Original Article

Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Situated Academic Writing Self-Efficacy of Students in Public Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This study determined the extent to which vocabulary learning strategies influenced situated academic writing self-efficacy among junior high school students in public secondary schools in Sto. Tomas District, Division of Davao del Norte. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was used with 120 Grades 7 to 10 students selected through quota sampling from four public secondary schools during the 2025-2026 academic year. Data were collected with adapted standardized questionnaires that measured vocabulary learning strategies across social, memory, metacognitive, determination, and cognitive domains, and situated academic writing self-efficacy across creative identity, relational reflective, and writing essentials. Means, standard deviations, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression were used for analysis. Results showed that vocabulary learning strategies were rated Moderate overall (M = 3.10, SD = 0.84), with social strategies obtaining the highest domain mean (M = 3.18, SD = 0.85). Situated academic writing self-efficacy was also rated Moderate overall (M = 3.28, SD = 0.84), with creative identity obtaining the highest domain mean (M = 3.33, SD = 0.84). Vocabulary learning strategies had a strong positive relationship with situated academic writing self-efficacy (r = 0.71, R^2 = 0.50, p = 0.000). The regression model was significant (R = 0.71, R^2 = 0.50, F = 45.62, p = 0.000), and all five vocabulary strategy domains significantly influenced situated academic writing self-efficacy. Metacognitive strategies showed the strongest standardized effect (Beta = 0.21, p = 0.002). The findings support the integration of explicit

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vocabulary strategy instruction with academic writing tasks to strengthen students' confidence, self-regulation, and lexical control in school-based writing.

Keywords: academic writing, adolescents, self-efficacy, vocabulary

1. Introduction

Academic writing requires more than control of grammar and sentence form. It asks students to select appropriate words, shape ideas for a particular audience, and revise a text until it meets the purpose of a school task. For junior high school learners, these demands can be difficult because vocabulary knowledge and confidence in academic text production often develop at the same time. Situated academic writing self-efficacy captures this context-bound confidence. It refers to learners' belief that they can complete academic writing tasks within actual classroom conditions, including the need to express ideas, respond to feedback, connect sources, and comply with task expectations. This focus is consistent with social cognitive theory, where self-efficacy is understood as a belief about capability in a specific task and setting rather than a general sense of confidence (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

Recent writing self-efficacy scholarship has moved away from general confidence measures and toward scales that consider academic context, reader awareness, disciplinary language, and self-regulation. Mitchell et al. (2021) developed the Situated Academic Writing Self-Efficacy Scale to address the limits of older measures that focused mainly on mechanics or process skills. Mitchell et al. (2023) later showed that writing self-efficacy research has value for instruction because it links motivation, task engagement, and the way students respond to challenges during text production. Braten et al. (2023) added that academic writing self-efficacy also matters when students need to work with several sources, synthesize ideas, and sustain confidence across complex literacy demands. These developments are relevant to secondary education because students must build confidence before advanced academic writing becomes a routine part of schooling.

Vocabulary learning strategies provide one pathway through which students can strengthen that confidence. Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy remains useful because it classifies vocabulary strategies into social, memory, cognitive, metacognitive, and determination domains. Nation (2013) likewise emphasized that vocabulary growth depends on repeated encounters, deliberate attention to form and meaning, and opportunities to use words in context. Current studies still support these views. Alnan and Abd Halim (2024) reported that vocabulary learning strategies can help explain differences in vocabulary size among EFL learners, while Srimanee et al. (2021) found that vocabulary achievers differ in strategy patterns during reading tasks. Aljasir

(2025) also showed that strategy choice varies by proficiency level, which means learners do not only need exposure to words. They need guidance on how to select and regulate strategies that match their current competence.

The connection between vocabulary strategies and academic writing self-efficacy is theoretically strong. A student who can find the meaning of an unfamiliar word, remember it, test its meaning in a sentence, and monitor whether it fits the academic task is more likely to feel capable of composing a coherent text. Conversely, limited vocabulary access can increase cognitive load and restrict idea development. Self-regulated writing research supports this connection. Teng (2022) argued that strategy-based instruction in L2 writing can build learners' strategic control, and Wang et al. (2025) reported that self-regulated writing strategies relate to academic writing performance in EFL contexts. Anggraeni et al. (2025) further showed that instruction grounded in self-regulated learning can support academic writing skills, while Zhang (2024) found that self-regulation strategies are linked to self-efficacy and creativity. Taken together, these studies suggest that vocabulary strategy use and academic writing confidence should be studied together rather than as separate literacy variables.

In public secondary schools, this issue has practical importance because junior high school students are still building both academic vocabulary and confidence in formal writing. English tasks often require them to move from familiar oral language to more precise academic expression. They must also learn to use feedback, organize ideas for readers, and select words that match school-based genres. However, empirical work that directly examines the statistical influence of vocabulary learning strategy domains on situated academic writing self-efficacy among junior high school learners remains limited. This gap is important because broad vocabulary scores do not show which strategy domains have the strongest connection with students' confidence in academic writing tasks.

This study determined the extent of vocabulary learning strategies and situated academic writing self-efficacy among junior high school students in public secondary schools in Sto. Tomas District, Division of Davao del Norte. It also tested the relationship between the two variables and identified which vocabulary learning strategy domains significantly influenced situated academic writing self-efficacy. By examining social, memory, metacognitive, determination, and cognitive strategies together, the study offers evidence that may guide vocabulary instruction, writing support, and classroom interventions for adolescent academic writers.

2. Methodology

The study used a quantitative descriptive-correlational design to determine the extent of vocabulary learning strategies and situated academic writing self-efficacy and to examine the relationship and statistical influence between the variables. The design was appropriate because the study measured naturally occurring perceptions and strategy use without intervention. The participants were 120 junior high school students enrolled in public secondary schools in Sto. Tomas District, Division of

Davao del Norte during the 2025-2026 academic year. They were drawn from a population of 210 Grades 7 to 10 students through quota sampling to secure representation across the participating schools. The final sample consisted of 40 students from Santo Tomas National High School, 30 students from Kimamon National High School, 30 students from La Libertad National High School, and 20 students from Tulali-an National High School. Eligible participants were full-time junior high school students who attended regular classes during the conduct of the study. Students with irregular attendance, inconsistent participation, or enrollment in special or alternative programs outside the standard curriculum were excluded to maintain comparability across the sample.

Data were collected with adapted standardized survey questionnaires. Vocabulary learning strategies were measured through a 40-item Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire adapted from Alnan and Abd Halim (2024). The instrument assessed five domains: social strategies, memory strategies, metacognitive strategies, determination strategies, and cognitive strategies. Responses used a five-point Likert scale from 1, Strongly Disagree, to 5, Strongly Agree. Situated academic writing self-efficacy was measured with a 16-item scale adapted from Mitchell et al. (2021). The instrument covered creative identity, relational reflective, and writing essentials. The source instrument reported a Cronbach's alpha of .93, which indicated high internal consistency. Before the main data collection, the adapted questionnaires were reviewed by three specialists in English language teaching and educational research to check content relevance, clarity, and alignment with the variables of the study. A pilot test was also conducted with 30 junior high school students who were not included in the final sample.

The research process followed institutional and school-level authorization requirements. The researcher secured ethics clearance and approval from the Graduate School before data collection. Permission was then requested from the Schools Division Superintendent and the concerned school heads. After approval, the researcher coordinated with school personnel to identify eligible respondents and schedule survey administration at times that did not disrupt regular classes. Informed consent, assent, and parental consent were secured before participation. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw without penalty. The questionnaires were administered in person, and completed forms were checked for completeness before data encoding. No personal identifiers were used in the analysis.

The data were encoded, screened, and analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics. Means and standard deviations were used to describe the extent of each vocabulary learning strategy domain and each situated academic writing self-efficacy domain. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to test the relationship between vocabulary learning strategies and situated academic writing self-efficacy. Multiple linear regression was used to determine the statistical influence of the five vocabulary learning strategy domains on situated academic writing self-efficacy. Decisions on

significance were based on the reported p-values, and descriptive levels followed the interpretive scale used in the source thesis. The study treated the regression results as statistical influence within a correlational model rather than as evidence of experimental causation.

3. Results

Table 1 presents the summary of vocabulary learning strategies. The overall mean was 3.10 with an SD of 0.84, described as Moderate. The highest domain mean was Social Strategies at 3.18, followed by Cognitive Strategies at 3.11, Metacognitive Strategies at 3.10, Determination Strategies at 3.08, and Memory Strategies at 3.04.

Table 1. Summary of vocabulary learning strategies.

Domain	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Social Strategies	0.85	3.18	Moderate
Memory Strategies	0.83	3.04	Moderate
Metacognitive Strategies	0.84	3.10	Moderate
Determination Strategies	0.85	3.08	Moderate
Cognitive Strategies	0.84	3.11	Moderate
Overall	0.84	3.10	Moderate

Table 2 presents the item results for social strategies. The highest mean was 3.31 for the use of extra English information through the Internet, while the lowest mean was 2.94 for communication with foreigners through different types of media. The overall mean for social strategies was 3.18 with an SD of 0.85.

Table 2. Summary of situated academic writing self-efficacy.

Domain	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Creative Identity	0.84	3.33	Moderate
Relational Reflective	0.85	3.24	Moderate
Writing Essentials	0.84	3.27	Moderate
Overall	0.84	3.28	Moderate

Table 3 presents the correlation between vocabulary learning strategies and situated academic writing self-efficacy. Vocabulary learning strategies had a mean of 3.10 and an SD of 0.84, while situated academic writing self-efficacy had a mean of 3.22 and an SD of 0.79 in the correlation table. The correlation coefficient was $r = 0.71$, with $R^2 = 0.50$ and $p = 0.000$.

Table 3. Correlation results.

Variables	r	p-value
Vocabulary Learning Strategies	0.71	0.000
Situated Academic Writing Self-Efficacy		

Table 4 presents the regression coefficients for the five vocabulary learning strategy domains. The constant was 0.88, and all five domains had significant p-values. Metacognitive Strategies had the highest standardized beta coefficient at 0.21, followed by Social Strategies and Determination Strategies at 0.19, Cognitive Strategies at 0.17, and Memory Strategies at 0.15. The reported regression equation was: Situated Academic Writing Self-Efficacy = 0.88 + 0.22(Social) + 0.18(Memory) + 0.26(Metacognitive) + 0.24(Determination) + 0.20(Cognitive).

Table 4. Regression results.

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p-value
Constant	0.88	0.29		3.03	0.000
Social Strategies	0.22	0.27	0.19	2.85	0.004
Memory Strategies	0.18	0.28	0.15	2.60	0.010
Metacognitive Strategies	0.26	0.30	0.21	3.12	0.002
Determination Strategies	0.24	0.29	0.19	2.94	0.003
Cognitive Strategies	0.20	0.28	0.17	2.78	0.005

4. Discussion

The moderate overall level of vocabulary learning strategies shows that the students had access to a range of vocabulary practices but had not yet reached a consistently high level of strategic vocabulary control. This pattern is important because vocabulary strategy use is not only a matter of word exposure. It also reflects how learners choose resources, monitor understanding, remember forms and meanings, and apply words to school tasks. The finding aligns with Schmitt's (1997) view that vocabulary strategy use is multidimensional and with Nation's (2013) argument that word knowledge develops through deliberate attention and repeated contextual use. Recent evidence also supports this interpretation. Alnan and Abd Halim (2024) found that vocabulary learning strategies are relevant to vocabulary size among EFL learners, while Aljasir (2025) showed that the type and quality of strategy use differ across proficiency levels. Thus, the moderate ratings in the present study may reflect a transition stage in which students use strategies but still need more explicit instruction on how and when to apply them.

Social strategies received the highest domain mean among the vocabulary strategy dimensions. This result may mean that vocabulary learning in the study context is strongly tied to interaction with classmates, teachers, and digital resources. For junior high school learners, social vocabulary practices can reduce the isolation of

word study because students can ask questions, compare meanings, and test word use in sentences before they use words in academic texts. Schmitt (1997) positioned social strategies as a key route for discovery and consolidation, and current vocabulary research continues to recognize the role of peer and teacher mediation in strategy development (Alnan & Abd Halim, 2024; Srimanee et al., 2021). However, the moderate item means also show that social strategy use was not yet extensive. Learners may be willing to ask for translations or search the Internet, yet they may have fewer opportunities to use English with authentic audiences or to participate in structured vocabulary-rich collaboration.

Memory strategies had the lowest domain mean, although still within the moderate range. This result is meaningful because retention strategies help learners move words from short-term exposure to usable vocabulary. If memory strategies remain less frequent than other domains, students may recognize words during class activities but have difficulty retrieving those words during academic writing tasks. Nation (2013) stressed that word knowledge requires repeated retrieval and varied encounters, while Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy includes memory strategies because semantic mapping, grouping, association, and affix awareness support durable word storage. The relatively lower mean therefore points to a possible instructional need. Vocabulary activities should not stop at definition recall; they should also include spaced review, word families, semantic networks, and repeated sentence-level application.

The moderate level of situated academic writing self-efficacy indicates that students generally perceived themselves as capable of academic writing tasks, yet their confidence was not stable enough to be classified as high overall. This finding is consistent with the situated nature of writing confidence. Mitchell et al. (2021) argued that academic writing self-efficacy must be understood through the actual demands of tasks, such as originality, reflection, feedback, and discipline-based expression. Mitchell et al. (2023) also emphasized that writing self-efficacy research is useful because it shows how confidence relates to student engagement and pedagogical support. The present results suggest that students may believe they can write with some competence, but they may still need systematic support in planning, revision, source integration, and audience awareness before confidence becomes more durable across academic writing situations.

Creative identity obtained the highest self-efficacy domain mean, while relational reflective obtained the lowest. This pattern suggests that students were relatively confident in originality and voice but less confident in the reflective and audience-oriented aspects of academic writing. In the SAWSES framework, creative identity captures the writer's sense of originality and authorship, while relational reflective self-efficacy concerns feedback use, reader awareness, and the ability to evaluate whether the text communicates its purpose (Mitchell et al., 2021). Doenyas et al. (2023) supported the cross-context relevance of this multidimensional structure through a non-Western adaptation of the scale. The lower relational reflective mean is therefore important. It suggests that students may need more guided peer review,

revision protocols, and audience-based prompts, not only more grammar drills. Such practices can help learners see writing as a social act that requires clarity for readers.

The strong positive correlation between vocabulary learning strategies and situated academic writing self-efficacy confirms the close link between lexical strategy use and confidence in academic writing tasks. With r = 0.71 and R^2 = 0.50, the shared variance was substantial in the sample. This result can be interpreted through cognitive and motivational lenses. From a cognitive perspective, vocabulary strategies can make word selection more manageable, which may free attention for organization, logic, and argument development. From a motivational perspective, successful vocabulary strategy use can create mastery experiences, a major source of self-efficacy in Bandura's (1997) theory. Braten et al. (2023) likewise showed that confidence in academic writing is related to students' perceived ability to manage complex literacy work. In the present study, students who reported stronger vocabulary strategy use also reported stronger confidence in situated academic writing tasks.

The regression analysis adds a more specific interpretation because all five vocabulary strategy domains significantly influenced situated academic writing self-efficacy. Metacognitive strategies had the strongest standardized beta coefficient, which fits the logic of self-regulated learning. Students who plan how to learn words, monitor their understanding, and evaluate strategy success are likely to approach academic writing with more control. This interpretation is supported by Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020), who linked self-efficacy and motivation to self-regulatory processes, and by Zhang (2024), who found that self-regulation strategies relate to language learning motivation, self-efficacy, and creativity. In writing-specific research, Teng (2022), Anggraeni et al. (2025), and Wang et al. (2025) also showed that strategic self-regulation has value for writing development. The present finding extends that evidence to vocabulary strategy domains among junior high school students.

Determination, social, cognitive, and memory strategies also made significant contributions. Determination strategies may help students feel more capable because they provide tools for independent problem-solving when unfamiliar words appear. Social strategies may build confidence through teacher feedback, peer support, and collaborative clarification of meaning. Cognitive strategies may support confidence through sentence practice, repetition, notebooks, and word classification, while memory strategies may support word recall during text production. These domains complement one another. A learner who can independently infer meaning, ask for clarification, store the word, rehearse it, and monitor its use has a broader strategy base for academic writing than a learner who relies on one approach only (Pregoner, 2024). The findings therefore support an integrated vocabulary-writing pedagogy rather than isolated vocabulary lists.

The findings should be read with attention to the limits of the design. The study used self-reported data, quota sampling, and a correlational model, so the significant regression coefficients should not be treated as experimental proof of causation. However, the consistency of the relationship across descriptive, correlational, and

regression results strengthens the practical value of the evidence. For public secondary schools, the results point to the need for vocabulary instruction that is strategic, reflective, and embedded in academic writing tasks. Teachers can help students build confidence by pairing vocabulary discovery and retention activities with paragraph construction, feedback cycles, revision, and source-based writing. In this way, vocabulary learning can become a direct support for situated academic writing self-efficacy rather than a separate language exercise.

5. Conclusion

The study found that junior high school students in public secondary schools in Sto. Tomas District, Division of Davao del Norte had moderate levels of vocabulary learning strategies and situated academic writing self-efficacy. Social strategies obtained the highest mean among the vocabulary learning strategy domains, while memory strategies obtained the lowest. For situated academic writing self-efficacy, creative identity had the highest mean and relational reflective had the lowest.

Vocabulary learning strategies had a strong positive relationship with situated academic writing self-efficacy. The regression model showed that all five strategy domains significantly influenced students' situated academic writing self-efficacy, with metacognitive strategies as the strongest predictor. These findings show that students' confidence in academic writing is closely connected with how they learn, retain, discover, regulate, and apply vocabulary. The results support the integration of explicit vocabulary strategy instruction with academic writing tasks, especially activities that strengthen self-monitoring, reflection, feedback use, and independent word discovery.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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