

# EFL Students' Writing Self-Efficacy and Writing Self-Regulated Strategies in Undergraduate Thesis Writing

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## ABSTRACT

This study attempts to map undergraduate students' writing self-efficacy and writing self-regulated learning strategies in the process of writing their undergraduate thesis. This survey study was conducted in Thesis Proposal Writing coursework in a private university in academic year 2022/2023. Eighty-six students agreed to participate in this study by filling out a questionnaire, and eight students were interviewed to obtain more information about their responses to the questionnaire. The findings indicate that the students' writing self-efficacy were categorized into medium ( $M=4,7872$ ,  $SD=1,138$ ), which means they believe either maybe or basically can do the writing ability stated in the items. They were relatively more efficacious in the use of English writing ( $M=4,936$ ,  $SD=1,199$ ), but less efficacious in grammar and spelling ( $M=4,69$ ,  $SD=1,062$ ). In terms of writing self-regulated strategies, most students sometimes used writing self-regulated strategies; the most frequently used SRL strategies were self-consequences strategies ( $M=2,41$ ;  $SD=0,641$ ) and self-evaluation strategies ( $M=2,35$ ;  $SD=0,693$ ) while the least frequently used strategies were self-monitoring strategies ( $M=1,755$ ,  $SD=0,793$ ). From these findings, the author suggests that students should be supported to enhance their writing self-efficacy and self-regulated learning strategies by providing more cohesive and coherent written corrective feedback. By doing so, they will be more efficacious in terms of ideation, organization, grammar, and spelling in writing their undergraduate thesis. It will also enhance their behavioral self-regulated learning strategies in the domain of self-monitoring strategies.

## I. Introduction

For students studying EFL, writing a thesis is a complex process that is influenced by linguistic, psychological, and sociocultural factors. In Tanjungpura University, district Pontianak, in West Kalimantan, there are several problems faced by more than 70% of students in writing thesis including: (1) finding reference sources in the last 10 years for literature review (77.58%), (2) critically analyzing literature sources (76.04%), (3) criticizing issues related to proposal writing (75.82%), (4) deciding on techniques of data analysis (75.82%), (5) reviewing literature (73.63%), (6) convincing readers that the problem really exists and is conveyed in the background of the research (72.97%), (7) identifying topics of focus for literature review (72.09%), (8) writing the conceptual framework of the research proposal (70.99%), (9) identifying current issues for proposal writing (70.11%), (10) limited knowledge related to lexical items and linguistics units (76.48%), (11) linking between sentences to form a research proposal (74.95%), (12) communicating fluently with the writing style of the research proposal (73.41%), (13) knowledge related to the social context of research in the research proposal (71.65%), (14) deciding on linguistic units (from phoneme to discourse) that must be deleted, replaced, added, or rearranged in research proposal writing (78.68%), and (15) using correct grammar in research proposals (72.31%) [1].

Another study in Indonesia involving 6 students from undergraduate English program as participants in an in-depth semi-structured interview discusses the problems faced by students in

writing an English thesis proposal. The results of the content analysis reveal the most common challenges faced by the six participants in writing of the research proposal which are found in three major writing parts, that is, in the introduction section, in the literature review section, and in the method section. In the introduction section, the problems are as follow: (a) organizing ideas coherently, (b) finding supporting references, (c) finding a research topic, (d) writing a problem statement, (e) writing a statement necessity. In the literature review section, the problems found are: (a) finding supporting references, (b) understanding article content, (c) writing motivation. Meanwhile, the problems found in methods section are as follow: (a) being not sure which research method used, (b) having little knowledge of research methods, (c) determining the number of research participants, (d) determining the research instrument used. The research also investigated strategies that can be used to overcome those challenges [2]. The most recent research conducted in Indonesia on the difficulties EFL undergraduate students have in writing the thesis proposal [1], [2] reported that students should be aware of their own efficacy and strategies to cope with the problems in thesis writing. Therefore, a study of writing self-efficacy and writing self-regulation profiles is needed and can serve as the foundation for additional solutions at the beginning of the process of writing an undergraduate thesis.

In the department where the research was conducted, the curriculum was designed to support students' academic writing and research skill development [3]. The process of producing a thesis proposal is the first step in the final thesis, which is further connected to student management and self-management in the process of finishing tasks. Prior research on student self-regulation approaches in writing an English undergraduate thesis program involves 97 participants who were working on their theses in the academic year 2021/2022 during the COVID-19 pandemic within the department where the research was conducted. The results show that, in order of importance, the following self-regulation strategies for online learning in the thesis writing process are used: environment structuring ( $M = 4.21$ ), help-seeking ( $M = 3.85$ ), self-evaluation ( $M = 3.78$ ), goal setting ( $M = 3.65$ ), time management ( $M = 3.6$ ), and task strategies ( $M = 3.43$ ). The study's findings have limitations because they only disclose self-regulation mechanisms in online learning components and do not address constructs directly relevant to EFL writing, which is essential in the thesis writing process [3] [22]. Meanwhile, in an offline learning environment, other research related to self-regulation in the completion of the thesis conducted from different setting also has not yet used constructs directly related to EFL writing [4].

All studies on self-regulated learning strategies with constructs directly related to EFL writing are carried out in China [5] [6] [7], there is still a large research gap discusses self-regulation strategies in learning that directly analyze constructs related EFL writing self-efficacy and self-regulation learning strategies for the completion of undergraduate thesis in the Indonesian context. Therefore, this study aims to: (1) describe the profile of writing self-efficacy and writing SRL strategies of students taking Thesis Proposal Writing courses within the department where the research was conducted. This study is unique in that it is the first to fill a research gap concerning SRL techniques and self-efficacy, both of which are directly relevant to EFL writing in the Indonesian context.

## II. Method

The researchers used a survey research design to describe the profile of writing self-efficacy and writing SRL strategies of students who were enrolling in Thesis Proposal Writing coursework. This study uses convenient sampling techniques with a target population of 104 students enrolled in the Thesis Proposal Writing class in the even semester of the academic year 2022/2023 in the Department of English Language Education at a private university in Yogyakarta. The Thesis Proposal Writing course is offered in semester 6 after students complete all writing, grammar, and research courses. The target participants who agreed to participate in the study should approve the statement of willingness to become a participant in the study before completing the questionnaires. The QEWSE Questionnaire (Questionnaire of English Writing Self-Efficacy) and QEWSRLS (Questionnaire of English Writing Self-Regulated Learning Strategies) were used in this study [5].

The Self-Efficacy for Writing Scale (SEWS) to measure the writing self-efficacy of middle and high school students was adapted [5] [16]. Since self-efficacy is domain-specific, only items from the writing construct were included [5] [16]. QEWS consists of 27 items divided into 5 subscales, as follows:

Table 1. Subscale, number of items, and QEWS items

Subscales	Number of Items	Items
Ideation	3	1,6,11
Organization	5	2,7,20,23,27
Grammar and Spelling	4	3,8,21,26
Use of English Writing	8	4, 9, 10,13, 14, 16,17,22
Self-efficacy for Self-regulation	7	5,12,15,18,19,24,25

For QEWS, participants were asked to respond to options with a Likert scale of 1-7. The internal consistency (Cronbach alpha) for QEWS was 0.94 for all items – 0.71 (ideation), 0.82 (organization), 0.78 (grammar and spelling), 0.87 (use of English writing), and 0.78 (self-efficacy for self-regulation), respectively, indicating good internal consistency of participants' responses to these questionnaires [5].

In terms of coping problems related to enhancing second or foreign language skills, the literature on second and foreign language education has generally embraced Flavell's definition of metacognition as a theoretical framework for analyzing the teaching and learning process [8], referring metacognition, as in the literature on education psychology, as students' "cognition about cognition" [9] [10], which is their understanding of the cognitive processes involved in making decisions before, during, or following a learning task. EFL writing involves several complex cognitive processes with deliberate cognitive action [11]. Metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive experience are the two categories into which metacognition was described [10]. Metacognitive knowledge as "learners' knowledge or beliefs about what factors or variables act and interact in what ways to affect the course and outcome of cognitive enterprise" (p. 5) [9]. The affective experience that students have during the learning process and their reflections on their methods are part of the metacognitive experience. Metacognition is primarily a higher-order cognitive activity in which students actively observe and continually adjust their cognitive processes to improve their learning outcomes. The monitoring and regulating procedures of learners are frequently coordinated to meet certain learning goals or objectives, for example: cognitive strategies can enhance EFL students' metacognition in a process-based writing to write undergraduate thesis [11]. Several common self-regulated learning strategies as a substitute in critique of language learning strategies research are well-represented in the metacognition field [12]. Although there are still a few studies in the realm of second/foreign language instruction, the discussions on the links among metacognition, self-regulation, and self-regulated learning strategies have been developed by some scholars [8] [13]. They did not offer any empirical evidence, but they touch on the significance of metacognition and self-regulated learning in the teaching of second and foreign languages [13].

Regarding its multifaceted structure of SRL strategies in EFL writing, another attempt to discuss the connection between metacognition, self-regulation, and self-regulated learning strategies was initiated by specifically investigating the characteristics of EFL students' self-regulated learning strategies in learning to write through the validation of a newly developed instrument called The Writing Strategies for Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) Questionnaire [14]. One of the few empirical studies that used self-regulated learning theory to examine foreign language learning involved 790 undergraduate students from six Chinese universities made up the sample [15]. An eight-factor linked model of EFL writing styles for SRL was created through confirmatory factor analyses. The additional study found that the optimal model was a multidimensional, hierarchical structure of SRL. In EFL writing, self-regulated learning strategies

encompasses the nine lower-order writing methods related to cognitive, metacognitive, social-behavioral, and motivational regulation components, is a higher-order construct. The study concluded that the empirical results support the idea that SRL theory from educational psychology and may be used to L2/EFL education, especially L2/EFL writing [15]. It appears that motivational control over the learning process has a close connection with metacognition and self-regulated learning [15]. The Questionnaire of English Writing Self-Regulated Learning Strategies (QEWSRLS) consists of 28 items from 3 subcategories was also adapted [5], [16]. The instrument was developed based on a self-regulation strategy model [17]. To guarantee this instrument's face validity and content validity, formal expert assessments were conducted.

Tabel 2. Subscale, number of items, and QEWSRLS items

Subscales	Number of Items	Items
Environmental SRL Strategies	8	
-Seeking Assistance Strategies		3,12,21
-Persistence Strategies		4,13,22
-Review Record Strategies		9,18
Behavioural SRL Strategies	8	
-Seeking Opportunities Strategies		5,14,23,25
-Self-Monitoring Strategies		6,15
-Self-Consequences Strategies		7,16
Personal SRL Strategies	10	
- Self-Evaluation Strategies		1,10,19
- Organization and Transformation Strategies		2,11,20,24,26
- Goal Setting and Planning Strategies		8,17

For QEWSRLS, participants were asked to respond to options on a Likert scale of 0 (never use) to 3 (frequent use). The Cronbach alpha scores were 0.88 for all items, 0.72 (environmental SRL strategies), 0.65 (behavioural SRL strategies), and 0.78 (personal SRL strategies), respectively [5].

Both instruments are translated into Indonesian and disseminated to research participants through Google Form, participants are asked to be willing to become research participants in the same form. Students who do not fill in the willingness to participate are not included as research participants. Before data collection, the construct validity and content of the two instruments go through the expert judgment stage from the head of the research department of the English Language Education Department / Study Program. Descriptive statistics such as mean value and standard deviation are used to analyze and report profile data of English Writing Self-Efficacy and English Writing Self-Regulated Learning Strategies. The data were analyzed with SPSS and presented in the form of diagrams with Microsoft Excell and tables then interpreted and discussed with literature and other relevant research results conducted in other countries in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

### III. Results and Discussion

The aim of the study is to describe the profile of writing self-efficacy and writing SRL strategies of students taking Thesis Proposal Writing courses within the department where the research was conducted. Findings of the study indicate that students' writing self-efficacy profile from Likert scale 1-7 was: ideation (M=4,806, SD=1,099), organization (M=4,704, SD=1,081), grammar and spelling (M=4,69, SD=1,062), use of English writing (M=4,936, SD=1,199), and self-efficacy for self-regulation (M=4,8, SD=1,249) which means that students' overall writing self-

efficacy was medium ( $M=4,7872$ ,  $SD=1,138$ ), between 4 (Maybe I can do it) and 5 (I basically can do it). Students were relatively more efficacious in use of English writing ( $M=4,936$ ,  $SD=1,199$ ), but less efficacious in grammar and spelling ( $M=4,69$ ,  $SD=1,062$ ).



Fig.1. Overall survey results for writing self-efficacy profile and writing self-regulated learning strategies

This finding is similar to the study involving 319 sophomores in China whose overall writing self-efficacy was at the medium level ( $M =4.36$ ,  $SD= 0.80$ ), between 4 (Maybe I can do it) and 5 (I basically can do it). However, the profile is slightly different. In the study, the participants were relatively more efficacious in Organization ( $M=4.53$ ,  $SD =0.90$ ), but less efficacious in the Use of English Writing ( $M= 4.13$ ,  $SD =0.92$ ) [5]. The participants in this study were more efficacious in use of English writing ( $M=4,936$ ,  $SD=1,199$ ) because in this study the participants were junior students who have completed several coursework in EFL writing (paragraph writing, essay writing, argumentative writing, and academic reading and writing) before taking thesis proposal writing coursework. However, the participants in this study had higher standard deviation compared to the participants in China [5] which means there was a wider range of responses among the participants.

Another interesting highlight in this study is that even though the use of English writing is the most efficacious domain the participants perceived, they were less efficacious in their skill in writing organization, grammar, and spelling. It is different from the findings of the study in China higher education context which reported that participants had relatively higher levels of self-efficacy for organization and lower levels of self-efficacy for use of English writing, implying that students felt more efficacious in paragraph construction and idea development but less efficacious in doing practical writings such as sending emails to friends or writing diaries in English. The prevalent teaching strategy in English writing classrooms in China, which is product-oriented and examination-driven, with a concentration on linguistic abilities and grammar [18], could potentially explain the result. Writing examinations for college students were designed to assess students' diction, syntax, and discursive development rather than practical usage and application of writing in academic or practical contexts. The findings suggest that the students in this study should be provided with more cohesive and coherent feedback [19], [20]. By doing so, the student will be more efficacious in terms of ideation, organization, grammar, and spelling in writing their undergraduate thesis. The overall results for students' writing self-efficacy profile is described in Table 3.

Table 3. Overall Survey Results for Writing Self-Efficacy

Domains of Writing Self-Efficacy	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Use of English Writing	86	1	7	4,936	1,199
Ideation	86	1	7	4,806	1,099
Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulation	86	1	7	4,8	1,249
Organization	86	1	7	4,704	1,081
Grammar and Spelling	86	1	7	4,69	1,062



Meanwhile, students' writing self-regulated learning strategies score was slightly above 2 ( $M=2,162$ ,  $SD=0,716$ ) from Likert scale of 0 (I never use it) to 3 (I often use it), except behavioral self-regulated learning strategies ( $M=1,998$ ,  $SD=0,763$ ). It indicated that the students frequently use SRL strategies in writing with the most frequently used personal SRL strategies: ( $M=2,278$ ,  $SD=0,69$ ) and the least frequently used behavioral SRL strategies ( $M=1,998$ ,  $SD=0,763$ ). The findings in the previous study where the research was conducted revealed that written feedback was valued by the students as critical to their writing in the process of writing their undergraduate thesis [3], [21]. They also thought that criticism was still important even if they received a high grade. They see writing feedback as valuable and believe it can help them become better writers [21]. The feedback from the lecturers to some extent helps them to enhance their writing self-regulated learning strategies [21]. The overall results for students' writing self-regulated learning strategies are described in Table 4. Meanwhile, the results of each domain are presented in Table 5, 6 and 7.

Table 4. Overall Survey Results for Writing Self-Regulated Learning Strategies

Domain of Self-Regulated Learning Strategies	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Personal SRL Strategies	86	0	3	2,278	0,69
Environmental SRL Strategies	86	0	3	2,21	0,716
Behavioral SRL Strategies	86	0	3	1,998	0,763

Table 5. Personal SRL Strategies Survey Results

Domain of Personal SRL Strategies	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Self-evaluation strategies	86	0	3	2,35	0,693
Organization and transformation strategies	86	0	3	2,26	0,690
Goal-setting and planning strategies	86	0	3	2,21	0,68

Table 6. Environmental SRL Strategies Survey Results

Domain of Environmental SRL Strategies	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Seeking assistance strategies	86	0	3	2,24	0,696
Review record strategies	86	0	3	2,23	0,711
Persistence strategies	86	0	3	2,15	0,725

Table 7. Behavioural SRL Strategies Survey Results

Domain of Behavioural SRL Strategies	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Self-consequence strategies	86	0	3	2,41	0,641
Seeking opportunities strategies	86	0	3	1,91	0,794
Self-monitoring strategies	86	0	3	1,75	0,793

The findings of the study were slightly better than the study in the China higher education context which reported that students' overall SRL strategy score was below 2 (I sometimes use it), indicating that they did not have a frequent use of SRL strategies in writing [5]. Organization and Transformation Strategies ( $M = 1.88$ ,  $SD= 0.55$ ) and Persistence Strategies ( $M = 1.81$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ) were the most often utilized SRL strategies while the least strategies that they utilized were the ones for reviewing records ( $M= 1.16$ ,  $SD= 0.75$ ) and goal setting and planning ( $M =1.21$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ) [5]. On the other hand, the findings of this study revealed that the most frequently used SRL strategies were self-consequences strategies ( $M=2,41$ ;  $SD=0,641$ ) and self-evaluation strategies ( $M=2,35$ ;  $SD=0,693$ ) while the least frequently used strategies were self-monitoring strategies ( $M=1,755$ ,  $SD=0,793$ ).

#### IV. Conclusion

This study is significant in providing information about the profile of students' writing self-efficacy and writing self-regulated learning strategies at the beginning of writing their undergraduate thesis proposal. It serves as a pre-coursework assessment to map the students' characteristics. Students' overall writing self-efficacy was at the medium level ( $M=4,7872$ ,  $SD=1,138$ ), between 4 (Maybe I can do it) and 5 (I basically can do it). Students were relatively more efficacious in the use of English writing ( $M=4,936$ ,  $SD=1,199$ ), but less efficacious in grammar and spelling ( $M=4,69$ ,  $SD=1,062$ ). Meanwhile, students' writing self-regulated strategies score was slightly above 2 ( $M=2,162$ ,  $SD=0,716$ ), except behavioral self-regulated learning strategies ( $M=1,998$ ,  $SD=0,763$ ). It indicated that the students frequently use SRL strategies in writing with the most frequently used personal SRL strategies : ( $M=2,278$ ,  $SD=0,69$ ) and the least frequently used behavioral SRL strategies ( $M=1,998$ ,  $SD=0,763$ ).

From this finding, the author suggests that students should be supported to enhance their writing self-efficacy and self-regulated learning strategies by providing more cohesive and coherent writing feedback. By doing so, the student will be more efficacious in terms of ideation, organization, grammar, and spelling in writing their undergraduate thesis. It will also enhance their behavioral self-regulated learning strategies, especially in the domain of self-monitoring strategies.

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