



EXPLORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS AMONG SUCCESSFUL EFL SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

Tri Aprilia Suciati^{1*}, Maria Arina Luardini², Natalina Asi³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Palangka Raya, Indonesia

Email: suciatitriaprilia@gmail.com¹, mariaarinaluardini@gmail.com², natalina@edu.upr.ac.id³

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Corresponding Author: Tri
Aprilia Suciati

Email Corresponding :
suciatitriaprilia@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

English writing is considered one of the most difficult skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, although some students achieve excellent writing proficiency despite learning in a non-English-speaking environment. This study explored how successful senior high school students developed their English writing skills. Using a qualitative case study design, the research was conducted at SMA Katolik Santo Petrus Kanisius Palangka Raya, Indonesia. The participants consisted of ten purposively selected Grade XI students with strong writing performance and one English teacher as a supporting informant. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The findings revealed four key practices that supported writing development: planning through brainstorming and outlining, applying multiple learning strategies such as reading, digital resources, and vocabulary building, engaging in regular writing practice with persistence and positive attitudes, and improving writing through self-editing and teacher feedback. These interconnected practices enhanced students' organization, language accuracy, vocabulary, and overall writing quality. The study highlights that successful writing development results from the integration of cognitive, behavioral, and reflective processes, emphasizing the importance of process-oriented writing instruction in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: *EFL Writing, Successful Learners, Writing Strategies, Senior High School Students.*

1. INTRODUCTION

English writing is recognized as one of the core competencies that learners are expected to acquire in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education (Fahmi & Rachmijati, 2021; Isgiarino et al., 2020; Baleghizadeh & Maryam, 2019). Among the four language skills, writing is often regarded as the most complex because it requires learners to simultaneously apply linguistic knowledge, organize ideas logically, think critically, and communicate meaning effectively. In addition to serving as a productive language skill, writing supports knowledge construction, systematic expression of ideas, and the development of higher-order thinking skills (Khudaverdiyeva, 2025; Jaja, 2024; Mohinur, 2024). Accordingly, improving students' writing ability has become a central goal of English language

teaching worldwide. In Indonesia, this goal is reflected in the national curriculum, which expects senior high school students to produce coherent, communicative, and linguistically appropriate academic and non-academic texts (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022). Despite these expectations, English writing remains a major challenge for Indonesian EFL learners. Nevertheless, some students are able to achieve outstanding writing performance, indicating that successful writing development is possible even in a foreign language learning context (Teng & Wang, 2023; Soughati et al., 2025; Zhou et al., 2022).

Numerous studies have shown that EFL learners encounter various obstacles in developing English writing skills. Common problems include grammatical errors, inadequate vocabulary, weak text

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organization, limited idea development, and lack of coherence (Al-Seghayer, 2024; Nadiyah et al., 2023; Fahmi & Rachmijati, 2021). Oeun and Heng (2025) further note that insufficient writing practice, limited teacher feedback, and ineffective learning strategies frequently hinder students' writing achievement. To address these issues, researchers have proposed a variety of instructional approaches. Imamuddin et al. (2023), for example, examined the use of mind mapping to improve students' writing performance, whereas Huisman et al. (2018) highlighted the positive impact of peer feedback on writing quality. Although these studies have expanded knowledge of effective writing instruction, they mainly concentrate on addressing learning difficulties or assessing the effectiveness of particular teaching methods.

Despite the extensive research on writing challenges and instructional interventions, relatively little attention has been paid to understanding how successful students develop their English writing skills. This gap is important because successful learners can offer valuable insights into effective learning strategies that may benefit other students. Inayatulloh et al. (2023) emphasize that high-achieving students provide meaningful information about successful language learning practices. Similarly, Anggara and Yulistianti (2025) argue that focusing on successful learning experiences can strengthen students' motivation and academic performance. Rather than emphasizing learning deficiencies, investigating successful learners enables researchers to identify productive writing processes, effective learning strategies, and positive learning behaviors that contribute to writing success. Such knowledge can assist teachers in designing more effective writing instruction.

Evidence from international research also highlights the importance of examining successful language learners. Xie (2025), for instance, found that proficient writers tend to demonstrate strong metacognitive awareness, actively revise their work, make use of diverse learning resources, and sustain high learning motivation. However, similar evidence remains limited in Indonesian EFL settings, particularly at the senior high school level. Most Indonesian studies have employed quantitative methods that focus primarily on measuring learning outcomes or evaluating teaching techniques. Consequently, only a limited number of studies have explored students' lived experiences, writing development processes, and personal learning

strategies through qualitative inquiry. This methodological imbalance has left an incomplete understanding of how successful students develop writing competence in authentic classroom contexts.

Another research gap concerns the educational setting. Previous Indonesian studies have predominantly been conducted in public schools or higher education institutions, while private faith-based schools have received comparatively little scholarly attention despite their distinctive academic cultures, disciplinary values, and learning environments (Syarif et al., 2025; Ningrum et al., 2023; Arochman et al., 2024). SMA Katolik Santo Petrus Kanisius Palangka Raya represents one such setting where several students consistently demonstrate high achievement in English writing despite learning English as a foreign language. Preliminary observations revealed that these students were capable of producing well-structured texts with appropriate vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and coherent organization of ideas. This phenomenon provides an opportunity to investigate how successful students develop their writing competence within a context that remains underrepresented in Indonesian EFL research. Exploring this setting is expected to broaden the existing literature by providing empirical evidence from a geographical and educational context that has rarely been examined.

Based on these considerations, the present study contributes to the existing literature in several ways. First, unlike previous research that mainly focuses on writing difficulties or instructional interventions, this study examines the experiences of successful student writers. Second, it provides empirical evidence from Palangka Raya, a context that has received limited attention in Indonesian EFL writing research. Third, by adopting a qualitative case study approach, the study investigates students' authentic experiences, writing development processes, learning strategies, and writing behaviors that cannot be fully captured through quantitative methods. Therefore, this research is expected to make both theoretical and practical contributions by offering a deeper understanding of successful English writing development among Indonesian EFL learners.

Accordingly, this study seeks to explore how successful senior high school students at SMA Katolik Santo Petrus Kanisius Palangka Raya develop their English writing skills. Specifically, it addresses the following research question: How do successful senior high school students develop their

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English writing skills? The findings are expected to provide useful insights for English teachers, schools, and researchers in designing writing instruction that promotes effective learning practices and supports successful writing development among EFL learners.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW**2.1 Writing Development in EFL Contexts**

Writing is widely acknowledged as one of the most demanding language skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because it requires learners to integrate linguistic knowledge, cognitive processing, and communicative competence simultaneously (Priyadi et al., 2024; De Wilde et al., 2020). Unlike receptive skills, writing involves generating ideas, organizing information, selecting appropriate vocabulary, constructing grammatically accurate sentences, and producing coherent texts that meet communicative purposes. In addition to serving as a medium of communication, writing enables learners to develop critical thinking, organize knowledge systematically, and express ideas effectively in academic contexts (Khudaverdiyeva, 2025; Bora, 2023; Flower & Hayes, 2019). In Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum also emphasizes students' ability to produce coherent and meaningful written texts, highlighting writing as one of the essential competencies to be achieved in secondary education (Kemendikbud, 2022). Consequently, developing writing proficiency has become an important objective of English language teaching in Indonesian schools.

Despite its importance, writing remains one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners. Previous studies consistently report that students experience difficulties in generating ideas, organizing content, applying appropriate grammatical structures, selecting vocabulary, and maintaining coherence throughout their writing (Al-Seghayer, 2024; Oeun & Heng, 2025). These challenges indicate that writing proficiency cannot be achieved merely through grammatical knowledge but requires continuous cognitive engagement and strategic learning. Therefore, writing development should be viewed as a gradual process in which learners continuously improve their ability through repeated practice, reflection, and revision.

From a cognitive perspective, writing is commonly conceptualized as a recursive process rather than a linear activity. Flower and Hayes (1981)

propose that effective writers continuously move between planning, translating ideas into written language, and reviewing their texts while composing. These processes do not occur sequentially but interact dynamically as writers modify ideas, reorganize information, and refine their texts throughout the writing process. Likewise, Nunan (2003) argues that writing should be understood as a process of discovering and developing ideas through planning, drafting, revising, and editing rather than simply producing a final written product. This process-oriented perspective has significantly influenced EFL writing pedagogy by emphasizing that writing development occurs through sustained engagement in meaningful writing activities rather than isolated language exercises.

Accordingly, writing development in EFL contexts should be understood as a dynamic process that combines linguistic competence with cognitive regulation and strategic learning. Students are expected not only to master language forms but also to develop the ability to plan their writing, monitor their progress, evaluate their work critically, and refine their texts through continuous revision. Such a perspective provides an important theoretical foundation for understanding how successful learners gradually develop writing proficiency through authentic learning experiences.

2.2 Successful EFL Writers and Writing Strategies

While many EFL learners encounter persistent challenges in writing, some students consistently demonstrate higher levels of writing achievement despite learning English in a foreign language environment. Previous studies suggest that successful learners differ from their peers not merely because of superior language proficiency but because they actively regulate their own learning, employ effective learning strategies, and maintain positive attitudes toward continuous improvement. Investigating these successful learners therefore provides valuable insights into the processes and strategies that contribute to writing development. Inayatulloh et al. (2023) argue that high-achieving learners represent important models for understanding effective learning practices. In contrast, Anggara and Yulistianti (2025) emphasize that learning from successful students can enhance

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motivation and encourage more productive learning behaviors among other learners.

Rather than relying solely on classroom instruction, successful EFL writers actively seek opportunities to improve their writing through independent learning. They frequently engage with authentic English materials, utilize dictionaries and digital resources, expand their vocabulary through extensive reading, and apply newly acquired language knowledge in regular writing practice. Such learning behaviors reflect learner autonomy, which enables students to assume responsibility for their own language development and sustain learning beyond formal classroom activities. In EFL contexts where exposure to English is relatively limited, learner autonomy plays an essential role in creating meaningful opportunities for continuous language practice.

In addition to learner autonomy, self-regulated learning has been identified as another defining characteristic of successful EFL writers. Self-regulated learners actively plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning to achieve specific academic goals. Rather than depending entirely on teachers' instruction, they identify their own strengths and weaknesses, select appropriate learning strategies, and continuously adjust their learning behaviors to improve performance. In writing, self-regulation is reflected in students' ability to generate ideas before writing, monitor language use during drafting, and critically evaluate their work through revision and reflection. Teng et al. (2022) emphasize that metacognitive awareness enables learners to regulate cognitive and behavioral processes throughout writing tasks, leading to more effective writing performance. Likewise, Xie (2025) reports that successful writers demonstrate high levels of motivation, strategic learning, and reflective thinking, allowing them to improve their writing quality through sustained practice and continuous self-evaluation.

These characteristics are closely associated with the writing strategies employed by successful learners throughout the writing process. One of the most important strategies is systematic planning, which involves brainstorming ideas, gathering relevant information, identifying writing purposes, and preparing outlines before drafting. Effective planning reduces cognitive demands during writing and helps learners organize their ideas logically, resulting in more coherent and structured texts. The

recursive writing model proposed by Flower and Hayes (1981) highlights planning as an essential component of the writing process because writers continuously organize and refine ideas before and during drafting.

Another strategy that contributes significantly to writing development is learners' engagement with multiple learning resources. Successful writers do not rely exclusively on classroom materials; instead, they expand their linguistic knowledge through extensive reading, English films, digital media, online platforms, dictionaries, and authentic texts. Exposure to diverse language input enriches vocabulary, improves grammatical awareness, and provides models of effective text organization that can be transferred into students' own writing. Such learning experiences also strengthen learner autonomy by encouraging students to seek opportunities for language development beyond formal instruction actively.

Furthermore, continuous writing practice is essential for developing writing proficiency. Writing competence develops gradually through repeated opportunities to express ideas, experiment with language, and apply newly acquired knowledge in meaningful communication. Frequent writing activities not only improve linguistic accuracy and fluency but also increase learners' confidence and motivation. More importantly, successful learners view writing as a developmental process rather than a one-time classroom task. They continuously evaluate their progress, identify areas for improvement, and refine their writing through sustained engagement with writing activities.

Equally important is the role of revision and feedback in improving writing quality. Revision extends beyond correcting grammatical errors; it involves reconsidering ideas, improving organization, strengthening coherence, and refining language use to communicate meaning more effectively. Constructive feedback from teachers and peers also provides learners with opportunities to recognize weaknesses and improve subsequent drafts. Huisman et al. (2018) found that feedback-supported revision significantly enhances students' writing performance because it encourages reflection and promotes deeper engagement with the writing process. Consequently, planning, strategic learning, continuous practice, and systematic revision should be viewed as interconnected processes that collectively contribute to successful writing development.

2.3 Previous Studies and Research Gap

Previous studies have substantially enriched the understanding of English writing instruction in EFL contexts. Existing research has primarily examined students' writing difficulties, factors affecting writing performance, and the effectiveness of instructional interventions designed to improve writing achievement. For example, Al-Seghayer (2024) and Oeun and Heng (2025) identify grammatical limitations, vocabulary deficiencies, insufficient writing practice, and ineffective learning strategies as common challenges experienced by EFL learners. Other studies have investigated pedagogical approaches to address these problems, including the use of mind mapping to facilitate idea generation (Imamuddin et al., 2023) and peer feedback to improve writing quality through collaborative revision (Huisman et al., 2018). These studies have provided valuable pedagogical insights into improving writing instruction in EFL classrooms.

More recent research has shifted attention toward successful language learners and the strategies underlying their academic achievement. Inayatulloh et al. (2023) argue that investigating high-achieving students provides valuable information about effective learning behaviors that may be adopted by other learners. Similarly, Anggara and Yulistianti (2025) emphasize that successful learners demonstrate distinctive learning habits that support sustainable language development, while Xie (2025) highlights the importance of metacognitive awareness, strategic learning, and continuous self-reflection in writing development. Collectively, these studies suggest that successful writing is influenced not only by instructional methods but also by learners' active engagement in their own learning processes.

Despite these contributions, the existing literature reveals several limitations. Most previous studies have focused on students' writing problems or evaluated the effectiveness of particular instructional techniques. In contrast, relatively few have explored how successful learners naturally develop their writing skills through their own learning experiences and strategies. In addition, qualitative evidence describing the authentic writing development of successful secondary school students in Indonesian EFL contexts remains limited. Addressing this gap, the present study explores how successful senior high

school students develop their English writing skills by examining the strategies, learning behaviors, and reflective practices that support their writing development. By focusing on successful learners within an authentic Indonesian senior high school context, this study extends previous research and contributes a deeper understanding of effective writing development that may inform future EFL writing instruction.

3. METHOD

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore how successful senior high school students developed their English writing skills. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because it enabled an in-depth investigation of a bounded phenomenon within its real-life context. The study focused on a specific case, namely successful English writers at SMA Katolik Santo Petrus Kanisius Palangka Raya, with the aim of understanding their writing development processes, learning strategies, writing behaviors, and revision practices. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a qualitative case study facilitates an in-depth exploration of a contemporary phenomenon through multiple sources of evidence, while Yin (2017) emphasizes that this design is particularly appropriate for addressing "how" questions concerning real-life situations. Accordingly, this approach provided a suitable framework for investigating how successful students developed their English writing skills in an authentic educational setting.

3.2 Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted at SMA Katolik Santo Petrus Kanisius Palangka Raya, Indonesia. The school was selected because several students consistently demonstrated strong performance in English writing, making it an appropriate setting for investigating successful writing development. The participants were ten Grade XI students who were purposively selected based on predetermined criteria. The selection criteria included students who demonstrated above-average English writing ability as identified by their English teacher, consistently produced high-quality procedure texts, actively participated in writing activities, and were willing to

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participate in interviews and classroom observations. Purposive sampling was employed because it enabled the researcher to select information-rich participants who could provide meaningful insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Memon et al., 2024; Ahmad & Wilkins, 2024; Makwana et al., 2023). In addition to the student participants, the English teacher participated as a supporting informant to provide complementary information regarding students' writing development and classroom writing instruction.

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to obtain a comprehensive understanding of students' English writing development. Classroom observations were conducted during English writing lessons using a non-participant observation approach. The observations focused on students' writing processes, writing strategies, writing behaviors, and revision practices. Field notes were recorded during each observation to document classroom interactions, learning activities, and contextual factors related to writing development.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the ten selected students and the English teacher. This interview format allowed the researcher to maintain consistency across participants while providing sufficient flexibility to explore individual experiences in greater depth (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Each interview lasted approximately 15–25 minutes, was audio-recorded with participants' consent, and was subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Document analysis was employed to complement the observational and interview data. The analyzed documents included students' writing assignments, revised drafts, and teacher feedback. These documents provided additional evidence regarding students' writing performance, revision practices, and writing development throughout the learning process. The use of multiple data sources strengthened methodological triangulation and enhanced the comprehensiveness of the findings.

3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This

analytical approach was selected because it enables researchers to identify, organize, and interpret recurring patterns within qualitative data. The analysis followed six stages: (1) familiarizing with the data through repeated reading of interview transcripts, observation field notes, and documents; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for potential themes; (4) reviewing and refining themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the final report. Data from observations, interviews, and documentation were analyzed concurrently to identify themes that explained how successful students developed their English writing skills.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis were analyzed using Braun and Clarke (2019) thematic analysis. The analysis generated four interrelated themes describing how successful EFL senior high school students developed their English writing skills. These themes were consistently identified across the three data sources, indicating recurring patterns in the participants' writing development.

Rather than relying on a single learning technique, the participants developed their writing skills through a gradual and recursive process involving systematic planning, strategic language learning, continuous writing practice, and regular revision. Classroom observations and students' writing documents further confirmed that these practices were embedded in their daily learning experiences. Figure 1 summarizes the four themes generated from the thematic analysis.

Table 1, Themes Generated from the Thematic Analysis

Themes	Description
Theme 1. Writing Development Begins with Systematic Planning	Students planned their writing through brainstorming, gathering ideas, and outlining before drafting.
Theme 2. Multiple Learning Strategies Support Writing Development	Students improved writing through reading, dictionaries, movies, online resources, and vocabulary building.
Theme 3. Consistent	Students strengthened

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Practice Shapes Writing Habits	writing skills through frequent practice, persistence, and active engagement.
Theme 4. Revision as a Habit of Successful Writers	Students continuously refined their writing through proofreading, self-editing, and responding to feedback.

Theme 1. Writing Development Begins with Systematic Planning

The first theme revealed that successful students approached English writing as a systematic and recursive process rather than an immediate drafting activity. Across interviews, observations, and document analysis, participants consistently described the importance of planning before composing a complete text. Their preparation typically involved understanding the topic, generating ideas, gathering supporting information, and organizing these ideas into simple outlines.

Several participants explained that planning helped them clarify the direction of their writing and organize ideas more effectively. Chia stated,

“I usually start by searching about the topic and understanding it. Then, I write some main ideas or important points that I want to discuss. After that, I make a simple outline so that my writing can be more organized.”

Similarly, Keisy explained that brainstorming and outlining allowed her to determine what should be written in each section of the text before drafting. Rafael also emphasized that preparing an outline enabled him to produce a more structured composition.

These interview findings were consistent with the classroom observations. During writing lessons, students rarely began writing immediately after receiving an assignment. Instead, they spent time discussing the topic with classmates, identifying relevant information from learning materials, and recording key ideas before drafting. Several students were also observed preparing short outlines and organizing their ideas according to the generic structure of the assigned text.

The documentary evidence further strengthened these findings. Students’ notebooks

contained brainstorming notes, topic maps, keyword lists, and simple outlines prepared before writing complete paragraphs. These documents demonstrated that planning activities had become part of the participants’ regular writing routines rather than isolated classroom tasks. Such evidence suggests that successful students viewed planning as an essential stage for constructing coherent and well-organized texts.

Overall, the findings indicate that systematic planning served as the foundation of students’ writing development. Through brainstorming, information gathering, and outlining, participants were able to organize their ideas more effectively, reduce uncertainty during drafting, and produce clearer written texts.

Theme 2. Multiple Learning Strategies Support Writing Development

The second theme revealed that successful students developed their English writing skills by engaging in multiple language-learning strategies beyond regular classroom instruction. Rather than depending solely on teacher explanations, the participants actively sought opportunities to strengthen their writing through extensive reading, audiovisual media, digital resources, dictionaries, and other authentic English materials. These strategies provided continuous language input that enriched their vocabulary, improved grammatical awareness, and enhanced their understanding of text organization.

Among the various strategies identified, reading emerged as the most frequently reported practice. Most participants explained that reading English books, articles, and stories exposed them to new vocabulary, sentence patterns, and different ways of expressing ideas. Chia stated,

“Reading English texts helps me become familiar with English words and learn new vocabulary.”

Similarly, Keisy explained that reading English novels and stories enabled her to understand how ideas were organized while simultaneously improving her vocabulary. Rafael also emphasized that reading books and story-based games provided valuable exposure to English expressions that later influenced his own writing.

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Besides reading, participants highlighted the importance of audiovisual media in supporting their writing development. Watching English movies, videos, and other digital content enabled them to learn vocabulary and observe how English was naturally used in different contexts. Rudolf explained that watching English movies was one of the most effective strategies for improving his English, while several other participants reported that English subtitles helped them understand unfamiliar words and expressions more easily. These activities allowed students to connect spoken and written language, which later supported their writing performance.

The interviews also revealed that successful students regularly used dictionaries and online learning resources whenever they encountered unfamiliar vocabulary or grammatical difficulties. Instead of waiting for teacher assistance, they independently searched for word meanings, sentence examples, and additional references before continuing the writing process. Such learning behaviour demonstrates a high level of learner autonomy, as students actively solved language-related problems through self-directed learning.

These findings were consistently supported by classroom observations. During writing lessons, students frequently consulted dictionaries, textbooks, and digital resources while completing writing tasks. Several students were observed searching for appropriate vocabulary, verifying word meanings, and taking notes from instructional materials before developing their paragraphs. Rather than relying on a single source of information, they combined multiple resources to improve the quality of their writing.

Document analysis further strengthened these findings. Students' notebooks contained vocabulary lists, grammar notes, useful expressions, and sentence patterns collected from books, classroom materials, online resources, and audiovisual media. The documentation demonstrated that students consistently recorded newly acquired language and organized it for future use in writing activities. Such learning records indicate that vocabulary development was not incidental but resulted from sustained and deliberate learning practices.

Overall, the findings suggest that successful students viewed writing development as a continuous learning process supported by diverse language-input

strategies. By integrating reading, audiovisual media, dictionaries, digital resources, and independent vocabulary learning into their daily routines, they continuously expanded their linguistic knowledge and strengthened their ability to produce more accurate, coherent, and meaningful English texts.

Theme 3. Writing Behaviors

Another prominent theme emerging from the data concerns the writing behaviors consistently demonstrated by successful students. Analysis of interview transcripts, classroom observations, and students' written documents indicates that writing success was supported not only by cognitive strategies but also by positive learning behaviors. These behaviors included consistent writing practice, active participation during classroom activities, persistence when encountering difficulties, and a willingness to learn from mistakes.

Interview data revealed that successful students viewed writing proficiency as a skill developed through continuous practice rather than innate ability. Most participants emphasized the importance of writing regularly to improve fluency and confidence.

Lucy explained:

"I practice writing every day because it helps me become more confident and improve my English."

Similarly, Inara stated:

"I always try to practice writing regularly because the more I write, the more I learn."

Abigail also expressed a similar view:

"I keep practicing because practice helps me improve my writing skills little by little."

These responses suggest that successful students perceived writing development as a gradual process requiring sustained effort. Rather than relying exclusively on classroom instruction, they intentionally created opportunities to practice writing independently.

Another behavior consistently identified across participants was persistence when facing writing difficulties. Students acknowledged that writing in English was challenging, particularly when dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary or grammatical

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structures. However, instead of abandoning the task, they continued working until they found appropriate solutions.

As Keshia explained:

"I keep trying even when writing is difficult because I know that practice and effort will help me improve."

Likewise, Abigail commented:

"Sometimes writing is challenging, but I continue practicing because I want to become better."

The interview data further indicate that successful students demonstrated a positive attitude toward mistakes. Errors were regarded as valuable opportunities for learning rather than failures.

Key stated:

"I am not afraid to make mistakes because mistakes help me learn and become better."

Similarly, Gloria remarked:

"If I do something wrong, I think it is fine because I can fix it later and learn from it."

Bertu also explained:

"Mistakes are opportunities to improve. I try to understand what I did wrong so I can avoid repeating it."

Classroom observations supported these interview findings. Throughout the writing lessons, students remained actively engaged in learning activities. They participated in classroom discussions, asked questions when encountering difficulties, consulted dictionaries, and collaborated with classmates to clarify vocabulary and grammatical problems. Observation notes also showed that students maintained their concentration throughout writing activities and demonstrated responsibility in completing writing tasks.

Document analysis further reinforced these findings. Students' notebooks and writing assignments contained evidence of continuous writing practice, including multiple classroom exercises, personal vocabulary records, and repeated writing activities completed over time. Several assignments also showed progressive improvement in organization, vocabulary use, and grammatical

accuracy, suggesting that regular practice contributed to students' writing development.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that successful students consistently exhibited productive writing behaviors characterized by regular practice, persistence, active engagement, and positive attitudes toward learning from mistakes. These behaviors became an important foundation supporting the gradual development of their English writing skills.

Theme 4. Revision Practices

The final theme identified from the analysis concerns students' revision practices. Data from interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis consistently indicate that successful students regarded revision as an essential stage of the writing process rather than merely a final proofreading activity. They regularly reviewed their drafts, corrected linguistic errors, refined vocabulary choices, and incorporated teacher feedback before submitting their final work.

Interview data revealed that participants routinely reread their writing to identify mistakes in grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and sentence structure. They believed that revising their work improved both the accuracy and clarity of their writing.

Lucy explained:

"Finally, I check my grammar."

Similarly, Inara stated:

"At the end, I check my grammar."

Rafael described his revision process in greater detail:

"When the draft is complete, I reread it to make sure there are only a few mistakes in the text."

Likewise, Key explained:

"The steps I take are brainstorming and outlining, drafting, refining vocabulary, and proofreading."

These responses indicate that successful students viewed writing as a recursive process involving repeated evaluation and refinement rather than producing a single draft.

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Besides conducting self-revision, participants also emphasized the importance of teacher feedback during the revision process. They considered feedback an opportunity to recognize weaknesses and improve the quality of subsequent writing.

Gloria explained:

“My teacher usually tells me which parts need improvement, and I revise them based on her suggestions.”

Similarly, Keshia stated:

“Teacher feedback helps me understand my mistakes and improve my writing.”

These interview findings suggest that successful students actively engaged with corrective feedback and used it to strengthen both language accuracy and text organization.

Classroom observations further supported these findings. During writing lessons, students were frequently observed rereading their drafts before submission. Many students checked vocabulary choices, corrected grammatical errors, modified sentence structures, and discussed revisions with classmates after receiving comments from the teacher. Observation notes also showed that students carefully examined teacher corrections and made appropriate revisions before producing the final version of their assignments.

Document analysis provided additional evidence of these revision practices. Comparison of students' first drafts and revised versions demonstrated noticeable improvements in grammatical accuracy, vocabulary selection, sentence construction, and organization of ideas. Teacher comments and correction marks were clearly visible in several writing assignments, followed by students' revisions that addressed the identified problems. These documents illustrate that revision was an integral component of students' writing development rather than a superficial editing activity.

Overall, the findings indicate that successful students consistently engaged in systematic revision through self-monitoring, proofreading, and responding to teacher feedback. These revision practices enabled them to improve the quality of their writing and contributed substantially to the development of their English writing skills.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings indicate that successful students developed their English writing skills through a recursive and self-regulated writing process consisting of planning, strategic learning, continuous practice, and revision. Rather than treating writing as a one-step activity, participants approached it as a gradual process that required idea generation, organization, language support, and continuous refinement. This suggests that writing development was shaped not only by students' linguistic knowledge but also by the way they managed their learning throughout the writing process (Cronin et al., 2020; Hubert et al., 2025; Pratama et al., 2020).

The planning stage emerged as an important foundation for writing development. Students commonly began by brainstorming ideas, identifying relevant information, and preparing outlines before drafting their texts. These findings support Nunan (2023) view that writing is a process of discovering and organizing ideas rather than simply producing a final text. Likewise, Canale and Swain (2018) Output Hypothesis explains that language production encourages learners to notice gaps in their linguistic knowledge and refine their language use through drafting and revision. By organizing ideas before writing, students appeared to reduce cognitive demands during drafting and produce more coherent texts.

Beyond planning, successful students actively employed learning strategies to enrich their language knowledge. Reading English texts, using dictionaries, watching English-language media, and searching for additional references enabled students to expand their vocabulary and become familiar with authentic language use. These findings are consistent with Krashen (1985) Input Hypothesis, which argues that language acquisition develops through continuous exposure to comprehensible input. The present findings suggest that students integrated language input obtained from multiple sources into their own writing practices, thereby improving vocabulary choice, sentence construction, and text organization.

Another important finding is that successful students consistently demonstrated productive writing behaviors characterized by regular practice, persistence, and positive attitudes toward mistakes. Rather than avoiding challenges, they viewed writing

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as a skill that could be improved through continuous effort. Such behaviors reflect the characteristics of self-regulated learners who actively monitor and direct their own learning. Teng et al. (2022) argue that successful writers possess positive writer identities that encourage persistence, confidence, and responsibility for learning. Similar characteristics were evident among the participants, who regularly practiced writing, sought learning opportunities beyond the classroom, and remained committed despite linguistic difficulties.

Revision also emerged as an essential component of students' writing development. Participants regularly reread their drafts, corrected grammatical and lexical errors, and refined their writing after receiving teacher feedback. These findings reinforce Mohammadzadeh et al. (2020) perspective that writing is recursive rather than linear, as effective writers repeatedly evaluate and improve their texts before considering them complete. The revision process also reflects metacognitive regulation because students monitored the quality of their own work and made deliberate improvements. Therefore, writing success appears to result not only from drafting ability but also from students' willingness to evaluate and refine their writing continuously.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that successful students developed their writing skills through the interaction of planning, strategic learning, productive writing behaviors, and recursive revision. Instead of relying on a single strategy, they combined multiple processes that supported both language development and writing performance, highlighting the importance of process-oriented writing instruction in EFL classrooms.

5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated how successful senior high school students cultivate their English writing proficiency within an EFL context. The findings reveal that writing development is not a linear or isolated activity but an iterative and dynamic process that evolves through continuous engagement. Successful students consistently enhanced their writing by integrating four interrelated practices: implementing a systematic writing process, utilizing a range of learning strategies, demonstrating productive writing habits, and engaging in ongoing revision.

The results further indicate that these practices function synergistically to support writing development. Pre-writing activities, including brainstorming and outlining, established a clear conceptual framework for drafting, while extensive reading, dictionary use, and the strategic utilization of diverse learning resources expanded students' linguistic competence. Regular writing practice, sustained perseverance, and a constructive attitude toward errors fostered continuous growth, whereas self-editing and teacher feedback facilitated the refinement of both language accuracy and overall text quality. Collectively, these interconnected practices demonstrate that successful writing development emerges from the integration of cognitive, behavioral, and reflective dimensions of learning.

This study enriches the literature on English writing development among Indonesian EFL senior high school students by offering qualitative insights into the authentic experiences of successful learners. The findings underscore the importance of process-oriented writing instruction that promotes planning, strategic learning, sustained practice, and recursive revision, rather than emphasizing the final written product alone.

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