

# Comparing Learners' Writing Self Beliefs: High Achievers versus Low Achievers

**Ali Jahangard**

Sharif University of Technology, Iran  
Jahangard@sharif.edu

**Zeinab Zandieh**

Payame Noor University, Iran  
zandieh@vu.iusb.ac.ir

## Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to compare writing high achievers and low achievers TEFL (teaching English as foreign language) learners' writing self-beliefs. Subjects, based on their officially recorded scores on the writing course, were assigned in two 22-member groups of high and low achievers. The adapted English version of Mills' and Péron's (2008) questionnaire and the Foreign Language Writing Self-Beliefs Instrument which assesses writing self-efficacy in the areas of organization, expression, content and grammar as well as writing self-concept, writing anxiety, perceived value of writing, and self-efficacy for self-regulation in writing were administered to evaluate each group's writing self beliefs. The results of the two-way ANOVAs suggested that high achievers' writing self beliefs were significantly higher than low achievers. Implications for researchers and educators are discussed.

**Keywords:** Writing Self-efficacy, Writing Apprehension, Perceived Value of Writing, Self-efficacy for Self-regulation, Writing Self-concept

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## **1. Introduction**

It is beyond doubt that writing is the most complicated skill for second language learners to master. Translating ideas into readable text is a highly complex process. Second language learners in order to write intelligibly have to simultaneously pay attention to higher level skills of planning and organizing as well as lower level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice, and so on (Richards and Renandya, 2002). Accomplishment of this mission demands a proper level of proficiency and belief in one's own capabilities.

According to Hummann (2005), transition between functioning as student writers and future teachers who will be responsible for writing instruction in their classrooms is problematic. Teaching writing requires high level of writing skills and self beliefs. The beliefs that students develop about their academic capabilities play a crucial role in their academic and career success (Pajares and Valiante, 1999). Unrealistic beliefs lead to underachievement.

Underachievement is commonly defined as an incongruity between potential (or ability) and performance (or achievement) (Reis and McCoach, 2000). Thus, an underachiever can be defined as a person who seems to have the capability of being successful in academic education but is nevertheless struggling. According to Bandura, "If self-efficacy is lacking, people tend to behave ineffectually, even though they know what to do" (1986, p. 425).

Factors which are commonly related to underachievement comprise low academic self-concept (Schunk, 1998; Supplee, 1990; Whitmore, 1980), low self-motivation (Weiner, 1992) and low goal-valuation (McCall, Evahn, and Kratzer, 1992), low self-efficacy (Schunk, 1998). The review of the related literature suggests that underachievers commonly tend to be characterized with attributes of lower academic self-perceptions, inferior self-motivation and subordinate self-regulation and less objective oriented, behavior, and more

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pessimistic attitudes toward the educational system in comparison with high achievers (Reis and McCoach, 2000). Nevertheless, the preponderance of research scrutinizing the common features of underachieving students has exploited qualitative, clinical, or single subject research methodology. A small number of all-encompassing quantitative studies have inspected the validity and truth value of these hypotheses (Reis and McCoach, 2000). According to Pajares and Valiante (1999), "It is due to the potent nature of self-beliefs that academic attainments can differ markedly when students have similar ability. Believing that they are capable serves students well when attempting academic tasks because such confidence helps to sustain effort, increase perseverance and resiliency when obstacles are encountered, foster optimism, and lower feelings of apprehension as academic tasks are engaged. As a result, positive self-beliefs maximize the level of success students ultimately achieve" (p. 390).

The affective factors that have significant functions in engendering overall writing self beliefs comprise the confidence with which students verge on writing tasks, the writing consternation and anxiety that students experience as they attempt writing tasks, how helpful they recognize writing to be, the self-monitoring strategies they employ, and the perceptions of self-worth which are allied with writing (Elbow, 1993; Hull and Rose, 1989).

Considering the fact that the majority of the subjects in this investigation are teachers or prospective teachers, it is remarkable that while teaching effectiveness is decisive to teaching performance, knowing about teachers' self beliefs for fruitfully engaging and dealing with professional and academic tasks that are straightforwardly interconnected to instruction, such as writing is also important. Self confidence in one's own task competence, in addition to actual skill, is of crucial importance in teaching effectiveness (Wilson and Floden,

2003). Hence this preliminary research was devised to compare high achieving and low achieving TEFL (teaching English as foreign language) students' beliefs about their writings.

## **Review of Literature**

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Bandura's social cognitive learning theory. Although many factors are involved in human functioning, Bandura (1997) contends that the principal function of self-efficacy beliefs in human functioning is "people's level of motivation, affective states, and actions which are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively true" (p. 2).

Writing incessantly reflects a depiction of self; people can found their identities via discourse choices (Ivanic and Camps, 2001). Foreign language writers may declare authority and tenure by means of particular writing preferences, (Tang and Suganthi, 1999) and their foreign language identities may be recurrently generated and redefined (Spiliotopoulos and Carey, 2005; Tang and Suganthi, 1999).

Writing self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their writing capabilities. The appraisal of students' self-efficacy attitudes or "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3) can be made by assessing FL students' self-beliefs. Self-efficacy beliefs depend upon what one judges that may be achieved with one's personal skill repertoire. According to Bandura (1986), "what people think, believe, and feel affects how they behave" (p. 26). Thus, essential forces are the beliefs that students engender and postulate as true about themselves in their academic accomplishment.

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Individuals' assessment of their capability in writing, specifically their judgments to write diverse writing tasks and of their control of an assortment of writing skills may be defined as 'writing self-efficacy beliefs' (Pajares and Johnson, 1993).

Although many research studies have investigated teachers' beliefs about teaching writing (Benton, 1999; McLeod, 1995; Moore, 2000), hardly have any of them taken into account teachers' beliefs about their own writing skill. Frank (2003), as an exception, explored how low writing self-efficacy teachers became engaged when writing their own stories. She argued that writing self-efficacy is augmented as teachers discover the "inscape" of their own cultural and personal stories, and when they link up to the knowledge and understanding of other teachers. Likewise, Shell (1989) found relationships between self-efficacy and achievement in both reading and writing, working with pre-service teachers. Similarly, Wachholz and Etheridge (1996) investigated disparities in writing self-efficacy attitudes for high and low writing apprehensive pre-service teachers, and connected previous experiences to writing efficacy in addition to establishing a liaison between writing self-efficacy to writing performance.

'Writing apprehension or anxiety' is generally construed of as negative, anxious feelings that disturb some part of the writing process. The term describes writers who are cognitively capable of the task to be done, but who yet have difficulty with it (McLeod, 1987). A study in this regard is Thoma's (2007) research study which explored the way the rhetorical and situational rudiments of writing instruction have exacerbated teaching anxiety and to what extent composition instructors attempted to nullify or curtail the effects of impending stimuli and symptoms, through engendering matter-of-fact writing self beliefs and attempting to boost their writing self efficiency.

'Perceived value of writing' has also been part of one's writing self beliefs.

Expectancy-value theory assumes that, opinions about confidence and cherished results codetermine the activities individuals will engage and the achievement they will go through (Wigfield and Eccles, 1992). According to Bandura (1986), self-efficacy assessments, to certain extent, determine the value that individuals attach to tasks and activities. For instance, teachers who attach elevated value to writing devote more time and exertion to writing activities. Bandura maintained that the outcomes students anticipate for the most part are contingent on their evaluation of what they can achieve.

'Self-efficacy for self-regulation' which is defined as assessments of capability to employ a multitude of self-planned learning strategies has also been taken into account in accomplishing an inclusive and overall judgment of writing self beliefs (Schunk and Zimmerman, 1994; Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons, 1992; Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons, 1988, 1990). To some extent, this is so due to the fact that success in using self-planned strategies amplifies confidence in academic capabilities (Bandura, 1997). Self-regulation merge and combine metacognition, learning behaviors or strategies, and motivation (e.g., Pintrich, 2000; Schunk and Ertmer, 2000; Winne, 1995).

Furthermore, writing tasks that oblige high levels of cognitive engagement are interconnected to higher levels of intrinsic motivation and self-supervising activities (Miller, Adkins and Hooper, 1993; Perry, 1998).

'Writing self-concept' defined as the assessment of self-value which is associated with one's self-image as a writer, also plays its role in construction of students' writing self beliefs (Pajares and Valiante, 1999). Academic outcomes across domains are widely believed to affect academic self-concept beliefs (Hattie, 1992; Skaalvik, 1997). High teacher efficacy was considered to be related to a variety of mental constructs one of which was the self concept of teachers (Handley and Thomson, 1990). Also, those teachers with less success

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in their works were judged to have lower degrees of self concept (Mundel-Atherstone, 1981).

### **3. Research Questions**

In light of the review of literature pertained to the writing self-beliefs construct, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. Is there any significant difference between high achievers and low achievers writing self-efficacy in the areas of organization, grammar, content, and expression?
2. Is there any significant difference between high achievers and low achievers writing self-beliefs in the areas of writing self-concept, writing anxiety, self-efficacy for self-regulation in writing and, perceived value in writing?

### **4. Method**

Because EFL learners have different beliefs about their writing abilities, the purpose of this study was therefore to investigate whether the students who score higher in academic writing courses (high achievers) have different writing self beliefs from those who score lower (low achievers). Since writing self beliefs construct as defined by Mills and Péron (2008) has a multifaceted nature which defies a comprehensive evaluation of subjects' writing self beliefs, this study attempted to compare those two groups in terms of writing self-efficacy, writing anxiety, perceived value of writing, writing self-concept, and self-efficacy for self-regulation in writing. The operational definition of the writing self-beliefs construct is discussed in the instrumentation section.

#### 4.1. Subjects and Setting

Subjects consisted of 44 postgraduate TEFL students in Payame Noor University in Iran. To take high achievers or low achievers variable out of the realm of theory and plant it squarely in concrete reality, pass and fail scores in Advance Writing course were considered. It is worth mentioning that the mean of the population from among which the subjects were selected was about 13 with a standard deviation index of 1.5, therefore, setting the band-score of (Mean  $\pm$  1-3SD) to group learners into high and low achievers looked reasonable. Each group consisted of 22 subjects whose characteristics are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Characteristics of the Subjects (n=44)**

<b>Gender</b>	
Female	36 (81.81%)
Male	8 (18.18%)
<b>University class</b>	
Year 1	23 (52.27%)
Year 2	17 (38.63%)
Year 3	4 (9.09%)
<b>Scores</b>	
Failed (8-12)	22 (50%)
Passed (14- 18)	22 (50%)
Mean	13
Standard Deviation	1.5
<b>Previous Academic Major</b>	
Related	39 (88.63%)
Unrelated	5 (11.36%)



## **4.2. Instrumentation**

An adapted version of the Foreign Language Writing Self-Beliefs Instrument which measures writing self-efficacy, writing self-concept, writing anxiety, perceived value of writing, and self-efficacy for self-regulation in writing of Mills and Péron (2008) was employed in this study (See Appendix A).

To assess the subjects' writing self-beliefs, one survey with multiple components was administered to measure students' English writing self-efficacy, writing anxiety in English, writing self-concept in English, self-efficacy for self-regulation in English writing and perceived value of writing in English.

Subjects responded to all instruments on a 10-point scale from 0 (not sure at all) to 100 (completely sure) like the conventional Likert scale format.

Pajares, Hartley, and Valiante (2001) came to the conclusion that a writing self-efficacy scale having a 0 to 100 response format was more reliable in terms of psychometric properties than one which had a traditional Likert format.

'Writing self-efficacy in English' items required subjects to appraise how confident they were in their ability to write in English. The instrument employed in the study was the adapted form of Mills, Pajares, and Herron's (2006) foreign language self-efficacy scale in reading and listening. To ensure of the face validity of the scale, it was reviewed by two experts whose fields of interests were close to academic self-efficacy research. The scale included 25 items which aimed at tapping the students' writing self-efficacy in the areas of expression (8 items), grammar (6 items), organization (4 items), and content (7 items). Questions on the self-efficacy instrument asked students, "how sure are you that you can perform each of the English writing skills below?"

The results obtained from the English writing self-efficacy instrument were analyzed by the investigators. The psychometric properties of the instrument were examined for internal consistency. A similar instrument used by Mills,

Pajares, and Herron (2006) had shown a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .97 and .95 respectively for a similar instrument which measured reading and listening self-efficacy. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of Mills' and Péron's (2008) French writing self-efficacy turned out to be .97. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the present study was .91 for overall self efficiency, .90 for expression, .79 for grammar, .84 for organization, and .88 for content.

'Writing anxiety in English' was assessed by an adapted form of Betz's (1978) Mathematics Anxiety Scale (MAS). Each of the anxiety items was modified to fit the writing domain, which totaled to 9 items. An example writing anxiety question in English was "writing in English makes me feel uneasy and confused." Students answered to questions about feelings of tension and apprehension connected with writing in English. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the present study was .90.

A modified form of Marsh's (1990) Academic Self Description Questionnaire (ASDQ-1) was employed to measure 'Writing self-concept in English'. The writing self-concept in English instrument was composed of 7 items as well as broad-viewed self-perceptions of English writing ability. A sample item which tapped English writing self-concept is "Compared to others in my class I am a good English writer." The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the writing self-concept in English instrument for the present study was calculated to be .91.

One's perceived competence in utilizing the apposite strategies to map, screen, and complete a writing task (Bandura, 1997), or 'Self-efficacy for self-regulation in English writing', was measured by a modified subscale from Bandura's (1995) Children's Multidimensional Self-Efficacy Scales. To measure the learners' perceptions of ability in employing different self-regulated learning strategies, 7 of the 11 original items were utilized in the

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present study (example question: "How well can you finish your English compositions on time?") Learners provided answers to questions that self-appraise their competence to complete and focus on English writing assignments. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the instrument which was employed in the present study was .88.

'Perceived value of English writing' was assessed by a modified scale from Eccles' (1984) Student Attitude Questionnaire and estimated learners' interest, satisfaction, and perceived value of writing in English. To assess the learners' perceptions of the value of writing in English 11 items were utilized. "I enjoy learning about different English writing techniques" is a sample item from among the ones which was employed to estimate perceived value of writing in English. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the perceived value of writing in English instrument in the present study was .87.

#### **4.4. Procedure**

In spring of 2009, the survey evaluating the students' writing self-beliefs was administered to TEFL students of Payame Noor University. Administering of the survey on writing self-beliefs took place during tutorial period. The instructors were asked to leave the classes during the administration of the tests to promote subjects' sincerity and candor in answering the attitudinal questions. The investigators read aloud the written instructions for each subscale and encouraged the subjects to ask questions if they did not understand them.

Teaching English as foreign language learners were divided to high achievers and low achievers based on their performance on their Advance Writing course in 0 to 20 interval scale. The subjects who failed Advance Writing course (below 12) were assigned to the low achievers group and

subjects who passed this course with acceptable scores (above 14) were assigned to high achievers group. In this study writing scores ranged from 8 to 18. To achieve a comprehensive judgment of students' overall writing ability, the scores in this course were the average of three in-class compositions and three homework compositions (8 points) plus final examination compositions (12 point). The evaluation criteria were based on the TOEFL writing assessment checklist. See appendix B for samples of class and exam composition topics.

#### **4.5. Data Analyses**

To determine the difference of the writing self-beliefs of high and low achieving writers studying teaching English as foreign language, two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. In this two way analysis design, subjects' writing self-beliefs were assessed on two instances, whether they were high achievers or low achievers. The purpose was to evaluate whether there was significant difference between the mean writing self-beliefs scores of high achievers and low achievers. A two-way ANOVA was conducted with high and low achieving groups as independent variable. The analysis included the subcomponents of writing self-efficacy (i.e., writing self-efficacy for grammar, content, expression, and organization) as second independent variable. Each of the four scales' had two levels (high achievers and low achievers).

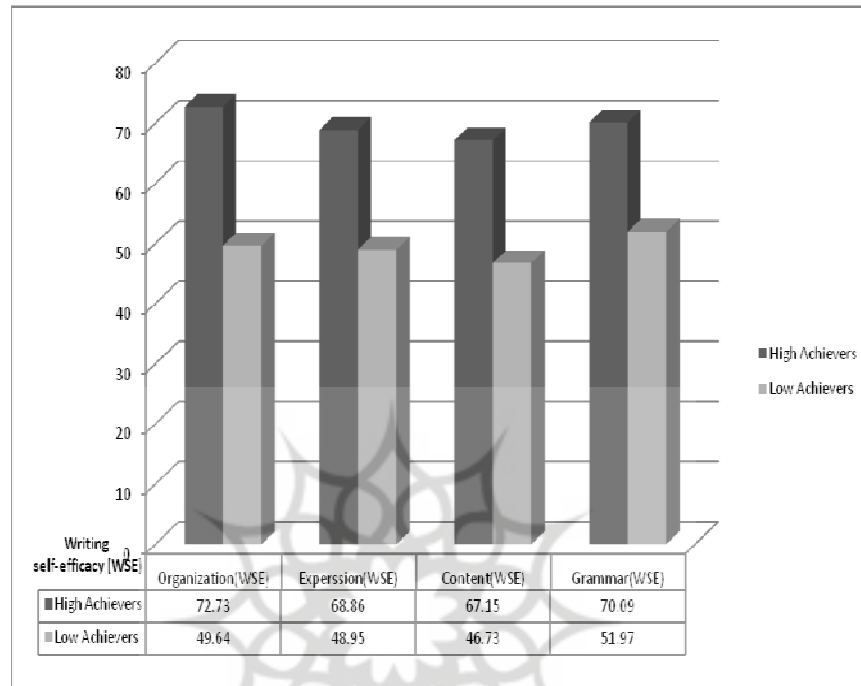
A second two-way ANOVA was also conducted with two groups as independent variable. The analysis included writing anxiety, perceived value of writing, writing self-concept, and self-efficacy for self-regulation. Each of the four scales had two levels (high achievers and low achievers).

## **5. Results**

### **5.1. Research Question1**

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there was any difference between high and low achievement subjects in writing course and writing self-efficacy beliefs (See Table 2). The basic assumptions for using two-way ANOVA were met. The first independent variable was achievement in Advance Writing course and included two levels (high achievers and low achievers). The second independent variable included four levels, the subcomponents of writing self-efficacy in content, grammar, organization, and expression.

The results of the two-way ANOVA indicated a significant difference between the high and low achievement groups in the writing self-efficacy variables, Critical Values for the Tukey HSD (2)(0.01) = 4.8,  $F(1) = 122.9$ ,  $p < .0001$ . Means and standard deviations are shown in Table 2. The results indicated that the writing self-efficacy scores of the high achievers were significantly greater than writing self-efficacy scores of the low achievers. These results suggested that the high achieving writers' beliefs in their ability to effectively use grammar, communicate content, write with appropriate choice and variety of vocabulary and sentence structures, and write in an organized fashion were significantly higher than the low achievers. There were no significant differences between subcomponents of writing self efficiency.



**Figure 1. Writing Self-Efficacy Beliefs of high and low achievers in Advance writing course**

**Table 2. Writing Self-Efficacy Beliefs of high and low achievers in Advance Writing course**

Scale	High Achievers Mean (SD)	Low Achievers Mean (SD)	F	df	P value
WSE Organization	72.73 (10.52)	49.64 (14.35)	2 Rows 122.9	1.44	<.0001
WSE Expression	68.86 (10.53)	48.95 (10.07)	4 Columns 1.19	3.44	0.3152
WSE Content	67.15 (12.64)	46.73 (13.26)	8 (r x c) 0.31	3.44	0.8181
WSE Grammar	70.09 (14.06)	51.97 (11.32)			

Note: Means for all writing self-efficacy variables are on a 10-point Likert type scale (ranging from 0 to 100).

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Data for the writing self-efficacy subscale measures was available for 44 subjects. Critical Values for the Tukey HSD (0.5) and (0.1) for high and low achievement variable were 3.63 and 4.8. Critical Values for the Tukey HSD (0.5) and (0.1) for writing self-efficacy in content, grammar, organization, and expression were 6.75 and 8.27 and for each category (r x c numbers 8) were respectively 11.31 and 13.27.

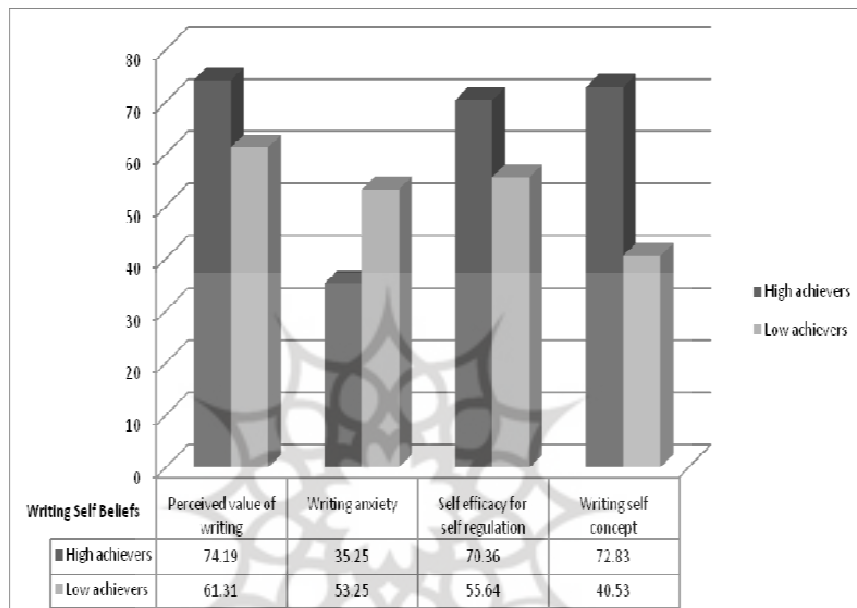
## **5.2. Research Question 2**

To answer the research question of whether there was a difference in writing self beliefs of high achievers and low achievers in Advance Writing course, a two-way ANOVA was conducted (See Table 3). Achievement was an independent variable included two levels (high and low). Writing self-belief was another independent variable which included four levels, overall writing self-concept, writing anxiety, self-efficacy for self-regulation in writing, and perceived value of writing. The results of the two-way ANOVA indicated a significant difference between the high and low achievers' writing self beliefs, Tukey HSD (2) (0.1) = 5.81, F (1) = 22.14,  $p < .0001$ . Means and standard deviations are shown in Table 2.

The results revealed significant difference between subcomponents of writing self beliefs, overall writing self-concept, writing anxiety, self-efficacy for self-regulation in writing, and perceived value of writing, Tukey HSD (4) (0.01) = 9.97, F (3) = 20.91,  $p < .0001$ .

The results also indicated significant difference between each category of writing self belief construct for high and low achievers, (high achievers overall writing self-concept, high achievers writing anxiety, high achievers self-efficacy for self-regulation in writing, high achievers perceived value of writing and also low achievers overall writing self-concept, low achievers writing anxiety, low

achievers self-efficacy for self-regulation in writing, low achievers perceived value of writing), Tukey HSD (8) (0.01) = 16.01,  $F(3) = 22.04$ ,  $p < .0001$ .



**Figure 2. Writing Self Beliefs of high and low achievers in Advance Writing course**

**Table 3. Writing Self Beliefs of High and Low Achievers in Advance Writing Course**

Scale	High Achievers Mean (SD)	Low Achievers Mean (SD)	F	df	P value
perceived value of writing	74.19 ( 13.66)	61.31 ( 15,58)	2 rows 22.14	1	<.0001
writing anxiety	35.25 ( 16.94)	53.25 ( 11.92)	4 columns 20.91	3	<.0001
self-efficacy for self-regulation in writing	70.36 ( 15.8)	55.64 ( 14.8)	Rows x columns 22.04		<.0001
writing self-concept	72.83 (13.2)	40.53 ( 16.3)			

Note: Means for all writing beliefs variables are on a 10-point Likert type scale (ranging from 0 to 100).



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Data for the writing self-beliefs subscale measures was available for 44 subjects. The Critical Values for the Tukey HSD at (0.5) and (0.1) for high and low achievers rows were 4.39 and 5.81. The Critical Values for the Tukey HSD at (0.5) and (0.1) for subcomponents of writing self beliefs, overall writing self-concept, writing anxiety, self-efficacy for self-regulation in writing, and perceived value of writing were 8.17 and 9.97 and for each category (r x c numbers 8) were respectively 13.69 and 16.01.

## **6. Discussion and Conclusion**

The major objective of this study was to determine whether writing self beliefs of high and low achievers were different. The results suggest that there is a significant difference between high and low achievers writing self beliefs construct (or global writing self belief), measured in areas of writing self efficiency, writing self-concept, writing anxiety, self-efficacy for self-regulation in writing, and perceived value in writing. These findings support the tenets of social cognitive theory regarding the influence of academic self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997), and confirm the previous findings (e.g., Pajares et al., in press; Pajares and Valiante, 1997; Shell et al., 1989, 1995), and extend the generalizability domain of these findings to EFL learners as well.

Enhancing the learners' self-efficacy beliefs might positively affect their writing capabilities, which in turn might lead to more efficiency in the process of second language learning and academic achievement as well.

In order to upgrade writing self beliefs of the learners researchers have emphasized on the creation of authentic writing milieus and learning activities that interest and appeal to students (Bruning and Horn, 2000; Campbell, 1998; Walker, 2003), to encourage learners to read each other's writing (Pajares, 2003), to give learners freedom of choice and tenure opportunities (Spaulding,

1995; Walker, 2003), to encourage collaborative writing and discussions (Walker, 2003), to provide chances for learners to write unswervingly in different styles (McConochie, 2000; Wachholz and Etheridge, 1996), and to allow learners to invigilate and ponder upon their evolvement (Collins and Bissell, 2002).

Although Klassen (2002) analyzed 16 research studies which examined the writing self-efficacy beliefs of 6th to 10th grade students and found that low achievers over-estimate their ability to complete specific writing tasks, the results of this study suggest that students at higher level education have realistic beliefs about their own abilities.

However, it is worthy of notice to emphasize that any implications and applications of the findings of the study should be interpreted taking into account the following limitations and the specific context of this study. Efficacy beliefs are context-specific self-appraisals of the potential to successfully do a task. They are acquired through mastery experiences, observation of others, social/verbal persuasion, and interpretations of physiological and emotional states (Bandura, 1995). This study was conducted in a distance education university in Iran. This particular setting imposed some unique characteristics to the study. Like many distance and open educational programs students could choose to self-study materials and not to participate in tutorial sessions.

Unfortunately, the openness of the university made access to some subjects impossible and limited the sample. As a matter of fact, most of the subjects were female and therefore could not be considered an adequately representative sample of the target population; it was impractical to balance sex to control for its possible effects.

Due to the broad-spectrum apathy of the subjects to answering any kind of questionnaire, almost half of the students refused to answer the questionnaires

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and were inevitably eliminated from the study. To make up for this limitation, the study defined wider ranges of scores in the operational definition of the high or low achievers variables.

Finally, the present study was a step toward understanding learners' beliefs about their writing competence and their actual performance in academic contexts. Further research is needed to address how it is that writing beliefs impact learning the writing skill. Moreover, further research is needed to investigate what happens if the self beliefs perceptions of the learners are deliberately augmented; will the manipulation of the self beliefs result in better performance of the subjects in writing tasks? Or is it a one-way route from writing ability to the perceptions of self efficacy?

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## Appendix A

### *Writing Self Belief Questionnaire*

#### Bio-data Information

Gender	University class		Admission	Your Advance Writing score(s)
Female	Year 1		PNU Entrance Examination	
Male	Year 2	Year 3	National University Examination	
Previous Academic Major(s)				

**Directions:** Please use the following scale to answer the following statements. Circle the number that best describes **how sure you are that you can** perform each of the English writing tasks or skills below.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
NO		20%		40%		60%		80%		100%
Chance		Certain		Certain		Certain		Certain		Certain

1	Write in several paragraphs in length on familiar topics	0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
2	Write with a clear sense of beginning and closure	0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

3	Vary sentence lengths and patterns when writing in English	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
4	Express yourself with sufficient and appropriate vocabulary when writing in English	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
5	Make few errors in spelling when writing in English	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
6	Write in English in a way that does not resemble literal translation from your native language	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
7	Write in English about a variety of topics with significant precision and detail	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
8	Describe personal experiences fully when writing in English	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
9	Write about topics related to your particular interests and opinions in English	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
10	Write in English with fluency and ease of expression	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
11	Make few grammatical errors when writing in English	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
12	Make few vocabulary errors when writing in English	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
13	Write in English with a variety and complexity of structures	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100

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14	Present arguments or points of view accurately and effectively when writing in English	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
15	Write in English with an underlying logical organization	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
16	Make few verb tense errors when writing in English	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
17	Write in English being sensitive to differences in formal and informal style	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
18	Write in English with a good control of a full range of grammatical structures	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
19	Write in English using a wide range of vocabulary	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
20	Write a composition in English that is relevant and appropriate to the assignment	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
21	Write in English using culturally appropriate content	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
22	Make few conjugation errors when writing in English	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
23	Accurately and effectively use transitions when writing in English	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
24	Make few agreement errors when writing in English	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100

25	Write in English including appropriate introductions and conclusions	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
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**Directions:** Please use the following scale to respond to the following statements. Circle the number that best describes how true each statement is for you.

		0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
		Not True		20% True		40% True		60% True		80% True		100% True
1	Compared to others in my class I am a good English writer.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
2	Writing English compositions does not scare me.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
3	I am afraid of doing English writing assignments when I know they will be graded.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
4	Learning about writing in English is important to me.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
5	It is important to me to get good grades on English writing assignments.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
6	I get good grades on English writing assignments	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
7	I am usually at ease when writing in English.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100

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8	I get a sinking feeling when I think of trying to complete a difficult writing assignment.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
9	Learning about writing in English is interesting for me.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
10	English writing assignments are easy for me.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
11	My mind goes blank and I am unable to think clearly when writing a English composition	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
12	I have usually been at ease writing in English in class.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
13	I look forward to English writing assignments.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
14	I like to do writing activities in English class.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
15	I have always done well on English writing assignments.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
16	Writing in English makes me feel uneasy and confused.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
17	I get really uptight while taking English exams with writing activities.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100

18	Writing in English is a lot of fun.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
19	I enjoy learning about different writing techniques.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
20	I am not a good English writer.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
21	I almost never get uptight while taking English exams with writing sections.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
22	I like completing English writing assignments.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
23	Learning how to become a better English writer is easy for me.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
24	Just thinking about trying to write an English composition makes me nervous.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
25	Learning about writing in English is an enjoyable experience.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
26	Learning about English writing techniques is boring.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
27	I look forward to classes that will help me with my writing.	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100

*Comparing Learners' Writing Self Beliefs...*

**Directions:** Read each question below very carefully and use the following scale to answer as honestly as you can. Remember that *you can circle any number from 0 to 100.*

		0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
		Not well at all		Not well		Somewhat		Well		Very well		
1	Can you finish your English writing assignments on time?	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
2	Can you do your English writing assignments when there are other interesting things to do?	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
3	Can you concentrate when completing your English writing assignments?	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
4	Can you arrange a place at home to do your English writing assignments where you won't get distracted?	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
5	Can you motivate yourself to do your English writing assignments?	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100

6	Can you plan ahead to complete your English writing assignments?	0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
7	Can you organize your English writing assignments so that you will complete them on time?	0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

## Appendix B

### *Sample Writing Topics from the Computer-Based TOEFL Tests*

People attend college or university for many different reasons (for example, new experiences, career preparation, and increased knowledge). Why do **you** think people attend college or university? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Parents are the best teachers. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Nowadays, food has become easier to prepare. Has this change improved the way people live? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

It has been said, "Not everything that is learned is contained in books." Compare and contrast knowledge gained from experience with knowledge gained from books. In your opinion, which source is more important? Why?

A company has announced that it wishes to build a large factory near your community. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this new influence on your community. Do you support or oppose the factory? Explain your position.

If you could change one important thing about your hometown, what would you change? Use reasons and specific examples to support your answer.



### *Comparing Learners' Writing Self Beliefs...*

How do movies or television influence people's behavior? Use reasons and specific examples to support your answer. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Television has destroyed communication among friends and family. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Some people prefer to live in a small town. Others prefer to live in a big city. Which place would you prefer to live in? Use specific reasons and details to support your answer. "When people succeed, it is because of hard work. Luck has nothing to do with success." Do you agree or disagree with the quotation above? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your position.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Universities should give the same amount of money to their students' sports activities as they give to their university libraries. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Many people visit museums when they travel to new places. Why do you think people visit museums? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Some people prefer to eat at food stands or restaurants. Other people prefer to prepare and eat food at home. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Some people believe that university students should be required to attend classes. Others believe that going to classes should be optional for students. Which point of view do you agree with? Use specific reasons and details to explain your answer.

Neighbors are the people who live near us. In your opinion, what are the qualities of a good neighbor? Use specific details and examples in your answer.

It has recently been announced that a new restaurant may be built in your neighborhood. Do you support or oppose this plan? Why? Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.

Some people think that they can learn better by themselves than with a teacher.

Others think that it is always better to have a teacher. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons to develop your essay.

What are some important qualities of a good supervisor (boss)? Use specific details and examples to explain why these qualities are important.

Should governments spend more money on improving roads and highways, or should governments spend more money on improving public transportation (buses, trains, subways)? Why? Use specific reasons and details to develop your essay.

It is better for children to grow up in the countryside than in a big city. Do you agree or disagree? Use specific reasons and examples to develop your essay.

In general, people are living longer now. Discuss the causes of this phenomenon. Use specific reasons and details to develop your essay.

We all work or will work in our jobs with many different kinds of people. In your opinion, what are some important characteristics of a co-worker (someone you work closely with)? Use reasons and specific examples to explain why these characteristics are important.

In some countries, teenagers have jobs while they are still students. Do you think this is a good idea? Support your opinion by using specific reasons and details.

A person you know is planning to move to your town or city. What do you think this person would like and dislike about living in your town or city? Why? Use specific reasons and details to develop your essay.

It has recently been announced that a large shopping center may be built in your neighborhood. Do you support or oppose this plan? Why? Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.

It has recently been announced that a new movie theater may be built in your neighborhood. Do you support or oppose this plan? Why? Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.