



Problems and Strategies for the Improvement of English Writing Skills of Secondary Students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were: 1) to investigate the problems in English writing experienced by secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province, and 2) to construct strategies for the improvement of English writing skills of secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province. This research was considered a mixed-method research study conducted at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province. The respondents were divided into two groups; namely, 1) 338 secondary school Chinese students, and 2) 90 teachers at Laibin No.8 Middle School in the academic year 2025. Two research instruments were employed; namely, 1) a questionnaire for investigating problems of writing skills, and 2) a set of questions for the focus group discussion meeting for evaluating the constructed strategies. The data collected were analyzed presented in terms of frequency count, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. In addition, the comments of the three specialists towards the correctness and suitability of the constructed strategies were collected and analyzed through the content analysis method. The results indicated that: The problems in English writing experienced by secondary school Chinese students were found at the highest level with mean scores ranging from 4.21 to 4.66. The most concerned problems included: 1) difficulty generating ideas, 2) grammar mistakes, 3) limited vocabulary, 4) logical organization problems, and 5) insufficient writing practice. In addition, the strategies for the improvement of English writing skills were categorized into 4 chapters; namely, 1) strategies for learners focusing on writing process awareness and self-regulation, 2) strategies for instructors emphasizing culturally responsive teaching and effective feedback, 3) classroom management strategies creating writing-conducive environments, and 4) teaching-learning materials incorporating curriculum-aligned resources and assessment tools.

Keywords: Problems of English Writing Skills, Strategies for the Improvement of English Writing Skills, Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province

1.Introduction

In the contemporary era of globalization, English has become the predominant medium of international communication, commerce, and higher education. Its role as a lingua franca is particularly evident in professional and academic contexts, where effective use of English is

often regarded as a prerequisite for success. For undergraduate students pursuing Business English, the development of advanced language proficiency, especially in writing, is indispensable. The present study, which investigates common writing errors, is grounded in the recognition that mastery of English writing is critical for both academic achievement and professional advancement. English has become an essential tool for international communication, education, and socio-economic development. As China continues to expand its role in global affairs, the demand for English proficiency has grown significantly, particularly in the field of education. Among the four fundamental skills of language learning—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—writing is often regarded as the most complex and demanding (Hyland, 2019). For secondary students, writing proficiency is not only a key indicator of language competence but also a foundation for academic success and future opportunities in higher education and professional development. Despite its importance, English writing remains one of the most challenging skills for Chinese secondary students to acquire. Research has consistently shown that learners at this stage encounter numerous difficulties, including limited vocabulary, weak grammatical control, lack of coherence and cohesion, and insufficient exposure to authentic writing practices (Wang & Wen, 2020; Zhang, 2022). In the context of Guangxi Province, where many students come from non-English-speaking family backgrounds and have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom, these challenges are particularly pronounced. Students at Laibin No.8 Middle School, like many in similar educational settings, struggle to produce accurate, fluent, and well-structured English texts. The persistence of these problems has raised concerns among educators and researchers, as writing proficiency plays a vital role in standardized examinations, academic advancement, and cross-cultural communication. Moreover, ineffective writing instruction and the dominance of exam-oriented teaching approaches often fail to address students' real needs for developing practical writing skills (Liu & Stapleton, 2021). Consequently, secondary students frequently rely on memorization and translation strategies, which limit their ability to express ideas independently and creatively in English. Given these challenges, it is essential to explore effective strategies for improving English writing skills among secondary school learners. Various approaches have been suggested, such as process writing, peer feedback, task-based learning, and the integration of digital tools in writing instruction (Lee, 2020; Chen, 2023). However, there remains a gap in localized research that investigates writing difficulties and practical solutions in specific educational contexts such as Guangxi Province. This study, therefore, focuses on the problems and strategies for the improvement of English writing skills of secondary students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province. By identifying the common writing difficulties students face and proposing suitable pedagogical strategies, the research aims to contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical solutions for enhancing English writing instruction at the secondary level. The findings are expected to support teachers in designing more effective writing activities and provide insights for policymakers to improve English education in similar contexts across China.

2.Literature Review

Within mainland China's basic education, English writing is increasingly emphasized in curricular standards and high-stakes examinations. Recent analyses of standards, instruction, and assessment indicate growing attention to genre awareness, task authenticity, and formative assessment; however, implementation remains uneven across regions and schools. In Guangxi specifically, emerging research documents teachers' adoption of innovative pedagogies such as flipped learning and 'reading-thinking-expressing' integration, alongside challenges in providing individualized feedback and sustaining learner engagement in writing tasks. The

local assessment landscape—dominated by exam-oriented practices—can constrain opportunities for process-oriented instruction and iterative revision, especially in large classes. Studies of junior/senior high school English teaching in Guangxi report promising but nascent shifts toward technology-supported instruction and task integration. Interviews with Guangxi teachers reveal both interest in new approaches (e.g., flipped classrooms, continuation writing) and difficulties operationalizing them due to workload, training needs, and uncertainty about best practices. Case-based research from Laibin further explores the linkage between reading input, critical thinking, and written output in project-based tasks, suggesting that sustained input–output cycles may build coherence and idea development among secondary learners. Thailand offers a closely comparable EFL context in Southeast Asia. Recent Thai studies with lower- and upper-secondary learners report persistent issues in grammar, lexis, cohesion, and mechanics, yet demonstrate improvement through structured instructional designs: collaborative process writing, genre-based cycles, peer feedback, and digital-flipped approaches. Thai research is particularly informative for Guangxi in terms of actionable classroom routines—planning–drafting–revising cycles, explicit modeling of genre moves, calibrated peer review, and integration of digital platforms—that can be adapted to resource- and time-constrained settings.

Common Problems in Secondary Learners' English Writing

1) Linguistic accuracy and lexical development

Across China and Thailand, secondary learners struggle with sentence boundary control, verb–tense consistency, prepositions, articles, subject–verb agreement, and word choice. Error analyses consistently highlight overreliance on direct translation and limited phraseological repertoire. Such issues reduce clarity and can impede higher-order concerns such as argument development. Effective responses pair focused form instruction with extensive practice and feedback during authentic tasks.

2) Discourse organization and cohesion

Difficulties with paragraph unity, logical development, and cohesive device use frequently lead to topic drift and weak argumentation. Genre-sensitive instruction and reading-to-write tasks help learners' appropriate rhetorical structures, while model texts and checklists can scaffold macro-organization and local cohesion during revision.

3) Affective and self-regulatory factors

Writing anxiety, limited self-efficacy, and low persistence negatively correlate with writing quality among adolescent EFL learners. Qualitative studies from China document avoidance behaviors and reduced willingness to revise under evaluative pressure. Interventions that blend strategy instruction (planning, monitoring, self-evaluation) with supportive feedback climates tend to reduce anxiety and increase productive engagement.

4) System and classroom constraints

Large class sizes, exam-driven pacing, and constrained teacher time restrict opportunities for multiple-draft cycles and individualized feedback. These conditions underscore the importance of scalable solutions—structured peer review, calibrated rubrics, and selected uses of automated writing evaluation (AWE) to offload lower-level error detection—while maintaining teacher guidance for higher-order concerns.

3. Research Objectives

The purposes of the study were:

1. To investigate the problems in English writing experienced by secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province.

2. To construct the strategies for the improvement of English writing skills of secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province.

4. Research Methodology

Population /Sample group

In this research project, Laibin No.8 Middle School was used as a case study. The population in this research project were divided into 2 groups; namely, 2,800 Chinese students and 90 teachers at Laibin No.8 Middle School in the academic year 2025.

The sample groups in this research project were divided into 2 groups; namely, 338 Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in the academic year 2025. The sample size (n) was obtained through the Krejcie & Morgan. (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The respondents were obtained through The Simple Random Sampling Method.

Research instrument

The two main research instruments were: 1) a questionnaire was employed for the investigation of problems of writing skill of secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School. All items/questions in the questionnaire were evaluated and approved for its correctness and suitability by the 3 specialists in terms of IOC which were found in the range of 0.66 – 1.00 . and 2) a set of questions for 2 focus group discussion meetings was used for the evaluation and approval of the strategies for the improvement of English writing skill of secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School.

Data Collection

1) For the investigation of problems in English communicative skills of undergraduate Chinese students studying in the International Business English Program., the researcher himself collected the data and information from the respondents.

2) For the evaluation and approval of the strategies for the improvement of English writing skill of secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School, a focus group discussion meeting was set up to collect comments from the 3 specialists

Data Analysis

For the investigation of problems in English writing experienced by secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province., the data and information collected from the questionnaire were analyzed and then presented in terms of frequency count, percentage, mean, standard deviation (S.D.).

For the evaluation and approval of the strategies for the improvement of English writing skills of secondary school Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province, the comments of the 3 specialists from the focus group discussion meeting were analyzed through the content analysis then used for the evaluation and approval of the strategies for the improvement of English writing skills of secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province.

5. Findings

Part1: problems in English writing experienced by secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province.

Table1: problems in English writing experienced by secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province. (Students)

Items	n=338		Level of problems
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	
1) I have difficulty generating ideas before writing.	4.30	0.21	Highest
2) I often make grammar mistakes when writing	4.31	0.13	Highest
3) I do not know enough vocabulary to write clearly.	4.40	0.15	Highest
4) I struggle to organize sentences and paragraphs logically.	4.26	0.12	Highest
5) I often make spelling and punctuation error.	4.32	0.13	Highest
6) I feel nervous and lack confidence when writing in English.	4.25	0.21	Highest
7) I find it difficult to write long passages in English.	4.21	0.14	Highest
8) I cannot use linking words or transitions effectively.	4.22	0.12	Highest
9) I usually translate directly from Chinese to English.	4.26	0.20	Highest
10) I do not have enough writing practice at school.	4.40	0.15	Highest
Total	4.25	0.17	Highest

According to table 1, it is indicated that the students rated the problems of English writing skill at the highest level at the range of $\bar{X}$ 4.21 (SD=0.14) – $\bar{X}$ 4.40 (0.15).

Table2: Problems in English writing experienced by secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province. (Teachers)

Items	n=90		Level of problems
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	
1) Your students have difficulty generating ideas before writing.	4.40	0.22	Highest
2) Your students often make grammar mistakes when writing	4.51	0.14	Highest
3) Your students do not know enough vocabulary to write clearly.	4.65	0.18	Highest
4) Your students struggle to organize	4.52	0.13	Highest

sentences and paragraphs logically.

5) Your students often make spelling and punctuation error.	4.31	0.16	Highest
6) Your students feel nervous and lack confidence when writing in English.	4.55	0.20	Highest
7) Your students find it difficult to write long passages in English.	4.65	0.18	Highest
8) Your students cannot use linking words or transitions effectively.	4.54	0.15	Highest
9) Your students usually translate directly from Chinese to English.	4.58	0.14	Highest
10) Your students do not have enough writing practice at school.	4.66	0.22	Highest
Total	4.54	0.18	Highest

According to table 2, it is indicated that the students rated the problems of English writing skill at the highest level at the range of $\bar{X}$ 4.31(SD=0.16) – $\bar{X}$ 4.66 (0.22).

Part2: The Strategies for the Improvement of English Writing Skills of Secondary Chinese Students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province

The strategies for the improvement of writing skill of secondary Chinese students is composed of 4 chapters ; namely, chapter 1: About Learners , chapter 2: About Instructors, chapter 3: About classroom management , and chapter 4: About teaching-learning materials and assessment : All the 4 chapters were approved by the three specialists (One Thai professors and two English native speakers) in terms of correctness and suitability of the contents. All the 4 chapters were evaluated and approved by the 3 specialists meaning the constructed the improvement of writing skill of secondary Chinese students could be used as a guideline for the strategies for the improvement of writing skill of secondary Chinese students in China.

6. Conclusion

The title of the research is “Problems and the improvement strategies of writing skills of secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province”. The objectives of this research were: 1) to investigate the problems in English writing experienced by secondary students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province, and 2) to construct the strategies for the improvement of English writing skills of secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province . In this research project, Laibin No.8 Middle School was selected as a case study. The population in this research project was divided into 2 groups, namely, 2,800 secondary Chinese students and 90 teachers in the academic year 2025, The sample groups in this research project were divided into 2 groups; namely, 338 secondary Chinese students and 73 teachers at Laibin No.8 Middle School in the academic year 2025. The main research instruments were a questionnaire and a set of questions for a focus group discussion meeting for the approval of the constructed the enhancement strategies for improving English writing skill for secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School.

In this research project, Laibin No.8 Middle School was employed as a case study. The researcher selected the Laibin No.8 Middle School as a case study since the researcher has a connection with people there. This helped facilitate the data collection. For this research project, the researcher herself collected the data and information from the sample groups. The data and information collected were analyzed and then interpreted and presented in terms of frequency count, percentage, mean (), and standard deviation (S.D.).

The findings from the investigation of problems of English writing skills of secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School indicated the students rated the problems of English writing skill at the highest level at the range of $\bar{x} = 4.21$ (SD=0.14) – 4.40 (0.15). Moreover, it was also indicated that the teachers rated the problems of English writing skill at the highest level in the range of the range of $\bar{x} = 4.31$ (SD=0.16) – 4.66 (0.22). It can be said that the students and teachers at Laibin No.8 Middle School rated the problems of English writing skills of secondary Chinese students at the highest level. The constructed “The improvement strategies of writing skills of secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province” are composed of four chapters; namely, chapter 1: For Learners of English Writing, chapter 2: For Instructors of English Writing, chapter 3: For Classroom Management, chapter 4: For Teaching – Learning Material and Assessment. The constructed improvement strategies of writing skills of secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province were accepted and approved by the three specialists, then it can be used as a guideline for the improvement strategies of writing skills of secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province.

7. Discussion

It can be concluded that both students and teachers at Laibin No.8 Middle School rated the problems of English writing skill of secondary Chinese students at the highest level. The problems of the English writing skill of secondary Chinese students can be delineated through the facts that the contents of the English courses do not focus directly on writing skill practice. It can be accepted that one major problem is related to grammar. Many students struggle with sentence structure, verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, and the use of articles, which often results in unclear or incorrect writing. Along with grammar, limited vocabulary is also a serious obstacle. Students may overuse simple words, repeat the same expressions, or choose inappropriate vocabulary, which prevents them from expressing their ideas accurately. Spelling and punctuation mistakes also occur frequently, making written texts less professional and harder to understand. Furthermore, students face significant difficulties in generating and organizing ideas. Some learners find it hard to brainstorm and develop relevant points, while others cannot structure their writing logically with clear introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions. Coherence and cohesion are often weak because learners do not use linking words or transitions effectively, which causes their writing to lack flow. Many students focus only on descriptive writing rather than developing critical thinking and analytical skills, which are required in academic writing. Moreover, the findings from this research correspond to previous studies, which indicated that insufficient exposure to authentic English writing environments limited students’ ability to develop writing fluency and accuracy. The lack of writing practice outside the classroom contributed to this issue, as students rarely engaged in English writing for communicative purposes beyond assigned coursework. Additionally, students demonstrated significant problems with confidence and motivation in writing tasks. The research revealed psychological barriers, with students experiencing high of writing anxiety when faced with English composition assignments. Many students relied heavily on direct translation from Chinese to English, which resulted in unnatural sentence structures and cultural mismatches in their writing. These problems are partly due to the lack of systematic writing strategy

instruction and over-reliance on traditional grammar-translation methods in English language teaching. The secondary school context (ages 13-18) presents unique challenges as students are transitioning from basic sentence writing to more complex paragraph and essay composition, requiring more sophisticated linguistic and cognitive resources than many possess at this developmental stage.

The constructed “The strategies for the improvement of English writing skills of secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province” are composed of four chapters; namely, chapter 1: For Learners of English Writing, chapter 2: For Instructors of English Writing, chapter 3: For Classroom Management, chapter 4: For Teaching – Learning Material and Assessment. They were accepted and approved by the three specialists, then it could be used as a guideline for the strategies for the improvement of English writing skills of secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The research instruments used for data collection included: A questionnaire with both closed-and open-ended items designed to measure speaking challenges, confidence levels, and language use frequency, and a set of semi-structured interview questions that allowed for deeper exploration of personal writing difficulties and learning preferences.

8. Recommendations

For the usage of the research findings into implementation, The Strategies for the improvement of English Writing Skills of secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province, should be included in the teaching and learning system at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province.

For further studies, the construction of guidelines for the development of English reading and communication of secondary Chinese students at Laibin No.8 Middle School in Guangxi Province should be conducted.

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