


## Exploring the relationship between L2 writing self-efficacy and language proficiency level

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### Abstract

This study aims to explore if EFL learners' self-efficacy perceptions of their L2 writing performance vary by proficiency level. As the research design, the quantitative method was employed and a questionnaire measuring EFL learners' L2 writing self-efficacy on a Likert scale was used as the data collection instrument. The participants were EFL students (n=47) enrolled in the preparatory program of an English-medium instruction state university in Türkiye. Data analysis showed that there was a positive correlation between the participants' proficiency level and their perceptions of L2 writing self-efficacy. The findings indicate that EFL students develop a more positive attitude towards L2 writing as they progress in language mastery and the preparatory programs appear to be feeding into the appearance of this positive perception. Nevertheless, some points among which idea production represents the biggest concern continue to be an issue deserving much attention across the levels. This finding suggests that L2 writing training should be enhanced with strategies as well as activities that can assist students in producing ideas on given topics.

### Keywords

self-efficacy,  
L2 writing,  
EFL learners

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### Introduction

Approaches to language teaching practice has gone through significant changes as a result of the pursuit of providing learners with a better language training in line with the requirements of modern times. As general approaches have changed, the treatment given to individual skills has directly taken new shapes. Similar to other language skills, the addressing of L2 writing has also gone through important shifts on a relatively long time scale spanning from grammar translation method (GTM) to communicative language teaching (CLT). While in GTM, L2 writing was taught as a highly mechanical task in

which learners were expected to copy from the reading texts (Siefert, 2013), CLT-based approaches take L2 writing as a productive process in which learners fulfill different functions. In CLT, L2 writing is treated as a double-faceted concept. As a product, L2 writing is the medium for learners to display their knowledge and individual stance on given issues. As a process of learning, other language skills including grammar, vocabulary and reading contribute to its development (Silva & Brice, 2004). This way, L2 writing functions as a factor contributing to L2 learning.

Three approaches that shape the study of L2 writing are: “learning to write, writing to learn content or language” (Ortega, 2011, p. 238). Though all three aspects arise from important motivations, it is safe to claim that the importance given to each aspect depends on the context. The orientation relevant to second language learning is thought to be writing to learn because the development of writing skills has a big potential for scaffolding L2 learning (Ortega, 2011; Manchón & Larios, 2008). Yet, all of these approaches can be treated as mutually feeding processes that take place in many writing tasks as L2 learners need to go through different stages even while writing a paragraph. According to Hyland (2003), L2 learners need to pay attention to structures in their written products, which requires the appropriate use of grammar and vocabulary; they need to consider the target genre’s rhetorical features and finally, they need to engage in L2 writing as a means of self-discovery as they are encouraged to express their own evaluations of a given topic. Given that L2 writing is such a complex phenomenon, it is not surprising to find many studies reporting how difficult it is for L2 learners from different parts of the world, i.e. for Arab EFL learners (Al-Gharabally, 2015; Qasem & Zayid, 2010; Shukri, 2014), for Chinese EFL learners (Bian & Wang, 2016; Dipolog & Ubanan, 2016; Guo & Huang, 2020), and for Turkish EFL learners (Altınmakas & Bayyurt, 2019; Ekmekçi, 2018; Kirmizi & Kirmizi, 2015).

Being such an important part of EFL learning, L2 writing has been researched from a variety of perspectives, which can be roughly categorized as cognitive and psychological dimensions. Cognitive factors include writing strategies (Bailey, 2019; Lu, 2010); working memory capacity (Lu, 2010; Zabihi, 2018); language aptitude (Kormos, 2012; Kormos & Trebits, 2012); age-related differences (Celaya & Naves, 2009). Psychological factors studied concerning L2 writing are not that much varied and the prominent ones are L2 writing anxiety (Kim & Pae, 2021; Kirmizi & Kirmizi, 2015; Zabihi, Mousavi, & Salehian, 2020); L2 writing motivation (Fathi, Ahmadinejad,

Yousofi, 2019; Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021); and finally self-efficacy in L2 writing (Golparvar & Khafi, 2021; Kirmizi & Kirmizi, 2015), which is also the focus of this study. Among the various approaches that investigate the challenging nature of L2 writing, employing a psycho-social view is particularly valuable in that psycho-social factors including self-efficacy and learners' feelings act as determinants of the amount of effort to be put by L2 learners in their L2 writing development (Han & Hiver, 2018). In this study, which relies on the acknowledgment of L2 writing as a means and aim of L2 learning, the context is an English-medium-instruction Turkish state university's English as a foreign language (EFL) preparatory program. The most salient motive of preparatory school students to learn English arises from the fact that English functions as the gateway for them to be eligible for studying their majors. Additionally, when they start their majors, they are required to submit their tasks in English. As such, before they rise to the stage of writing to learn the content in their departments, they need to write to learn the language in the preparatory program. Considering that writing is such an important means and goal of L2 learning for students in the context of this study and other EFL preparatory programs in Türkiye, it is important to investigate their self-efficacy as a factor impacting L2 writing as it offers insights into the learning and teaching of a successful second language learning process. Despite being such an important factor, the self-efficacy concept in relation to L2 writing of Turkish EFL learners, particularly for those enrolled in an EFL preparatory program, is still an under-researched area with few existing studies (Bektaş-Çetinkaya, 2020; Erkan & Saban, 2011; Öztürk & Saydam, 2014). This study aims to contribute to the existing literature by offering some insights into the L2 writing self-efficacy of Turkish EFL learners.

### *Self-efficacy in L2 Writing*

During the longitudinal process of academic learning, learners develop a sense of agency, which refers to their self-image of their academic competencies (Zimmerman, 1995). Self-efficacy is treated as a factor that is highly decisive in learners' formation of an academic self-image (Graham, 2007). Self-efficacy is defined as "believes in one's capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to manage

prospective situations'' (Bandura, 1995, p. 2). This set of beliefs that learners have in relation to their L2 learning experience is highly decisive in how much they invest in their learning process (Mathews, 2010). Self-efficacy is of crucial importance in determining various details including L2 learners' goal setting, strategy choices, their commitment to tasks and ultimate task performance (Schunk, 2003). Being so pivotal to learners' L2 achievement, self-efficacy has been researched in relation to different language skills including reading (McLean & Poulshcok, 2018; Murad Sani & Zain, 2011), vocabulary (Mizumoto, 2013; Onoda, 2011), speaking (Bárkányi, 2021; Kitikanan & Sasimonton, 2017), and listening (Graham, 2010). Bandura (1995) highlights self-efficacy to be a changeable mechanism affected by four main factors, which are one's personal record of achievements and failures, their observations about others' success, the amount of encouragement given by others, and one's emotional state. Considering this highly unstable nature of perceived self-efficacy, it is important to first identify what level of self-efficacy language learners hold in relation to specific language skills. As Wyatt (2021) suggests, identification of L2 learners' self-efficacy is useful for encouraging language teachers to adequately address their learner's emotional approaches to L2 learning process.

Self-efficacy has been also researched with regard to L2 writing development of EFL learners. A very recent study confirming self-efficacy to be a critical factor in L2 writing achievement was conducted by Golparvar and Khafi (2021). In their study, the researchers examined the relationship between L2 self-efficacy and summary writing performance of a group of EFL learners (n= 192). The results showed that the students' high self-efficacy was a predictor of their L2 summary-writing success. In the Turkish context, Kirmizi and Kirmizi (2015) explored Turkish EFL learners' L2 writing self-efficacy perceptions along with their L2 writing anxiety. All the participants (n=172) were from the different grades of the same English-major department. The results showed that the participants reported having medium-level self-efficacy regardless of their grades. Similar to what previously described studies reported, as the self-efficacy level increased, the participants' anxiety level decreased. Along with these studies in which self-efficacy was found to be a predictive factor of L2 writing achievement, some other studies investigated the factors that influence the construct of L2 writing self-efficacy.

Pajares (2003) analyzed social factors related to self-efficacy in L2 writing and pointed at teachers' support, gender, and students' self-image, which can be influenced even by being a member of a minority group in the society. Woodrow (2011) conducted a study that measured the relationship between L2 writing task achievement and self-efficacy with Chinese EFL college students (n= 738). The results that also confirmed the predictive value of self-efficacy on L2 writing achievement showed that students' self-efficacy was shaped by three factors: how much students believed in their own chance of success, the amount of individual study time and parental pressure. While there was a positive correlation between the first two factors and self-efficacy, parental pressure negatively affected self-efficacy.

As a decisive factor, self-efficacy in L2 writing has been also researched in Turkish context. Among the few existing studies, Erkan & Saban (2011) questioned the relationship between writing apprehension, writing self-efficacy and attitudes of Turkish EFL learners (n= 188) enrolled in a state university's preparatory program. Among the findings, they highlighted the negative correlation between writing apprehension level and writing self-efficacy level of their participants in line with the existing research. Despite being a valuable study in the field, Erkan & Saban (2011) did not take proficiency level as a variable by leaving it for future studies. One of the two studies that investigated the relationship between language proficiency level and self-efficacy in L2 writing was conducted by Bektaş-Çetinkaya (2020) in Turkish EFL preparatory program context. The researcher reported a moderate-level writing self-efficacy and found that proficiency level of the participants was not a predictor of their L2 writing self-efficacy. Considering that the population range was limited to A1 and B1 students in Bektaş-Çetinkaya's (2020) study, a need for collecting data from other proficiency levels emerges. One other study with a similar methodological orientation was conducted by Ozturk and Saydam (2014). The researchers explored the relationship between L2 writing self-efficacy and L2 writing anxiety of EFL learners (n=240) from 8 different Turkish universities. Yet, the proficiency level was limited to A1, A2 and B1 learners. Similar to Bektaş-Çetinkaya's (2020) study, they found a moderate level of self-efficacy across their participants, for whom the level of linguistic knowledge was found to be the most significant indicator of L2 writing self-efficacy. As the discussion in this section suggests, the investigation of Turkish EFL learners' self-efficacy in L2

writing needs to be widened with more studies that can build on the limited range of existing studies. It is deducible from these studies that as with any other psychological factor, self-efficacy is not a stable concept and may augment or deteriorate depending on various factors throughout the learning experience (Piniel & Csizer, 2015). This study was conducted to explore one of these factors, which is language proficiency as it is highly important in the context of the study, where the content of English education is framed around learners' proficiency levels. Given the scarcity of studies on L2 writing self-efficacy of preparatory program students in the Turkish context, this study aims to expand the inquiry between proficiency level and self-efficacy by getting data from three proficiency levels spanning from A2 to B1+. It aims to answer the following research question:

- Is there a significant relationship between language proficiency and L2 self-efficacy level of Turkish EFL learners?

## **Methodology**

### ***Research Design***

This study draws on a quantitative analysis in which the data was gathered via a 5-point-Likert scale questionnaire. Adopting a quantitative approach was thought appropriate for this study in which the proficiency level of the respondents was taken as the main variable. As Rahman (2017) suggests, to seek if there are patterns in relation to any specific social behaviour, amounting data with quantitative methods is particularly useful. A particular drive for conducting this study with a quantitative method was from Bandura's (2005) emphasis on measuring perceived self-efficacy with domain-specific instruments. Also relying on Bektaş-Çetinkaya's (2020) observation that the instruments tailored to measure L2 learners' perceived self-efficacy into writing is limited, this study was designed to use an l2 writing self-efficacy scale developed by Yavuz-Erkan (2004, as cited in Erkan & Saban, 2011), which was developed by considering the experiences of Turkish EFL learners enrolled in preparatory programs.

### ***Participants***

The data was gathered from 47 participants. They were EFL students enrolled in the preparatory program of a Turkish state university where medium of instruction was English. Learners who fail to prove required language proficiency, which is B2 in an in-

house proficiency exam, take this compulsory preparatory program at a pre-faculty level. The participants, who are enrolled in social science departments, need L2 writing as a skill not only to achieve the writing part of the proficiency exam but also to write fully developed essays in the exams that they take at their departments where they are also offered compulsory Academic Writing courses.

The participants in this study were reached by the purposive sampling method. They were in the classes the researchers were teaching, which made the data collection easy. They were from three different proficiency levels, namely from pre-intermediate (n=14), intermediate (n= 16) and upper-intermediate (n=17). These students' proficiency levels were determined depending on their scores from an in-house placement test. They were all offered a content that was designed to build on the previous level as the students progressed across the proficiency levels. Before the data was collected, the ethical committee report issued by Social Sciences University of Ankara was taken (Report No: 2022-40286). All the students were given a consent form and they were informed about the aim of the research and the content of the questionnaire.

### *Data Collection Instrument*

The self-efficacy in L2 writing questionnaire given to the students was adopted from Yavuz-Erkan (2004, as cited in Erkan & Saban, 2011), who developed that questionnaire as a part of her doctoral thesis. This questionnaire was deemed to be suitable and have content validity for this study as it was originally designed for Turkish EFL learners and validated by relying on the data from this group. Thus, it is taken to be a valid instrument for our research-group as well. The questionnaire consisted of 28 items in total. For this study, the instrument was administered in Turkish so as to avoid language proficiency to be a barrier for learners to comprehend the items. One of the researchers translated the English version of the questionnaire into Turkish. Then, the other researcher translated it into English and inconsistencies were detected in the back-translation process.

### *Data Collection Procedure and Analysis*

The questionnaire was administered in online format through the learning management system of the institution. The participants were asked to respond to the questionnaire by logging into this system within the class time. It took nearly 15 minutes to complete, during which the researchers encouraged learners to ask for clarification on any item that was not clear to them. For the data analysis, SPSS 16 was employed. Cronbach alpha coefficient was found to be .842 for the questionnaire, which proved its reliability as an instrument to be used for this study. Because the research sample was limited in number, the normal distribution feature was not sought in the data and nonparametric test of Kruskal-Wallis was run to see if the students from three proficiency levels differed in terms of their L2 writing self-efficacy.

### **Results**

The scores of the participants were treated differently in order to understand if the participants' self-efficacy perceptions differed significantly in line with their proficiency level. The initial analysis was level based and made to see how the students from each level scored on individual items. This analysis allowed a grouping of the items. The mean scores for each item were calculated and ranked from the highest to the lowest ones. Table 1 shows the ranking of items for the participants from each group.

**Table 1.** Grouping of items as low, medium, or high-scored across the proficiency levels

Level	Low-Scored Items	Medium-Scored Items	High-Scored Items
Pre-intermediate	3,4,8,9,11,12,13,15,16,18, 19,23,24,25,26,28	1-2-5-6-7-10-14-17-20- 21-22-27	-
Intermediate	28	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11- 12-13-14-15-16-17-18- 19-20-21-22-23-24-26-27	25
Upper-intermediate	-	2-3-5-6-7-8-10-11-13-14- 21-22-25-27	1-4-9-12-15-16-17- 18-19-20-23-24-26- 28



For being able to comment on the scores of students from each proficiency level separately, there was a need to group the items as the ones for which the participants scored as low, medium, and high. The cut-off points were determined by checking the score range of the participants. Accordingly, the cut-off points for grouping items were as follows: low= 14-19; medium= 20-26; high= 27-33. Table 1 shows that for all levels, the items displayed a different grouping pattern. For pre-intermediate students, there were moderately more items (n=16) with low-score means in comparison to the ones with medium-scores (n=12). For pre-intermediate level participants, there was no item whose mean score was in the high-scored category. When the content of the items was analysed, it was seen that both the low-score and medium-score items were about all aspects of L2 writing. The issues ranged from using genre-identification to self-editing and included details about correct punctuation and grammatical accuracy.

For the intermediate students, there was a different pattern. Whereas there was just one item in each of the low and high-scored categories, the rest of the items fell into the category of medium-scored items (n=26). The low-scored item by the intermediate-level participants was about time management in timed-writing tasks and the participants' responses indicated their low level perceived self-efficacy about this topic. The only high-scored item by the intermediate-level participants was about being able to keep the writing task within a given word count limits. Finally, upper-intermediate students did not score low for any of the items. The items were seen to be distributed to the medium-scored items category (n= 14) and high-scored items category (n=14) in a balanced manner. Similar to the case of pre-intermediate level participants, the content of the items in both categories were overlapping and they were about a wide array of topics from producing arguments to achieving structural complexity. Furthermore, to see if the mean scores for individual items showed significant differences across the levels, Kruskal-Wallis test was run for each item.

**Table 2.** Comparison of mean scores for items across the proficiency levels

Item	M for Pre-intermediate Students	M for Intermediate Students	M for Upper-intermediate Students	Sig.
1. I can write interesting and appropriate response to a given topic.	20,14	21,68	29,84	0,56
2. I can easily cover all the information that should be dealt within a given topic.	24,50	26,12	21,31	,503
3. I can use appropriate style to the task.	19,89	25,03	26,50	,286
*4. I can easily match style with topic.	16,79	26,29	27,88	0,27
5. I can generate ideas to write about easily.	24,68	24,15	23,25	,956
6. I can think of ideas rapidly when given a topic to write about.	23,75	25,00	23,16	,913
7. I can write on an assigned topic without difficulty	22,25	22,74	26,88	,492
8. I can easily find examples to support my ideas.	18,64	25,82	26,75	,170
*9. I can justify my ideas in my compositions.	17,61	22,62	31,06	0,13
10. I can write grammatically correct sentences in my compositions.	20,36	24,97	26,16	,439
11. I can use complex language in writing without difficulty.	18,82	26,79	25,56	,206
12. I can produce error free structures.	18,50	25,00	27,75	,146
13. I can spell very well.	19,79	26,91	24,59	,313
14. I can use the punctuation correctly.	22,46	25,38	23,88	,803
15. I can edit my compositions for mistakes such as punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing.	19,29	23,59	28,56	,088
16. I can easily use structures I have learned in my class accurately.	17,36	26,06	27,63	,109
17. I can link ideas together easily.	20,71	22,53	28,44	,189
*18. I can use transition words correctly to make my composition a better one.	14,32	24,65	31,78	,002
*19. I can use connectors correctly to make my composition a better one.	17,46	24,15	29,56	,031
20. I can use a wide range of vocabulary in my compositions.	23,86	20,94	27,38	,372

**Table 2.** Comparison of mean scores for items across the proficiency levels

Item	M for Pre-intermediate Students	M for Intermediate Students	M for Upper-intermediate Students	Sig.
21. I can use synonyms in a composition rather than repeating the same words over and over again.	23,46	23,26	25,25	,883
22. I can write a brief and informative overview of a given topic.	22,93	23,09	25,91	,773
*23. I can manage my time efficiently to meet a deadline on a piece of writing.	18,75	20,94	31,84	,010
24. I can rewrite my wordy or confusing sentences to make them clear.	19,82	22,41	29,34	,102
*25. I can extend the topic to fit in a given word limit.	15,50	29,21	25,91	,008
*26. I can choose and defend a point of view.	17,07	24,65	29,38	,023
27. I can make long and complex sentences.	20,25	24,94	26,28	,418
*28. I can fulfill a writing task without difficulty within a given time limit	19	19,82	32,81	,002

\*  $p < .05$

As can be seen in Table 2, the mean scores of items were considerably close to each other across the levels, except a few items. Several items were found to have a p-value which is less than or equal to the significance level, which is 0.05 and these were the items that indicated a significant difference between or across the levels. For these items numbered 4, 9, 18, 19, 23, 25, 26, 28, further analysis was run to see which levels differed from each other significantly.

Post-hoc analysis that allowed comparisons of mean scores for those items showed that for item 4, which is about deciphering the essay type, there was a significantly important difference between pre-intermediate and other two levels. Pre-intermediate students scored lower than both intermediate and upper intermediate students ( $p < .05$ ). There was no meaningful difference between the scores of intermediate and upper-intermediate students ( $p > .05$ ) for item 4.

Regarding item 9, which is related to providing justification for arguments, the significant difference was available only between pre-intermediate and upper-

intermediate level students. For item 9, the upper level students scored significantly higher ( $p < .05$ ) than pre-intermediate students.

Item 18 is about the proper employment of transitory words and for this item again pre-intermediate students scored significantly lower than both intermediate and upper-intermediate students while there was not a meaningful difference between the mean scores of intermediate and upper-intermediate students. Similar to item 18, item 19 was also about the functional use of connectors and pre-intermediate students scored significantly lower than upper-intermediate students ( $p < .05$ ).

For items 23 and 26, the only meaningful difference was found between pre-intermediate and upper-intermediate students, the latter of which scored significantly higher than the previous one ( $p < .05$ ). Item 23 was about time-management while item 26 was seen to be related to students' decision making on the point of view they would defend in a given essay.

Unlike the other elements, the only item for which pre-intermediate students scored significantly lower than intermediate level students was item 25 ( $p < .05$ ), which was about topic extension. The difference between the scores of pre-intermediate and upper-intermediate students for item 25 did not indicate a meaningful difference.

Finally, for item 28, which was again about time management during writing tasks, upper-intermediate students scored significantly higher than both pre-intermediate and intermediate students, separately ( $p < .05$  for each pair). This was the only item for which a significant difference was detected between the mean scores of intermediate and upper-intermediate students.

## **Discussion**

This study primarily aimed to discover the writing self-efficacy perceptions of English preparatory students enrolled in the same program. Considering that the perceived self-efficacy of individuals is not fixed and is responsive to different factors ranging from personality to task type (Gist & Mitchell, 1992), we find it important to access a research population from the very same institution to minimize the perceptual differences that can arise from contextual factors and such, which may distort the results.

As for the first research question addressing level-specific writing efficacy, the present study found that the self-efficacy perception of the participants had a direct correlation with the proficiency level and as the students progressed through the proficiency levels, their writing-self efficacy perceptions heightened. Accordingly, pre-intermediate students scored low for nearly half of the items about a range of topics from identifying essay genre to finding supporting ideas, from producing complex sentence structure to completing tasks within given time limits. The categorisation of items according to the participants' proficiency levels indicate that the development of L2 writing progresses gradually in parallel to their improvements in language proficiency. The pre-intermediate-level students may have scored low for many more items than the students at other levels because they did not feel well-equipped to express their ideas in English as the target language and this lack of self-efficacy was related to various issues ranging from content formation and sentence complexity to punctuation, to name but a few. This finding does not comply with that of Kahraman (2012), who found a moderate level of L2 writing self-efficacy for pre-intermediate level learners. The fact that the pre-intermediate learners' responses indicated moderate level of self-efficacy for some other items is partially in line with the findings of Apridayani and Teo (2021), who reported moderate level L2 writing efficacy for Taiwanese EFL students from A2 level proficiency. Apridayani and Teo (2021) found also moderate level of L2 writing-self efficacy for their B1 students, whose counterparts are intermediate level students in this study. Our study also found that the B1 students scored moderately for most of the items, which supports the findings of Apridayani and Teo (2021).

Regarding the fact that the upper-intermediate students scored high for a significantly big number of items in comparison to the other students in this study, this research confirms the findings of Çitil and Yurdakul (2020), who reported a positive influence of English preparatory program on learners' writing self-efficacy. Accordingly, the Turkish EFL participants in their study scored higher in L2 writing self-efficacy along with other language skills in post tests, which was taken as the contribution of the preparatory program to the language learning process. In a parallel manner, this study also shows that as learners progress across the proficiency levels, they appear to develop a higher perception of L2 writing self-efficacy because they expand their language proficiency along with L2 writing-specific knowledge. Since the

participants of this study took a well-planned L2 writing training through each proficiency level, it is no surprise that upper-intermediate students accumulated more information on L2 writing and reported higher self-efficacy for more items than the other levels.

However, upper-intermediate level participants scored high only for half of the items while displaying moderate self-efficacy perception for the other half, among which there were items about idea generation while writing. Thus, our findings are partially contradictory with those of Rahimpour and Nariman-Jahan (2010) who found that their upper-intermediate level participants expressed high self-efficacy levels in terms of producing ideas in a given concept. Still, the moderate self-efficacy perception of the upper-intermediate participants is in line with the study of Kirmizi and Kirmizi (2015), whose English-major participants from 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades also scored moderate in L2 writing self-efficacy. One implication is that Turkish EFL learners do not feel competent in L2 writing even though they commence taking the L2 training as of the preparatory program and practise this skill throughout their departmental studies. Another study was carried out by Çimenli and Çoban (2019) with Turkish EFL students from the preparatory program. Similar to Çitil and Yurdakul (2020), Çimenli and Çoban (2019) examined L2 writing self-efficacy perceptions and founded that B2 level students, equivalents of upper-intermediate students in this study, scored higher in L2 writing self-efficacy.

Overall, the mean scores of individual items showed that the scores for several items were medium for all levels and some areas were noticeably difficult for the students. Items 2, 5, 6, 7, and 22 were all about idea production and indicated that producing appropriate ideas on a given topic is a challenge for learners across the levels, as in the study of Genç and Yaylı (2019). Another point was accuracy, which was the theme of items 10 and 27 and for which the students had medium scores. The results indicated that the students approached grammatical accuracy and sentence complexity as issues lowering their writing efficiency, which was verified by the study of Tanyer and Susoy (2019).

## Conclusion

This study was conducted to see if the students' writing self-efficacy perceptions differed across proficiency levels. The findings indicated that the participants displayed a more positive attitude towards L2 writing as they progressed through the proficiency levels in the English language preparatory program. Taken with the results of other studies (Bektaş-Çetinkaya, 2020; Ozturk & Saban, 2014), the moderate level of self-efficacy of the participants in this study underlines the success of the L2 training given in an English language preparatory program in promoting their L2 writing skill. Yet, the fact that even upper-intermediate students did not show an evident high level of perceived self-efficacy suggests that the preparatory program contents should be enhanced to encourage higher self-efficacy regarding the writing skill of EFL learners. To identify the areas in need of improvement, future studies may be conducted with qualitative methods and ideally with longitudinal designs to track the path of development in L2 writing skill of EFL learners.

Though the level of perceived self-efficacy was not topic-oriented and did not show a topic-based distribution across the proficiency levels in this study, some items were seen to indicate challenging aspects for the participants across all proficiency levels. First, though in different degrees, idea production represents a pervasive concern for all proficiency levels and it is an issue that requires deeper investigation. This finding suggests that L2 writing training should be enhanced with strategies as well as activities that can assist students in producing ideas on given topics. Further studies can address the reasons underlying the low self-efficacy perceptions of Turkish EFL students on idea production. The second challenging aspect for the participants was to produce complex and grammatically accurate sentence structures. To address this issue, experimental research can be designed to find what kind of training EFL learners would benefit from.

This study is not without limitations. The study was conducted with a small group of participants, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, the study relied on one tool as the data collection instrument. Further studies may be conducted with a bigger sample size and with the employment of alternative data collection instruments.

### Notes on the contributors

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