performance. Additionally, strengthening research on the correlation between writing self-efficacy and writing strategies, anxiety, achievement, and other factors to deepen the understanding of their complex relationships. Lastly, conducting longitudinal tracking studies on learners' writing self-efficacy at different stages and researching their change patterns. This can help reveal the developmental status of writing self-efficacy during the learning process, as well as the influencing factors and intervention opportunities at different stages.

## 5. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive review and synthesis of the relevant research on writing self-efficacy. Firstly, it offers a clear elucidation of the concept of writing self-efficacy, laying the groundwork for subsequent discussions. Subsequently, it meticulously analyzes and summarizes the key aspects within the current research domain, encompassing the overall level of writing self-efficacy, its relationship with writing performance, cultivation methods, measurement tools, as well as its associations with student anxiety levels and evaluation methods. Finally, the researchers conduct an in-depth analysis of the shortcomings present in existing studies and propose directions for future research efforts, aiming to provide insights and guidance for further exploration in the field of writing self-efficacy.

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