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HOW DO INDONESIAN IN-SERVICE EFL TEACHERS DEFINE WRITING PRACTICE AND WRITING INSTRUCTION: A MICRO-ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: Despite global shifts towards process-oriented L2 writing instruction, a theory-practice gap persists in Indonesia, where pedagogy often remains product-focused. This study investigates how Indonesian in-service English teachers formulate their beliefs about writing practices and instruction through an ecological lens. A qualitative case study design was employed, involving 20 voluntary high school teachers from Yogyakarta during a professional development program. Data were collected through questionnaires, written narratives, and semi-structured interviews, and analyzed via qualitative thematic analysis to identify emergent themes. Findings revealed a fragile instructional microsystem, primarily constrained by teachers' own identities as writers. A significant lack of writing self-efficacy led many to adopt protective, control-oriented pedagogies, such as sentence-level drills and corrective feedback, despite promoting beliefs in process-oriented approaches. This growth mindset paradox highlighted how internal insecurities and external pressures (e.g., administrative burdens, student readiness) undermined the implementation of constructive beliefs. The study concludes that an effective reform must address teachers' personal writing competencies, suggesting that a future professional development should focus on building their identity and confidence as writers to foster more authentic, process-focused writing classrooms.
Keywords: *teacher beliefs; L2 writing instruction; ecological perspective; self-efficacy; Indonesian ELT in-service teachers.*

INTRODUCTION

The pedagogical domain of second language (L2) writing instruction has been advancing much over the past half-century. Deeply rooted in the behaviorist principles, writing instructions have been progressing toward more dynamic, student-centered paradigms**.** This change, as reported by Renandya & Floris (2024), stemming from the controlled composition and habit-formation drills of the mid-20th century, has been changing its foci into the movement prioritizing drafting and revision. Today, the practice of writing has materialized beyond the practice of individual's goals, becoming a socially situated practice (Badger & White, 2000).

Disregarding the positive progression in the field of writing instruction, there has been chaotic, disrupting the academic ideals from classroom practices. Especially in Indonesian context, the instructional practices of writing in the secondary classroom remains stagnant in the same position for many years. The government has been integrating genre-based pedagogy to boost and support the literacy practices of Indonesian secondary students, emphasizing on the social practices of genres learned. Furthermore, the practices have been progressively emphasizing on the products of writing, disregarding the process and social engagement to produce the text (Yu et al., 2025). This condition further isolates the ideal ecosystem where the government's policy aims for communicative, learner-focused autonomous approach, yet the realities in the frontline are still persistent in a traditional, form-focused

orientation, prioritizing grammatical accuracy and formulaic structures over critical thought and self-expression.

The disconnection of integrating theories and practice in the classroom, to some extent, stems from the misalignment of teacher cognition and classroom practice (Wang et al., 2020). A substantial body of research highlights the prevalent practices of belief-practice misalignment, where teachers' espoused philosophies diverge from their enacted pedagogies. This is not a simple failure of will but an adaptive response to a demanding professional environment. For example, Yu et al. (2020) found that novice teachers, while strongly believing in process-oriented methods, frequently capitulated to product-focused instruction due to the overwhelming cognitive load and immediate pressures of classroom management and exam preparation.

This conflict is particularly severe in the realm of assessment, a powerful force that shapes instructional priorities. Wang et al. (2020) demonstrated a clear disconnect where university EFL teachers valued formative "assessment for learning" in theory, yet their practices were dominated by summative "assessment of learning." This misalignment was attributed to potent external pressures, including the washback effect of high-stakes standardized tests, gaps in teachers' assessment literacy, and student expectations conditioned by years of traditional schooling. These factors create an ecological context that actively constrains teachers' ability to implement their preferred pedagogies.

The capacity to navigate these constraints and sustain innovative practice is closely tied to a teacher's sense of self-efficacy. A teacher's belief in their own capability to affect student learning outcomes serves as a critical buffer against contextual pressures. Graham et al. (2021) provided compelling evidence for this, demonstrating that among teachers of deaf and hard-of-hearing students, self-efficacy was a unique predictor of whether they employed evidence-based writing practices. Teachers with higher self-efficacy were more likely to persist with complex, student-centered strategies, while those with lower efficacy often retreated to more controlled, "defensive" teaching methods to minimize perceived risks.

Given the intricate web of individual beliefs, contextual constraints, and systemic pressures, it becomes clear that understanding writing instruction requires a lens that moves beyond blaming individual teachers. Ecological perspectives, pioneered by Bronfenbrenner (1993), offer a powerful framework for this purpose. This model posits that human development is shaped by a dynamic interplay of interactions across multiple, nested environmental systems, from the immediate classroom (microsystem) to the broader cultural and policy contexts (macrosystem) (Burakgazi, 2024).

The microsystem is the innermost layer and represents the immediate setting where the individual engages in direct, face-to-face interactions. It encompasses the activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced in daily life. Common examples include the family unit, the classroom, or peer groups. Because active participation occurs here, the microsystem is the site of the most direct influence on development.

Surrounding the microsystem is the mesosystem, which is defined by the connections and interrelations between two or more microsystems (Navarro et al., 2022). The exosystem comprises social settings where the developing person is not an active participant but is nonetheless indirectly affected by events occurring within them. Neal and Neal (2013) cite a parent's workplace as a quintessential example. Factors such as parental job satisfaction, work hours, or leave policies can significantly alter interactions within the family microsystem, affecting the child despite their absence from the workplace. The macrosystem is the outermost layer, representing the overarching cultural, economic, and political context. It includes the belief systems, ideologies, and social norms that permeate a culture. As noted by An and Blanchard (2020), the macrosystem serves as a blueprint that organizes the inner systems, shaping policies and expectations that trickle down to influence the exosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem.

This nested perspective illuminates how a disconnect at any level, such as a national policy promoting communicative language teaching (macrosystem) while high-stakes exams reward grammatical precision (exosystem), can render pedagogical improvement efforts ineffective.

In relation to writing instruction in Indonesian context, writing instruction is shaped by a complex microsystem of interrelated factors that directly influence classroom practice and student outcomes. A critical component is cultural influence, which manifests in both pedagogical approaches and student affect. Nationally, policies

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advocate for the localization of English language teaching through local texts to enhance relevance and engagement (Lestari, 2019). However, the implementation of this culturally responsive pedagogy is uneven, often constrained by regional resource disparities. Furthermore, cultural attitudes significantly impact learners, with factors like fear of academic writing contributing to writer's block among EFL students (Nurkamto et al., 2024).

This instructional landscape is fundamentally structured by educational policies and curriculum frameworks. Consequently, the translation of policy into effective practice relies heavily on foundational supports, including coherent curriculum alignment and targeted teacher training, which are identified as primary causal factors for literacy outcomes (Yarmi, 2025). Beyond the school, family dynamics and socio-economic status (SES) constitute a powerful external influence. SES profoundly affects access to educational resources, with students from higher socio-economic backgrounds typically having greater access to books and technology, thereby advantaging their writing development (Abduh et al., 2023; Samiullah & Haidar, 2023).

Finally, the integration of technology represents an evolving component of the microsystem. When accessible, technology can enhance student motivation and writing literacy by providing engaging platforms for expression and exploration (Salam et al., 2025). Yet, its potential is often moderated by the same socio-economic disparities that affect other resources, and its effective use requires adequate teacher training and infrastructure, challenges that remain prevalent, particularly in rural settings (Khoiriyah & Werdiningsih, 2025). In summary, writing instruction in Indonesia is situated within a microsystem where cultural norms, policy enactment, socio-economic stratification, and technological access interact dynamically, collectively determining the quality and equity of student writing experiences.

Therefore, to meaningfully address the prolonged challenges in L2 writing instruction, it is vital to examine how Indonesian in-service ELT teachers define their beliefs in writing practice and in writing instruction, within these interconnected ecological systems**.** In part, by adopting this holistic perspective, the research community can shift the focus from the temporary intervention to the entire learning ecosystem, identifying the specific interactions and leverage points that either inhibit or promote effective practice. This study seeks to contribute to this understanding by exploring this research question: "how do Indonesian ELT in-service teachers formulate their current beliefs of writing practices and of writing instruction?"

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design, grounded in an ecological perspective, to investigate the transformation of in-service teachers' beliefs about writing practice and instruction. Following Stake's (2000) approach, the case was defined as the bounded system of teachers' belief development. This methodology was selected for its capacity to explore complex, real-world phenomena in depth (Creswell, 2013).

The participants were 20 voluntary in-service senior high school teachers (19 female, 1 male) from the Yogyakarta province, recruited through a local English teacher working group. The criteria for participation included having over five years of teaching experience and a demonstrated interest in improving their writing practice. All participants were provided with pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. Despite these conditions, this may reflect a limitation which may impact on the over-generalization.

Multiple qualitative instruments were used to triangulate data and capture the ecological layers of the case. These included: (1) questionnaires, adapted from established scales (e.g., (Brindle et al., 2016; Graham et al., 2002), to elicit teachers' implicit theories and beliefs about writing; (2) post-course written narratives; and (3) semi-structured interview to explore classroom behaviors and reflections

The data analysis employed a systematic thematic analysis procedure (Saunders et al., 2023). The process began with deep familiarization with all qualitative data, followed by initial inductive and deductive coding (Zairul, 2025). Using an iterative procedure, codes were collated into participant themes, which were rigorously reviewed and refined against the full dataset (Saunders et al., 2023). The analysis phases were specifically aligned to distinct research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The ecological framework posits that human development is shaped by a nested set of structures, but the primary engine of development is the Microsystem. This constitutes the immediate, proximal environment of instruction, the classroom where the teacher, the student, and the task of writing intersect (Burakgazi, 2024). While external forces from the Meso-, Exo-, and

Macrosystems exert significant downward pressure in the form of policy, curriculum, and societal expectations, it is ultimately within this Microsystem that learning is either facilitated or inhibited. This facilitation occurs through what ecological theory terms as proximal processes, which refer to the direct, reciprocal social interactions and pedagogical exchanges between the developing learner and the persons, objects, and symbols in their immediate environment (Neal & Neal, 2013).

The findings of this study reveal that the Microsystem of EFL writing instruction in this context is currently fragile. It is not a stable, sealed environment but rather a dynamic space characterized by a complex and often contradictory interplay between the teachers' risky self-efficacy, their hesitating instructional beliefs, and the specific feedback loops they establish with students. This fragility suggests that the potential for deep learning is being compromised not necessarily by a lack of external resources, but by internal pedagogical conflicts. This section unpacks these dynamics, arguing that the effectiveness of the writing classroom is primarily constrained by the teacher's own identity as a writer and the resulting pedagogical choices. The data suggests a pattern where teachers, driven by internal insecurity, prioritize pedagogical safety and control over the genuine, albeit messy, cognitive engagement required for writing development.

The teacher's personal identity as a writer

The most significant finding within the Microsystem, and perhaps the fulcrum upon which the entire instructional quality balances, is the prevalent lack of robust self-efficacy among teachers. In the specific context of writing instruction, the teacher's role extends beyond that of a mere instructor or manager; the teacher is not merely a deliverer of content but a model of the craft (Teng, 2016). Writing is a performance skill, much like playing an instrument or painting, and students learn as much from observing the teacher's relationship with the text as they do from the explicit instruction provided. Therefore, the teacher's internal belief system regarding their own writing ability acts as the regulating thermostat for the entire classroom climate (R. Zhang & Hanks, 2024). If the thermostat is set to anxiety or hesitation, the learning environment cools, and the possibilities for student risk-taking diminish.

The quantitative data indicates there is a significant lack of professional confidence that is deeply revealing of the state of the Microsystem. When asked about their readiness to teach writing, only 2 of 20 participants felt fully "Ready." The vast majority (15) selected "Ready enough" (*Cukup Siap*). It is crucial to interpret the semantic and psychological weight of "Enough" (*Cukup*). This selection does not indicate mastery, enthusiasm, or pedagogical abundance. Rather, it suggests adequacy, a state of survival rather than thriving. It implies a teacher who feels capable of getting through the lesson, but perhaps not capable of navigating the unpredictable complexities that arise when students grapple with difficult composition tasks.

The qualitative data clarifies that this hesitancy is not merely a reflection of professional modesty but stems directly from the teachers' personal relationship with the act of writing. Ms. Dewi's admission, "(I) often feel stuck in writing," provides a window into the cognitive blocks that plague the instructor. Similarly, Ms. Ari's statement that she finds it "difficult to produce a good and correct piece of writing" reveals a fundamental insecurity. These are not just comments about teaching; they are comments about being a writer. This insecurity is often shaped by personal writing histories, where the teachers themselves may have experienced writing as a site of struggle, error, or criticism during their own education (Karaca & Uysal, 2023; Yigitoglu & Belcher, 2014).

This finding validates the theoretical assertion that teacher self-efficacy is highly domain-specific (Graham et al., 2021). A teacher may possess high self-efficacy in managing a classroom, teaching grammar rules, or conducting reading comprehension drills, yet feel paralyzed by the open-ended nature of composition (Rusinovci, 2022). This distinction is critical because the "primary actor" in the Microsystem dictates the emotional tone of the engagement. When the teacher views the task (writing) as a source of anxiety, cognitive load, or blockage ("feeling stuck"), this anxiety is inevitably transmitted to the students (Nazari et al., 2023). This transmission occurs through subtle cues: the avoidance of live writing modeling, the over-reliance on textbooks, or the visible relief when a writing task is completed.

The teacher who feels "stuck" is unlikely to model the messy, recursive process of drafting and revising because doing so requires a vulnerability

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they do not possess (Hardin & Koppenhaver, 2023). To model writing effectively, a teacher must be willing to stand at the whiteboard, struggle with a sentence, cross it out, and think aloud about the difficulty of finding the right word. For a teacher like Ms. Ari, who already doubts her ability to produce "correct" writing, this public performance of struggle feels dangerous rather than instructional. It threatens her position of authority within the Microsystem.

Consequently, this study observed the emergence of compensatory mechanisms within the Microsystem designed to protect the teacher's fragility. Ms. Christin, the most senior teacher, stated that readiness "should already be included in the lesson plan." This statement is profound in its implication. It suggests a displacement of agency from the person to the document. By viewing the lesson plan, an artifact, as the locus of readiness, rather than the teacher's own internal capacity and adaptability, Ms. Christin signals a fragility in Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) (Al-Bataineh et al., 2010; Haynes-Brown, 2025).

In a robust, high-efficacy Microsystem, the teacher views the lesson plan as a flexible roadmap, adapting it in real-time to the immediate needs of the students. In a fragile Microsystem, the teacher clings to the lesson plan as a script to mask their own uncertainty (Abdelhalim, 2023). This dependence fundamentally restricts the proximal processes necessary for writing development. If a student asks a complex question or produces a draft that deviates from the expected norm, the teacher who is clinging to the plan may ignore the learning opportunity to stay on the "safe" path. Thus, the teacher prioritizes completing the administrative requirements of the plan over addressing the emergent, messy, and real writing struggles of the students (Walker & Pattison, 2016). The lesson plan becomes a shield against the vulnerability of the writing process.

Practicum experiences

The Microsystem is defined not just by the psychological state of the actors, but by the activities and roles enacted within it. The findings reveal a sharp dichotomy in how these activities are structured, reflecting a deeper struggle between the idealized Process approach, which teachers know they "should" use, and the practiced Product approach, which feels safer to implement (Renandya & Floris, 2024; Teng, 2016). This tension dictates the cognitive load placed on students and determines the very nature of the learning task: are students learning to create meaning, or are they learning to avoid error?

A majority of participants (10) articulated a clear, constructivist vision of the Microsystem. They described a classroom environment defined by scaffolding and tiered support. Ms. Ratna's description of instruction as "tiered from guided, semi-guided, (to) free guided" and Ms. Anita's workflow of "reading to find ideas" followed by "brainstorming/concept maps" demonstrate a theoretical alignment with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and constructivist apprenticeship models (Hardin & Koppenhaver, 2023; Ray et al., 2024). In these classrooms, the Microsystem is conceptually designed to be a scaffold. The teacher envisions their role as a facilitator who supports the student's cognitive climb from the abstract generation of ideas to the concrete realization of text. Furthermore, Ms. Tiara's focus on creating a 'writing-friendly environment' emphasizes the psychosocial dimension of the Microsystem. She recognizes that writing is an emotionally risky activity, and therefore the environment itself must be engineered to reduce anxiety and support emotional regulation (Zarrinabadi et al., 2021; L. J. Zhang et al., 2024).

However, a counter-narrative exists that is deeply revealing of the Microsystem's limitations and the impact of the self-efficacy gaps discussed previously. A minority of teachers, driven perhaps by the fear of "getting stuck" or losing control, enact a Microsystem focused on strict control through product-oriented drills (Casas et al., 2020; Pham & Truong, 2021). Ms. Tini's belief that one must teach "how to construct correct sentences first" and her use of the sample writing prompt given in the questionnaire: "Arrange the jumbled words into correct orders" represents a collapse of the writing construct.

It is vital to analyze why this shift occurs. When Ms. Tini assigns a "jumbled words" task, she is fundamentally redefining "writing." In this Microsystem, writing is not the generative, cognitive struggle to create meaning from silence. Instead, it is the correct assembly of pre-existing linguistic units (Watson, 2015). It transforms writing from a creative act into a puzzle-solving act. This phenomenon can be analyzed through the lens of cognitive load theory within the Microsystem. Teaching writing as a generative process (brainstorming, drafting, revising) is cognitively demanding and unpredictable for the teacher (Gaitas & Alves Martins, 2015). It invites chaos, a term hinted at by Ms. Evi's observation of students' "chaotic" organization. "Chaos" implies

a loss of control, a situation where the teacher may not have an immediate answer.

In contrast, a "jumbled word" exercise is contained, predictable, and has a single correct answer key. For teachers like Ms. Tini and Mr. Daud (who focused on "simple present tense" sentences), restricting the Microsystem to these controlled tasks is a rational response to their own discomfort with the complexity of writing (Rusinovci, 2022). It is a survival strategy. By focusing on the sentence level rather than the discourse level, the teacher reduces the ambiguity of the classroom interaction. They can be sure of their authority because they know the grammar rules, whereas they might not be sure how to guide a student's disorganized argument. However, in doing so, they strip the Microsystem of its potential to foster genuine communicative competence. They deny the student the opportunity to exercise learner agency, resulting in a classroom where students can arrange words but cannot express thoughts (Mizusawa & Kiss, 2024).

Monitoring and reflection

The most critical interaction within the Microsystem, the proximal process, is the feedback loop. It is the mechanism through which the teacher regulates student learning, directs attention, and influences motivation (Yu, 2021). The study reveals a stark split that fundamentally alters the nature of the teacher-student relationship, dividing the participants into two distinct pedagogical camps.

For exactly half the participants, the feedback loop tend to be reactive and corrective. Feedback is viewed as a medical intervention: it is triggered only by the presence of pathology, i.e., error (Chen, 2023). Ms. Tini provides feedback "(w)hen a text... uses simple present tense" instead of past, and Ms. Heni intervenes when she finds "mistakes made by the majority." This approach creates a Microsystem defined by surveillance. The teacher's role is reduced to that of an editor, a proofreader, or a gatekeeper, constantly scanning the environment for deviations from the linguistic norm (Wang et al., 2020).

This dynamic has profound implications for the student's identity within the Microsystem. If the teacher only speaks to correct a mistake, the student learns that the primary goal of writing is not communication, but error avoidance. Ms. Yeni's focus on "Google Translate" and grammar further reinforces this adversarial dynamic. She frames the use of tools as a transgression to be caught, rather than a strategy to be guided. The teacher is trying to catch the student; the student is trying to hide their limitations. In such a Microsystem, the psychological safety required for growth evaporates. This aligns with research suggesting that corrective feedback, when divorced from content and praise, often induces a fixed mindset and severe writing apprehension (Truax, 2018; Yao et al., 2024). The feedback loop becomes a source of punishment rather than information.

Conversely, the other ten participants described a developmental and affective feedback loop. Ms. Ratna's assertion that "[e]very student's work must get feedback" and Ms. Ari's inclusion of feedback for "good writing" shifts the dynamic from doing surveillance to support (Ha et al., 2024). This indicated a critical distinction: feedback is provided not because something is wrong, but because the student is valued.

Crucially, this group integrates the affective domain into the Microsystem. Ms. Linda notes the necessity of "appreciation or motivation," recognizing that writing requires emotional fuel. Ms. Anita describes the physical act of "walking around checking students one by one." This "walking around" is a significant Microsystemic behavior. It reduces the physical and psychological distance between teacher and student. It transforms the teacher from a distant judge at the front of the room to a mobile coach working alongside the writer. This allows for real-time, "just-in-time" scaffolding (Muthukrishnan et al., 2024). When a teacher intervenes during the process (while the student is thinking) rather than only after the product is finished, they influence the cognitive formation of the text. This approach fosters a Microsystem where risk-taking is permitted, aligning with the findings that motivational and process-oriented feedback supports student self-regulation and engagement (Bai & Wang, 2021; Jiang et al., 2024). This creates a positive feedback loop where teacher support enhances student willingness to communicate, further enriching the Microsystem (Han & Ganapathy, 2025).

Administrative burdens

The first major challenge disrupting the classroom flow is the lack of stability in the curriculum. In a healthy learning environment, the curriculum acts as a steady map for the teacher. However, the data suggests that for these teachers, the map is constantly changing.

Ms. Tini's observation about the "[c]onstant

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changes in Learning Achievements (CP)" highlights a critical issue: administrative fatigue. She notes that these frequent shifts force teachers to "always change all teacher administration." This is not just a paperwork issue; it is a pedagogical one. When a teacher must spend their limited energy rewriting documents and updating compliance forms, that energy is diverted from lesson planning and student feedback. This aligns with findings by Pham and Truong (2021), who argue that top-down policy reforms often force teachers into a role of administrative compliance rather than pedagogical innovation. The classroom suffers because the teacher is forced to focus on bureaucracy rather than instruction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

This pressure is compounded by specific mandates like the "Pancasila Student Profile Project" (P5, a mandatory theme-based project required to be conducted collaboratively by teachers across subjects). Ms. Heni describes it as "very burdensome," citing high costs in time and energy. Ms. Anita takes this critique further, noting that the project effectively "reduces the depth of essential material." This is a crucial finding for writing instruction. Writing is a slow skill that requires patience, drafting, and deep thinking (Graham et al., 2021). If the classroom schedule is crowded with external projects, the teacher is forced to rush. Consequently, the depth of the writing lesson is sacrificed just to stay on schedule.

Furthermore, Ms. Siti points out the absence of a standard benchmark for what students should actually know in grades X, XI, and XII. This creates a paradox in the classroom: the administration demands constant paperwork updates ("too much control"), yet provides no clear standard for student success ("too little guidance"). This leaves teachers navigating the classroom in the dark, unsure of where the finish line is for their writers (Wang et al., 2020).

While teachers struggle with curriculum instability, they simultaneously face significant challenges regarding student readiness. Ten teachers identified deep barriers related to foundational skills, which directly impact the daily interactions in the classroom (Rusinovci, 2022). Ms. Evi identified the "[z]oning factor" as a primary cause for students entering high school with very minimal English skills. This government policy, focusing on prioritizing students admission by the nearest proximity from the school, creates classrooms with extreme heterogeneity in ability. Teachers are asked to teach high-level writing to students who may still struggle with basic vocabulary. This leads to the cognitive blocks described by Ms. Wiwik and Ms. Anita, where students "get stuck" and are unable to develop main ideas into supporting sentences. In the immediate space of the classroom, this halts the flow of learning (Hattie, 2008). The teacher cannot move to complex composition tasks because they are constantly backtracking to fix basic linguistic issues.

These skill gaps create a wall of fear. Ms. Siti notes that students "lack confidence and are afraid of making mistakes." This fear paralyzes the writing process. When students are afraid, they stop trying to generate their own ideas. This connects directly to the modern challenge identified by Ms. Yeni: the heavy reliance on "AI tools."

This reliance on AI is a direct response to the classroom environment. When a student lacks skills (due to the zoning factor) and is afraid of error (due to low confidence), AI becomes a survival mechanism (Barrot, 2023). It offers a way to bypass the struggle of writing entirely. For the teacher, this complicates the classroom dynamic immensely. Instead of acting as a mentor who guides a student's thinking, the teacher is forced into the role of a detective, trying to figure out if the work is authentic. This fundamentally alters the relationship between teacher and student, shifting it from collaboration to suspicion.

Growth mindset

Finally, the Microsystem provides the stage for the enactment of what this study identifies as the growth mindset paradox. The quantitative data shows a near-universal agreement (95%) with the theoretical tenets of growth mindset that writing is teachable, that effort matters, and that process writing is beneficial (Yao et al., 2024; Seaton, 2018). The teachers know the right answers; they have absorbed the professional development jargon; they believe theoretically that students can improve.

However, the reality of the Microsystem often contradicts this belief (Karaca & Uysal, 2023; Wang et al., 2020). While Ms. Tiara advocates for "celebrating progress," the immediate classroom reality described by other teachers is one of struggle and frustration. Ms. Evi notes students' ideas are "chaotic" (*acak adul*), Ms. Wiwik observes difficulty in "developing ideas," and Ms. Siti highlights that students are "afraid of making mistakes."

This disconnect suggests that the Microsystem is under severe stress. The teachers hold high

theoretical beliefs, but these beliefs are fragile. When faced with the immediate, visceral challenges of the classroom, the "chaotic" drafts that don't make sense, the silence of students who are "stuck," the overwhelming number of grammatical errors—their low self-efficacy triggers a regression to lower-order practices (Nazari & Karimpour, 2022; R. Zhang & Hanks, 2024). The cognitive dissonance is resolved by reverting to control. They believe in growth, but they practice correction because correction is tangible and manageable. They believe in process, but they assign product drills because drills keep the class orderly (Graham et al., 2023).

This implies that within the Microsystem, the cognitive and emotional demands of the moment override the theoretical beliefs held by the teacher (Lou et al., 2025; Zilka et al., 2023). The pressure of the immediate situation forces the teacher to abandon their ideals. The "fear" expressed by students (Ms. Siti) is likely a reflection of this paradox: students sense the contradiction. They hear the teacher's rhetoric of growth ("You can do it!"), but they experience the reality of a red pen that marks every error ("But you did this wrong"). The actual currency of the classroom remains grammatical accuracy, despite the inflation of motivational language. This finding is consistent with studies on the emotional impact of classroom assessment practices, where inconsistent messaging leads to student confusion and withdrawal (Bal et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Microsystem of these EFL writing classrooms is defined by a critical fragility. It is an environment where teachers, burdened by their own history as "stuck" writers and lacking deep confidence in their generative skills (Yigitoglu & Belcher, 2014), often construct pedagogical barriers to manage the complexity of the task. These barriers—rigid reliance on lesson plans, the use of jumbled word drills to simulate writing, and the deployment of error-focused feedback, serve to reduce the teacher's anxiety but simultaneously limit the students' growth (Al-Bataineh et al., 2010).

While a segment of the cohort succeeds in creating a supportive, scaffolded environment, a significant number retreat to safe, controlling practices that limit student agency (Pham & Truong, 2021). This analysis suggests that improving writing instruction requires an intervention deep within this Microsystem. Policy changes and new textbooks will not suffice if the teacher remains insecure. The path forward requires rehabilitating the teacher's own identity as a writer through sustained, coaching-rich professional development (Hardin & Koppenhaver, 2023; Traga Philippakos et al., 2025). Only by transforming the teacher from a nervous "corrector" into a confident "writer-model" can they navigate the messy, uncertain process of student composition with confidence rather than fear, ultimately stabilizing the Microsystem for the benefit of the learner.

However, due to the nature of volunteering participants from only a specific province, this may provide bias to the results of analysis and cause over-generalization. Thus, this study recommends further investigations across regions to enrich the data.

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