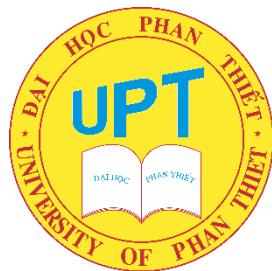


MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & TRAINING

UNIVERSITY OF PHAN THIET



NGUYEN THI NGOC THANH

KEY FACTORS AFFECTING WRITING SKILL OF
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:

A CASE STUDY AT TRAN HUNG DAO HIGH SCHOOL

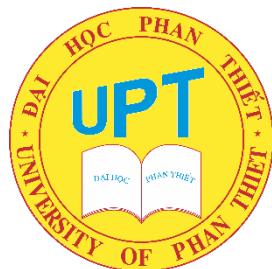
MASTER'S GRADUATION PROJECT

ENGLISH LANGUAGE MAJOR

Binh Thuan Province, 2025

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INSTRUCTOR: LY THI MY HANH, Ph.D.

Binh Thuan Province, 2025

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

I confirm that the work presented in this master graduation project entitled **“Key factors affecting writing skill of high school students: A case study at Tran Hung Dao High School”** has been performed and interpreted solely by myself.

I am submitting this Certificate of Originality for my Master’s Graduation Project titled “Key factors affecting writing skill of high school students: A case study at Tran Hung Dao High School” in fulfillment of the requirements for the Master’s degree in English Language at Phan Thiet University. I solemnly declare that this Master’s Graduation Project represents my own work, conducted under the guidance of Ly Thi My Hanh, Ph.D., and that it has not been previously submitted for any other degree at Phan Thiet University. I affirm that the ideas, concepts, and content presented in this project are my own, and any external materials or sources have been appropriately referenced in accordance with the academic standards of Phan Thiet University. I have not engaged in any form of plagiarism, misrepresentation, or unethical conduct during the research, writing, or presentation of this project. Furthermore, I acknowledge that the intellectual property rights of any external materials used in this project have been respected and adhered to. Any permission required for the use of copyrighted materials has been obtained.

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ABSTRACT

This Master's Graduation Project examines key factors affecting the English writing skill of high school students at Tran Hung Dao High School and explores practical strategies to enhance their writing proficiency. With persistent challenges in students' writing performance despite curricular reforms, this research aimed to identify influential factors and effective instructional strategies. Employing a mixed-methods design, quantitative data were collected through questionnaires from 74 students from both English-specialized and non-specialized classes, complemented by qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews with six students chosen among 74 students and three experienced teachers. The findings revealed notable difficulties in generating ideas and organizing arguments logically due to limited Social Knowledge and insufficient Critical Thinking. Psychological Factors, including anxiety and low self-confidence, significantly impeded students' writing engagement and performance. Effective pedagogical strategies identified in the study include integrating diverse reading materials to build background knowledge, explicit instruction using structured outlining techniques to improve logical coherence, and collaborative writing activities such as peer-review sessions to promote Critical Thinking. Additionally, motivational approaches, notably providing detailed constructive feedback and publicly displaying student writing both physically in classrooms and digitally via platforms such as Google Classroom, significantly improved student motivation and confidence.

Keywords: writing skill, high school students, Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, Psychological Factors

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL : English as a Foreign Language

L2 : Second language

MOET: Ministry of Education and Training

SDT : Self-determination theory

SPSS : Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

English has long been recognized as a dominant global language, serving as a key medium for international communication in fields such as education, commerce, and diplomacy (Crystal, 2003). Over the past two decades, Vietnam has undertaken multiple reforms to elevate English language proficiency across all levels of schooling, reflecting the country's increasing integration into the global economy and higher education arenas (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021). The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has played a central role in this process, progressively revising curricula to better align English instruction with communicative objectives.

A significant milestone in these reforms is the introduction of the 2018 General Education Program, codified under Circular No. 32/2018/TT-BGDDT. This policy underscores a paradigm shift from teacher-centered instruction focused on memorizing linguistic forms toward learner-centered approaches that prioritize communicative competence. According to the MOET guidelines, language knowledge, encompassing vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, is now regarded primarily as a tool for developing the four main language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The overarching goal is to equip students with practical communicative abilities and this enables them to engage effectively in both academic and real-world contexts.

Within the Vietnamese high school system, writing is uniquely positioned as one of the most challenging but indispensable skills. Unlike receptive skills (listening and reading), which focus on comprehension, or speaking, which often benefits from real-time interaction, writing demands sustained cognitive effort, careful organization, and clarity of expression (Hyland, 2003). Such requirements become even more obvious in the era of globalization, where written communication which ranges from emails and reports to scholarly essays constitutes a substantial portion of academic and professional discourse.

Tran Hung Dao High School in Phan Thiet City represents a reflection of these broader shifts in English education. Renowned for its competitive admission process, the school admits only a limited number of students into English-specialized and non-specialized classes. These students generally exhibit strong foundational language skills, which align with the performance benchmarks set out in the 2018 curriculum. Despite this powerful linguistic background, internal reports and preliminary assessments indicate that many learners continue to face difficulties in producing coherent, well-structured written texts. Their struggles appear not to stem from gaps in vocabulary or grammar but rather from challenges in synthesizing ideas, constructing logical arguments, and adapting their language to various contexts, which are core elements of what the 2018 curriculum deems essential for communicative competence (MOET, 2018).

The ongoing pursuit of improved writing outcomes has significant implications for both academic success and future career opportunities. Mastery of writing not only improves performance in high-stakes exams but also fosters Critical Thinking and creativity, skills that are increasingly valued in the 21st-century global landscape. Consequently, an in-depth examination of the factors influencing writing proficiency at Tran Hung Dao High School and how these factors interact with the school's competitive setting is crucial. By better understanding the barriers that hinder effective writing, educators and school administrators can devise strategies that more fully realize the communicative aims outlined by the 2018 High School Education Program.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Despite a strong language foundation and a selective admission process at Tran Hung Dao High School, effective writing remains a notable concern. A comprehensive survey revealed that approximately 65% of students struggled to produce coherent, well-structured essays and to generate meaningful ideas. Interestingly, this problem does not stem from a lack of basic grammar or vocabulary, areas that are well supported by the 2018 General Education Program (Circular No. 32/2018/TT-BGDĐT), but rather appears tied to higher-order

competencies. These skills encompass organizing arguments, constructing logical flow, and applying critical analysis, core competencies emphasized in the 2018 MOET curriculum.

Survey data further indicate that about 80% of students do not view vocabulary or grammar as significant obstacles. Such findings point to other underlying factors, notably Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors.

The competitive environment at Tran Hung Dao High School, which admits only 70 students out of about 400 applicants registered for selection into two English-specialized classes (a ratio of about 1:6) and three non-specialized classes select 90 out of 715 candidates, who did not pass the entrance exams for the seven specialized subjects: Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Literature, English, History, Geography, and Informatics (a ratio of about 1:8), may intensify these issues. While the strict admission standards highlight students' strong linguistic capacities, they also introduce heightened academic pressure. Such stress can prevent creativity and risk-taking in writing, thus impeding the communicative aims set forth by the 2018 curriculum.

Addressing these concerns is crucial for multiple reasons. In the short term, improved writing skill can help students perform better in class assignments and standardized exams, boosting academic success. In the long run, proficiency in writing is fundamental for higher education, international certifications (e.g., IELTS), and global career opportunities. Consequently, it becomes imperative to identify how Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors collectively hinder or could potentially enhance students' writing performance.

By investigating these elements, this study aims to propose effective interventions and pedagogical approaches that go beyond rote memorization of language mechanics. Ultimately, the goal is to help students at Tran Hung Dao High School translate their robust language competence into coherent, persuasive written communication, fully aligning with the communicative objectives of the 2018 General Education Program.

1.3 Aims and objectives of the study

Building upon the challenges identified earlier, this study aims to identify and analyze the key factors, specifically Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors, affecting the writing skill of high school students at Tran Hung Dao High School, and to propose practical strategies to enhance teachers' instructional practices and students' independent learning of writing.

To achieve this aim, the study will pursue the following specific objectives. These objectives include:

- Review existing literature to explore how Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors influence writing skill among high school students.
- Collect qualitative and quantitative data from students and teachers at Tran Hung Dao High School to assess the impact of these factors on students' writing performance.
- Analyze the collected data to determine the significance of each factor in hindering students' writing abilities.
- Propose teaching strategies for teachers to address these factors in the classroom, alongside self-study techniques for students to improve their writing skill independently.

1.4 Research questions

To tackle the writing difficulties encountered by students at Tran Hung Dao High School, as highlighted in earlier sections, this study is driven by two core research questions:

1. What are the key factors negatively influencing the writing skill of high school students at Tran Hung Dao High School?
2. What practical strategies can be implemented to help students improve their writing skill, taking into account the identified key factors?

These questions are carefully defined to investigate the key factors impeding students' writing skill and to devise practical solutions that suit the school's distinct

educational context, which includes both English-specialized and non-specialized classes.

1.5 Scope of the study

The scope of this study is confined to the investigation of key factors negatively affecting the writing skill of high school students at Tran Hung Dao High School in Phan Thiet City. The study will focus on two specific 11th-grade classes: one English-specialized class and one non-specialized class, encompassing 74 students. The school features two distinct educational tracks: English-specialized classes (Lớp chuyên Anh) and non-specialized classes (Lớp không chuyên). English-specialized classes include students who demonstrate a high level of proficiency in English and aim to achieve advanced linguistic competencies. The curriculum is designed with intensive English language instruction, emphasizing skills such as writing, speaking, and critical analysis. Non-specialized classes consist of students with varying levels of English proficiency, primarily focusing on foundational language skills to meet general curriculum requirements. Writing instruction in these classes often addresses basic linguistic and organizational challenges. The research period spans six months, from October 2024 to March 2025 for the following reasons:

Writing is a skill that requires sustained practice and iterative feedback to show measurable improvement. A six-month timeframe allows for adequate observation of changes in students' writing performance and the impact of implemented interventions. This period aligns with a semester in Vietnam's academic calendar, enabling the research to integrate seamlessly with students' regular learning schedules and minimize disruptions. The six-month duration balances the need for comprehensive data collection with the logistical feasibility of conducting research within the school's operational and administrative framework.

The study aims to explore the impact of various internal and external factors on students' writing proficiency, including their Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking skills and Psychological Factors.

The study will utilize a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, including questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The findings will be contextualized within the specific educational environment of Tran Hung Dao High School, offering insights into the unique challenges faced by students in this setting. The results will contribute to the development of targeted interventions and instructional practices designed to enhance writing skill among high school students in similar educational contexts.

1.6 The significance of the study

This study is meaningful because it focuses on the specific context of Tran Hung Dao High School, a Vietnamese high school with its own unique educational environment. While many studies have explored writing skill and the factors affecting them, this research centers on a particular school in Phan Thiet City, known for its mix of English-specialized and non-specialized classes. This focus makes the study relevant and practical for the school's specific needs.

Tran Hung Dao High School is distinguished by its diverse student population and the distinct pedagogical approaches adopted in its English-specialized and non-specialized classes. By examining how factors like Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking skills, and Psychological Factors influence writing skill in this setting, the research offers insights that are directly applicable to this school.

The main value of this study lies in its practical contributions. It aims to provide evidence-based recommendations to improve teaching and learning of writing skill at Tran Hung Dao High School. For teachers, these suggestions could help refine instructional methods and address students' specific challenges, such as limited idea generation or fear of errors. For students, the study offers potential strategies to enhance their writing abilities and confidence, empowering them to overcome barriers independently. Additionally, school administrators could use the findings to inform curriculum adjustments or support programs that strengthen English education. While tailored to Tran Hung Dao High School, the insights may

also benefit other similar high schools in Vietnam, particularly those emphasizing English learning.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a comprehensive literature review of key factors influencing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing skill among high school students, with a focus on Tran Hung Dao High School.

2.1 Writing skill in high schools

2.1.1 The importance of writing skill in EFL contexts

Writing skill is a vital part of high school education, providing students with key abilities for academic success and future career preparation in a globalized world where English proficiency is highly valued (Hyland, 2003). In secondary education, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing is crucial for students to perform well in national examinations, such as Vietnam's high school graduation tests that include essay tasks, and to meet the demands of higher education and workplace communication (Le, 2019). Beyond mastering grammar and vocabulary, writing helps students express ideas clearly and develop Critical Thinking, making it an essential aspect of their learning process (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). For example, students with strong writing abilities can create effective applications for scholarships or job opportunities, showing how this skill matters outside school (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), writing stands out among language skills because it requires planning and effort that speaking does not, giving students a way to show deeper understanding. In Vietnam, where English is taught as a foreign language, writing helps students compete in a world that values clear communication (Pham, 2020). This skill also builds confidence and prepares them for real-life tasks, like writing reports or emails, which are common in many jobs.

2.1.2 Writing as a productive skill in the 2018 MOET curriculum

The 2018 General Education Program introduced by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) encourages a communicative approach wherein writing is no longer treated as a peripheral skill (MOET, 2018). The curriculum sets explicit goals for developing learners' ability to express ideas coherently and

appropriately across different contexts. Such an approach aims to balance linguistic accuracy with functional fluency, promoting writing tasks that incorporate real-world communication scenarios, for instance, composing emails, reflective essays, or opinion pieces on contemporary issues.

However, implementing these curricular shifts can be challenging. Teachers, especially in large public high schools, may face constraints such as limited classroom hours, large class sizes, and an exam-driven culture that prioritizes discrete language items (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) over the iterative process of drafting and revising. Even when communicative writing tasks are introduced, learners might still rely heavily on memorized structures or formulas, thus missing the opportunity to develop critical and creative dimensions of writing (Nunan, 2015). For high-achieving students such as those at Tran Hung Dao High School, these constraints can exacerbate the gap between knowing linguistic rules and applying them to produce meaningful written work.

2.1.3 Challenges of developing writing skill in high schools

Despite its importance, developing EFL writing skill remains a significant challenge for high school students. Many learners struggle to produce meaningful content and arrange ideas logically because they lack knowledge about real-world topics (Flowerdew, 2013). This is often made worse by teaching methods that focus heavily on grammar and vocabulary instead of thinking skills (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). In Vietnam, where speaking comes more naturally to most people, writing demands more effort and planning, making it harder to learn (Le, 2019). For instance, a student might talk easily about a topic like family but find it tough to write a clear paragraph about it (Pham, 2020). Students often avoid writing because it feels complex and takes time, yet teachers continue to teach it since it improves Critical Thinking skills and prepares them for important tasks like exams and work (Graham & Perin, 2007). Research also shows that limited practice with real topics leaves students unable to connect their ideas well (Ellis, 2009). These problems point to the need to look at factors like Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking skills,

and Feelings such as anxiety or motivation to help students improve their EFL writing skill.

2.2 Social Knowledge in EFL writing

2.2.1 Definitions, role in communicative competence

Social Knowledge in language learning can be understood as the understanding of cultural norms, social conventions, and contextual factors that influence how messages are formed and interpreted (Kim, 2020). Unlike purely linguistic components such as vocabulary or grammar, Social Knowledge involves knowing what to say, when to say it, and how to say it in ways that resonate with the audience's cultural and social expectations. In the context of writing, this dimension becomes particularly relevant when learners are expected to produce texts that communicate effectively across different genres and purposes (Li, 2022).

From the perspective of communicative competence, Social Knowledge correlates closely with sociolinguistic competence, which Canale and Swain (1980) define as the ability to use language appropriately in various social contexts. While the 2018 General Education Program (MOET, 2018) in Vietnam emphasizes communicative skills, much classroom practice has traditionally focused on grammatical competence. As a result, even students with strong linguistic proficiency can struggle to generate culturally appropriate content or structure arguments in ways that align with the expectations of academic or real-world communities (Hyland, 2003). For instance, a student might craft grammatically correct sentences but fail to present ideas persuasively due to a lack of awareness about the target audience's values, background knowledge, or discourse conventions (Brown, 2007).

At Tran Hung Dao High School, where many learners enter with considerable English vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, the challenge often lies in transferring that knowledge to writing tasks requiring audience awareness and contextual relevance. When students lack exposure to diverse perspectives or real-life applications of English, their written output may appear formulaic, lacking

the nuance and depth that reflect a command of social and cultural contexts. Consequently, addressing Social Knowledge is essential to fulfilling the communicative aims of the 2018 curriculum, as it bridges the gap between mechanical correctness and meaningful interaction (MOET, 2018).

2.2.2 Schema theory and background knowledge acquisition

Schema theory explains that learners interpret new information through cognitive frameworks (schemas) formed by their prior knowledge and experiences (Rumelhart, 1980). In EFL writing, these schemas encompass both content knowledge (facts and concepts related to a given topic) and formal knowledge (awareness of text organization, genre conventions, and rhetorical patterns) (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2023). When these schemas are activated, learners can generate more coherent texts and integrate new information efficiently. Conversely, underdeveloped schemas often lead to fragmented or overly simplistic compositions, as students struggle to link ideas meaningfully (Hyland, 2003).

Empirical research underlines the advantages of schema-based activities for writing. Bayat (2014) found that tasks designed to tap into learners' existing knowledge significantly improved their ability to produce detailed and contextually relevant essays. Systematic exposure to diverse reading materials, such as articles, opinion pieces, and short narratives, expands learners' schemas and fosters deeper engagement with real-world themes (Tardy, 2009). This enriched background knowledge, in turn, underpins creativity and coherence in writing (Nunan, 2015). By consciously activating schemas, teachers can guide students to connect new ideas with established frameworks, reducing uncertainty and enhancing writing fluency (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). Within the 2018 MOET curriculum (MOET, 2018), schema activation aligns well with communicative goals, ensuring that students at high-performing institutions like Tran Hung Dao High School develop not only linguistic accuracy but also the contextual and organizational skills essential for effective written communication.

2.2.3 Constructivist learning theory

Constructivist learning theory suggests that learners actively build or “construct” knowledge rather than merely receiving it passively (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1990). Within this paradigm, new information is integrated into existing cognitive frameworks through continuous interaction, exploration, and reflection. When applied to EFL writing instruction, constructivism suggests that meaningful learning occurs when students engage in authentic tasks and relate them to prior experiences. By reading a range of materials such as articles, short stories, and opinion pieces, students accumulate the background knowledge and contextual awareness vital for producing coherent and contextually relevant texts (Al-Ghazo & Al-Zoubi, 2018).

In a constructivist-oriented classroom, discussions, debates, and collaborative projects play a pivotal role in stimulating deeper thinking. As learners interpret and analyze texts, they refine their perspectives, formulate new ideas, and integrate insights into their subsequent written outputs (Nunan, 2015). This iterative process prompts students to question assumptions, draw connections between diverse sources, and articulate arguments with clarity and confidence. Over time, consistent interaction with challenging readings helps them expand both their linguistic range and their analytical capabilities (Hyland, 2003).

Empirical findings underscore the effectiveness of this approach. Al-Ghazo and Al-Zoubi (2018) report that reflective reading assignments and class debates, core features of constructivist pedagogy, led to significant improvements in EFL writing proficiency among high school students. By emphasizing active learning, constructivist methods provide a bridge between reading and writing, ensuring that learners internalize and transform newly acquired knowledge, ultimately enhancing their ability to express complex ideas in written form.

2.2.4 Reading-to-write model

The reading-to-write model suggests a symbiotic relationship between reading input and writing output, highlighting that the comprehension strategies and

language features encountered through reading directly inform students' written production (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). Under this model, learners accumulate ideas, syntactic structures, and rhetorical patterns by engaging with a wide range of texts, which they can later adapt or transform to suit their own communicative goals (Hyland, 2003). When students read extensively, they gain exposure to various discourse styles such as argumentative, expository, and narrative writing and internalize the structural and linguistic nuances characteristic of each genre (Carrell, 1988).

Empirical studies underscore the effectiveness of this approach in improving written composition. For instance, Lee and Schallert (2018) demonstrated that learners who consistently participated in extensive reading scored higher in content richness, organization, and coherence than those who relied primarily on textbook exercises. These findings suggest that reading serves as a cognitive reservoir, enabling writers to draw upon diverse vocabulary, stylistic devices, and cultural references when generating original texts (Nunan, 2015). In the context of the 2018 MOET curriculum, this model aligns well with communicative language teaching principles, as it fosters integrated skill development rather than isolating reading and writing into separate domains (MOET, 2018).

2.2.5 Thematic learning and its role in writing

Thematic learning weaves reading and writing instruction around central themes, allowing learners to explore interconnected ideas in a focused yet varied context (Brinton et al., 2003). By presenting multiple texts related to a single theme such as environmental conservation, cultural celebrations, or technological innovations, students encounter recurring vocabulary, conceptual frameworks, and perspectives that deepen their content knowledge. This approach aligns with the communicative goals of the 2018 MOET curriculum (MOET, 2018), which encourages instruction that integrates skills and fosters authentic language use. As Curtain and Dahlberg (2004) observe, repeated exposure to thematically linked content not only reinforces linguistic elements but also promotes cognitive

engagement by prompting students to draw connections and compare viewpoints across various sources.

When learners are asked to reflect on these thematic inputs through guided discussions, note-taking exercises, or written summaries, they naturally internalize key concepts, lexical items, and rhetorical structures (Brown, 2007). The reflection process helps them synthesize ideas, articulate their personal stances, and craft coherent arguments in subsequent writing tasks. Empirical evidence from Vietnam supports the efficacy of this model: Tran (2020) found that students who engaged in thematic units exhibited higher levels of motivation and produced more content-rich and organized essays than peers who studied unconnected topics. The gains in writing performance were attributed to students' deeper familiarity with the subject matter, as well as their expanded repertoire of relevant language and discourse patterns. Consequently, thematic learning stands out as a powerful method for integrating Social Knowledge development with practical writing skill enhancement.

2.3 Critical Thinking in EFL writing

2.3.1 Definition and importance

Critical Thinking in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing refers to the ability to analyze, evaluate, and organize ideas to create clear and logical texts (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). This skill is vital because it helps students go beyond simple language use to develop strong arguments and express thoughts well (Hyland, 2003). For high school students learning English in Vietnam, Critical Thinking is crucial for writing tasks like essays, which need careful planning and reasoning. Without it, students often write texts that are unclear or poorly structured, a common issue in EFL classrooms (Pham, 2018). Richards and Rodgers (2014) note that Critical Thinking makes writing more meaningful by connecting ideas to real situations. For example, a student who can evaluate reasons for learning English might write a better essay than one who just lists facts. In Vietnam, where EFL writing is part of national exams, this skill is key to success in school and beyond (Le, 2019). Ellis (2009) adds that Critical Thinking helps students

understand their topics better, improving their confidence. It also supports learning by encouraging them to think deeply about what they write (Ennis, 1993). This makes Critical Thinking skill an essential part of EFL writing.

2.3.2 Bloom's taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy, first introduced by Bloom et al. (1956) and later revised by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), remains a foundational framework for fostering Critical Thinking skills across educational settings. This taxonomy outlines six levels of cognitive processing: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. In the EFL writing classroom, the upper three levels, analyzing, evaluating, and creating, are particularly relevant because they demand that learners move beyond rote memorization and direct imitation, engaging instead in deeper exploration and original expression (Facione, 1990). For instance, when tasked with writing an essay on school rules, students must analyze various perspectives, evaluate their significance, and then synthesize their own coherent argument (Ennis, 1993).

Compared to simpler tasks such as copying sentences or recalling facts, higher-order writing tasks challenge learners to reorganize information, detect underlying assumptions, and substantiate claims with evidence. Richards and Rodgers (2014) emphasize that Critical Thinking enhances not only the structural quality of writing but also its clarity and persuasiveness. By applying Bloom's higher levels of cognition, students learn to structure their ideas more logically, leading to essays that demonstrate both linguistic proficiency and intellectual depth.

In Vietnam, where grammar and exam preparation often dominate teaching approaches, Bloom's Taxonomy offers a framework for shifting instruction toward deeper cognitive engagement (Pham, 2018). Encouraging EFL learners to analyze, evaluate, and create content can help them develop essential problem-solving and communication skills, thereby aligning classroom practice with the communicative objectives of the 2018 High School Education Program (MOET, 2018). Ultimately, focusing on higher-order thinking compels students to question, refine, and adapt

their ideas. Those are critical steps in producing well-reasoned, compelling written texts.

2.3.3 Impact on EFL writing

Critical Thinking has a clear impact on EFL writing by improving how students structure and argue their ideas. Hyland (2003) explains that EFL writers need Critical Thinking to make their texts logical and convincing to readers. Research shows that students with weak Critical Thinking skills often write texts that lack order or depth (Liu & Stapleton, 2014). For instance, a student might list reasons for learning English but not explain them well. In Vietnam, Pham (2018) found that many high school students write essays with weak arguments because they lack practice in analyzing ideas, leading to low scores. Tran (2019) adds that without Critical Thinking, students' writing stays simple and unconnected, missing clear points.

On the positive side, Critical Thinking helps students write better texts. Liu and Stapleton (2014) showed that Chinese EFL students trained to evaluate ideas wrote essays with 15% better structure after 12 weeks. In Vietnam, Tran (2019) found that students who compared local and global topics improved their essay scores by 18% over eight weeks. Richards and Rodgers (2014) note that Critical Thinking makes writing more useful by linking ideas to real life, like explaining why rules matter. Nguyen (2021) adds that Vietnamese students with strong Critical Thinking write longer, clearer texts because they can organize their thoughts well. This shows Critical Thinking is key to improving EFL writing quality.

2.4 Psychological Factors in EFL writing

2.4.1 Definition and importance

Psychological Factors in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing refer to emotions, attitudes, and beliefs that affect how students approach and complete writing tasks, including anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and motivation (Botes et al., 2020). These factors are vital because they shape students' willingness to start, their effort during writing, and their ability to finish tasks successfully (Hyland,

2003). For high school students learning English in Vietnam, Psychological Factors can either hold them back or push them forward in writing. Anxiety and fear might stop them from trying, while motivation can encourage them to work harder (Dörnyei, 2001). In Vietnam, where English is a foreign language taught mostly in classrooms, these factors often determine how much time and energy students put into writing (Pham, 2020). Research shows that students who feel nervous, scared, or uninterested produce weaker texts with fewer ideas and less structure (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). For example, a student anxious during an exam might skip essay questions, while a motivated one might write a full page (Le, 2019). Richards and Rodgers (2014) note that understanding these feelings helps teachers improve student writing. Ellis (2009) adds that Psychological Factors influence not just performance but also how students see themselves as writers. When students know their work might be shared, they often feel more motivated to write well (Reeve et al., 2004). This makes Psychological Factors a key focus for EFL writing success.

2.4.2 Horwitz's foreign language anxiety theory

Horwitz's foreign language anxiety theory (1986) offers a pivotal framework for understanding the emotional and psychological challenges learners face when writing in a second or foreign language. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), this anxiety often stems from several interrelated concerns, including fear of failure, apprehension about negative judgment, and uncertainty regarding the task at hand. In the realm of EFL writing, these fears can be magnified by the permanence of the written text, where grammar and spelling errors remain visible for instructors and peers to scrutinize (Horwitz, 2001). Unlike speaking, where minor inaccuracies might be overlooked or forgotten, written mistakes are documented, potentially intensifying students' fear of evaluation. This heightened sense of vulnerability can lead learners to avoid lengthy written assignments or to rely on formulaic expressions that limit the scope for creativity and genuine language exploration (Saito & Samimy, 1996).

In exam-driven contexts like Vietnam, Horwitz's theory is especially salient, as high-stakes tests often emphasize accuracy and correctness over the iterative

process of drafting and revising (Pham, 2020). Students may feel additional pressure to produce error-free essays, fuelling anxiety and discouraging them from attempting more challenging sentence structures or sophisticated arguments. Over time, this avoidance can undermine both writing fluency and confidence in self-expression. Consequently, Horwitz's framework suggests that educators should prioritize reducing anxiety whether through constructive feedback, peer collaboration, or scaffolded writing tasks to foster a supportive environment where students are more willing to take risks. By alleviating the fear of negative judgment, teachers can help learners focus on skill development rather than error avoidance, thus improving overall EFL writing performance (Horwitz et al., 1986).

2.4.3 Motivation theory

Motivation is a critical psychological factor influencing students' success in EFL writing. Various theoretical frameworks provide insights into how motivation operates within foreign language learning contexts, each highlighting different aspects of motivation. Dörnyei's (2001) motivational self-system, originally termed the L2 motivational self-system, proposes that motivation arises primarily from learners' future-oriented self-images, distinguishing between an ideal self-reflecting students' aspirations such as becoming fluent English users and an ought-to self, related to obligations and expectations from teachers or family. By contrast, Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory emphasizes learners' self-perceived capability, suggesting that students who believe in their ability to write effectively tend to engage more actively, approach writing tasks confidently, and persist in overcoming challenges, while those with low self-efficacy tend to avoid difficult tasks.

Expanding on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory (SDT) describes how students' motivation can be nurtured through meeting their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Unlike Dörnyei and Bandura, who focus on individual beliefs and aspirations, SDT emphasizes creating supportive classroom environments to enhance learners' intrinsic motivation, highlighting that students feel more

motivated when their sense of competence and autonomy is actively supported through positive and constructive teacher feedback.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1970) complements these theories by emphasizing a structured progression of motivational needs, from basic physiological and safety needs to esteem needs and self-actualization. Particularly relevant to EFL writing is the esteem need, reflecting students' desire for recognition and respect from peers and teachers. Satisfying this need through practices like displaying students' written work publicly can significantly enhance their motivation and reduce writing anxiety.

2.4.4 Impact on EFL writing

Psychological Factors significantly affect students' performance in EFL writing. Anxiety, as described by Botes et al. (2020), typically results in avoidance behaviors, where students produce shorter, simpler texts to reduce the risk of errors and negative evaluation. Vietnamese students experiencing high anxiety often limit their writing complexity, leading to superficial content lacking depth and creativity (Tran, 2020). Conversely, motivation theories suggest positive psychological impacts on EFL writing. According to Dörnyei's (2001) motivational self system, students driven by clear, meaningful goals produce more extensive, detailed, and well-structured texts. Similarly, Bandura's (1997) concept of self-efficacy shows that students who believe strongly in their writing abilities engage more actively and persistently, produce higher-quality writing.

Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory further highlights that when students' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled through supportive teaching practices, they become intrinsically motivated, leading to better engagement and improved writing outcomes. Specifically, practices such as constructive teacher feedback significantly increase students' feelings of competence and autonomy, thereby enhancing their intrinsic motivation. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1970) complements these insights by underscoring the importance of esteem needs which are students' desires for recognition and positive regard from peers and teachers. Satisfying these needs through activities

like student work displays in classrooms has been found to substantially boost motivation, lower anxiety, and promote greater effort and improved writing performance among Vietnamese EFL students (Phan, 2021). Thus, addressing both anxiety reduction and motivational enhancement through targeted pedagogical practices is essential for effective EFL writing instruction.

2.5 Previous studies

Previous studies on EFL writing provide a strong foundation for understanding factors that influence students' writing skill, including Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and motivation.

2.5.1 Foreign studies

Foreign studies have extensively explored factors influencing EFL writing skill, notably Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors. Hyland (2003) emphasized the importance of Social Knowledge, showing students familiar with cultural and social contexts produce more engaging and coherent texts. Flowerdew (2013) further highlighted the difficulty students face when lacking knowledge about unfamiliar social topics, resulting in superficial and limited writing content. Critical Thinking has also been studied significantly. Liu and Stapleton (2014) demonstrated that structured Critical Thinking training greatly enhanced students' ability to organize and articulate logical arguments in their writing. Richards and Rodgers (2014) supported this, showing improved essay coherence through Critical Thinking-oriented tasks. Psychological Factors, such as anxiety and motivation, are extensively examined as well. Botes et al. (2020) noted how anxiety negatively influences writing performance, leading students to produce shorter and simpler texts. Conversely, Dörnyei (2001) and Ryan and Deci (2000) emphasized how positive motivation, reinforced by strategies such as public displays of student work, significantly improves writing quality and engagement.

2.5.2 Vietnamese studies

Research conducted within Vietnam aligns closely with international findings but highlights contextual nuances specific to Vietnamese high schools. Le

(2019) noted that Vietnamese students often face difficulties generating meaningful content due to limited background knowledge of social issues. Similarly, Pham (2018) and Tran (2019) found that traditional grammar-focused teaching approaches inadequately prepare students for tasks requiring higher-order thinking skills, such as structuring coherent and logical arguments found that integrating Critical Thinking tasks into teaching practices significantly improved students' argumentative writing abilities. Psychological Factors have also been addressed in Vietnam. Tran (2020) revealed how anxiety substantially reduces students' writing performance, whereas Nguyen and Nguyen (2021) demonstrated the effectiveness of motivational strategies, including constructive feedback and student work displays, in enhancing motivation and reducing anxiety. Hoang (2020) supported these findings, highlighting that public recognition significantly boosts students' self-confidence and writing performance, closely aligning with Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

2.6 Research gaps

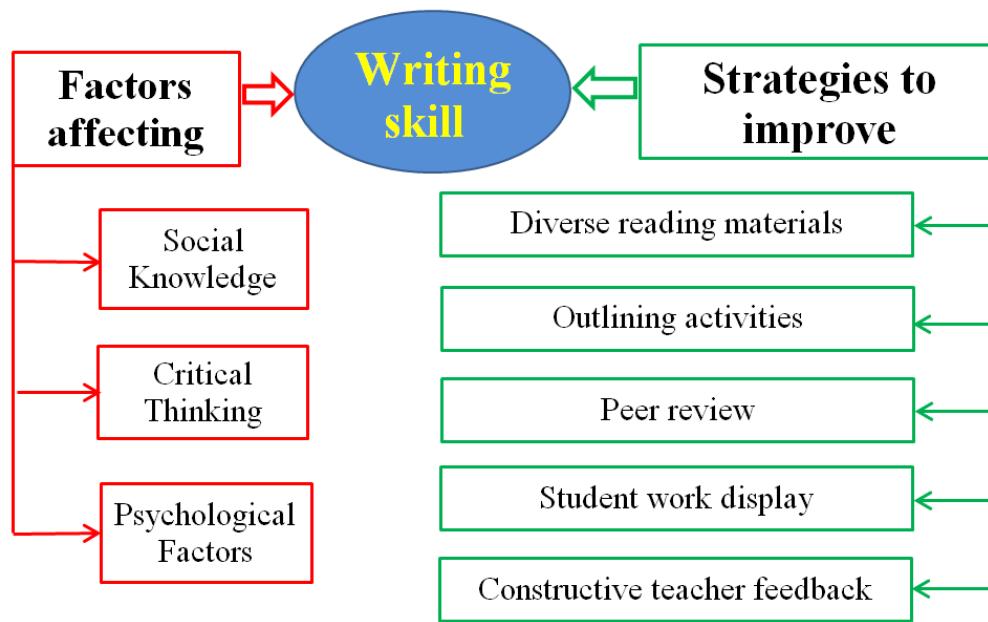
Despite extensive studies on EFL writing, several important gaps remain, particularly within the specific context of Tran Hung Dao High School. Most existing research has separately explored the factors of Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and psychological influences, often without examining the interplay among these elements comprehensively. While international studies provide foundational insights, their findings may not directly apply to Vietnamese students due to cultural and educational differences. Moreover, previous Vietnamese studies have mainly emphasized specific, isolated aspects, such as grammar-oriented instruction or anxiety reduction, without considering how these factors interact to collectively influence writing skill.

Furthermore, the majority of research conducted in Vietnam has predominantly targeted urban or university contexts, leaving limited insight into the unique challenges and needs of students in specialized provincial high schools like Tran Hung Dao. Research on practical strategies such as integrating diverse reading materials, thematic learning, structured Critical Thinking exercises, and

psychologically supportive classroom practices has rarely been conducted comprehensively in high school contexts. Consequently, there is an urgent need to investigate how Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Influences interact and affect writing proficiency, specifically through clearly defined instructional strategies relevant to the student population at Tran Hung Dao High School. This study aims to fill these gaps by examining these combined influences and proposing integrated, context-specific pedagogical interventions to enhance EFL writing skill effectively.

2.7 Conceptual framework

From the discussion in the Literature Review, the researcher developed the conceptual framework of the study, which is displayed in Figure 2.1.



This study investigates key factors influencing high school students' writing skill at Tran Hung Dao High School, specifically focusing on Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors. Based on theoretical foundations reviewed in Chapter 2, practical strategies and tasks have been selected to address these identified factors effectively. To enhance students' Social Knowledge grounded in schema theory (Rumelhart, 1980; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2023) and the

reading-to-write model (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996), this study employs diverse reading materials exposure and thematic reading & reflection assignments. These strategies aim to broaden students' background knowledge, providing richer content for their writing tasks.

To foster Critical Thinking, informed by Constructivist Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1990), the study adopts Outlining and Group discussions. These practices support students in organizing ideas logically, critically evaluating content, and articulating arguments clearly and coherently.

Finally, addressing Psychological Factors such as writing anxiety and low self-confidence, this research integrates Product display and Recognition activities, rooted in motivational theories. These practical tasks aim to reduce students' anxiety, enhance their self-confidence, and strengthen their motivation by showcasing and acknowledging their writing achievements in a supportive learning environment.

These theoretically informed strategies form the study's conceptual framework, clearly illustrating how each selected practical approach addresses specific factors identified as influencing students' writing skill.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This study employs a descriptive research design combined with a case study approach to explore the key factors influencing the writing skill of high school students at Tran Hung Dao High School. The descriptive research design, as supported by Creswell (2014), allows for a systematic investigation of students' writing challenges in their natural learning environment without manipulating variables. This approach is suitable for examining multiple interrelated factors, Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological barriers, that shape students' writing performance, as established in the conceptual framework (Chapter 2).

The case study approach is adopted to gain an in-depth understanding of writing difficulties within a specific educational setting. Tran Hung Dao High School, with its dual-class system consisting of one English-specialized class and one non-specialized class, provides a unique context for examining how different learning conditions influence students' writing development. The case study approach allows for a more contextualized and detailed exploration, ensuring findings are applicable to similar educational settings.

To ensure a comprehensive analysis, this study follows a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Questionnaires will be administered to students to gather quantitative data on their experiences, perceptions, and challenges in writing, focusing on content generation, coherence, and engagement. Meanwhile, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with students and teachers to provide deeper insights into classroom dynamics, instructional methods, and students' psychological attitudes toward writing. This combination of methods, as suggested by Creswell (2014), enhances the study's reliability and validity by allowing for triangulation, which cross-verifies findings through different data sources.

The collected data will be analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Specifically, statistical analysis using SPSS will be conducted to process survey responses, while qualitative data from interviews will be thematically coded to identify recurring patterns related to the factors affecting writing skill. The reliability of the questionnaire will be evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, with detailed procedures discussed in Section 3.5 Data Analysis.

This research design is structured to ensure a rigorous investigation into the factors influencing students' writing skill while maintaining alignment with the study's research questions and objectives. Based on this framework, the selection of participants and data collection procedures are further detailed in Section 3.2 Participants.

3.2 Participants

The participants for this study will be selected from two 11th-grade classes at Tran Hung Dao High School: one English-specialized class and one non-specialized class. This selection allows for a comparison between students who receive focused English language instruction and those who follow a general curriculum. By comparing these two groups, the study aims to identify the specific factors that differentially impact the writing skill of students with varying levels of English exposure and instruction.

The decision to focus on 11th-grade students is based on their critical stage in academic development, where they are expected to refine their writing skill in preparation for the final year of high school and subsequent university entrance exams. Additionally, 11th graders have sufficient experience with English instruction to provide meaningful insights, unlike 10th graders who are still adjusting to high school, or 12th graders who are primarily focused on exam preparation.

The total number of student participants was 74, with equal representation from each class: 37 students from the English-specialized class (11A1) and 37 students from the non-specialized class (11C3). To ensure diversity and

representation in the sample, gender distribution within each class was also carefully considered.

Table 3.1 Gender distribution of student participants

Class	Male	Female	Total
11A1 (English-specialized Class)	16	21	37
11C3 (Non-specialized Class)	4	33	37
Total	20	54	74

(Source: Tran Hung Dao High School in school year 2024 - 2025)

To gain deeper insights into students' perceptions and experiences with English writing, a purposive sampling approach was applied to select six students from the total of 74 questionnaire respondents for semi-structured interviews. The selection criteria were established to ensure diversity in perspectives while maintaining alignment with the research objectives. The criteria for selecting the six students were as follows:

Class representation: Three students were chosen from the English-specialized class (11A1), and three from the non-specialized class (11C3). This ensures a balanced comparison between students receiving intensive English instruction and those following the core English curriculum.

Writing proficiency levels: Students were selected based on their self-reported confidence and performance in writing, as indicated in the questionnaire responses. The sample included students with high, moderate, and low confidence in their writing abilities to capture a broad spectrum of experiences and challenges.

Engagement in writing activities: Preference was given to students who reported different levels of engagement with writing activities outside of school.

Critical Thinking and Psychological Factors: Students were selected based on their responses to the questionnaire items related to Critical Thinking and Psychological Factors affecting writing (e.g., anxiety, motivation, and confidence).

This allowed for an exploration of how cognitive and emotional factors influence writing performance.

Willingness to participate: Only students who expressed interest and agreed to participate in the interview were included in the sample to ensure authentic and meaningful discussions.

These criteria were designed to capture diverse perspectives, ensuring that the qualitative data would complement the findings from the questionnaire and provide a richer understanding of students' writing challenges and needs.

Additionally, three English teachers participated in the semi-structured interviews. These teachers were specifically selected based on their teaching roles, as well as their professional experience of over seven years in teaching English at the high school level. Such selection criteria ensured that the teachers possessed substantial practical teaching experience and had adequate familiarity with the students' academic contexts and needs.

In particular, two teachers were responsible for class 11A1: one teacher taught the core English program (based on the standard textbook curriculum), while the other taught specialized, advanced topics focusing on enhancing students' language proficiency. Class 11C3 had one teacher responsible for the core English program only.

Table 3.2 Detailed information about teacher participants

Class	Teacher role	Number of Teachers	Years of Experience
11A1	Core program teacher	1	> 7 years
	Specialized program teacher	1	> 7 years
11C3	Core program teacher	1	> 7 years

(Source: Tran Hung Dao High School in school year 2024 - 2025)

With the participant composition established, the study's effectiveness relies on the selection and application of appropriate research instruments to gather data from these diverse groups. The following section, 3.3 Research instruments, details the design and justification of questionnaires and interviews, tailored to capture the multifaceted aspects of students' writing skill and teachers' instructional approaches.

3.3 Research instruments

This study employs two primary instruments, a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, to collect data on the factors influencing writing skill at Tran Hung Dao High School, as established in Section 3.2. These instruments capture quantitative and qualitative data on Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors, aligning with the conceptual framework (Chapter 2).

3.3.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of 26 items to measure students' experiences in English writing. The first two questions gather background information: (1) "How many years have you been studying English in school?" and (2) "On average, how many hours per week do you spend on English writing outside of school?" The remaining 24 items, divided into Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors constructs contain 8 items each on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Sample items include: "My knowledge of social issues helps me generate ideas for writing" (Social Knowledge) and "I feel anxious when writing essays in English" (Psychological Factors). The design draws on Horwitz et al. (1986) and Liu and Stapleton (2014). A pilot study with 15 students yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.82, confirming reliability. In addition to the 24 Likert-scale questions assessing Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors, two open-ended questions were included to gather students' perspectives on effective writing tasks and teacher support. These questions aimed to capture qualitative insights regarding students' preferences for instructional strategies and activities that could enhance their writing proficiency. The responses

were analyzed to identify recurring themes, differences between specialized and non-specialized students, and the most frequently mentioned strategies. The detailed questionnaire is in Appendix A.

3.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews collect qualitative data on writing challenges and strategies, emphasizing Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors. Two sets of interviews, each with four to five open-ended questions, target 6 students (3 English-specialized, 3 non-specialized) and 3 experienced English teachers (over 7 years of experience). Conducted individually in a quiet classroom, each session lasts 30-45 minutes. Student interviews examine emotional responses (e.g., “How do you feel when writing in English?”), Critical Thinking challenges (e.g., “What challenges do you face in essays requiring Critical Thinking, like global issues?”), and knowledge gaps (e.g., “How do you perform with familiar versus unfamiliar topics?”). Teacher interviews explore barriers (e.g., “What challenges do students face in Critical Thinking?”), knowledge application (e.g., “How do students perform with familiar versus unfamiliar topics?”), and support methods (e.g., “What would you recommend to address this issue?”). Questions draw on Rumelhart, (1980), Carrell & Eisterhold (1983), Grabe & Kaplan (1996), Vygotsky (1978), Hyland (2003), Tran (2020), and Dörnyei (2001), aiming to complement quantitative data and inform practical strategies. The questions are embedded in the transcribed interview provided in Appendix B.

3.4 Data collection procedure

To ensure comprehensive and reliable data collection, the researcher implemented a structured and careful procedure, covering both quantitative and qualitative data gathering methods. Data collection was conducted in mid-January 2025, immediately after the students completed their first-semester final examinations. The timing of data collection, conducted at the end of the first semester (mid-January 2025), was carefully selected based on several important considerations. At this point, students had completed approximately fifteen weeks of instruction, ensuring adequate exposure to various writing tasks and instructional

methods related to the three constructs under investigation—Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors. Having recently completed their first-semester final examinations, students were likely to have fresh reflections on their writing experiences and the challenges they encountered, providing more accurate and relevant responses. Additionally, conducting the data collection after examinations helped reduce students' academic pressure and anxiety, allowing them to reflect thoughtfully on their writing practices without immediate performance stress. Consequently, this timing effectively supported the reliability and validity of the data collected.

3.4.1 Questionnaire data collection

Initially, formal permission and support were obtained from the homeroom teachers of Class 11A1 (specialized English class) and Class 11C3 (non-specialized English class) at Tran Hung Dao High School. Questionnaires were administered during scheduled homeroom sessions, providing approximately 30 minutes for students to respond carefully. Clear instructions were orally explained, emphasizing how to correctly use the 5-point Likert scale, especially highlighting reverse-coded items designed to ensure response consistency. Students were informed about the importance of honesty and clarity in their responses. Following the instruction session, students completed the questionnaire electronically via Google Form. The use of Google Form facilitated efficient data collection, ensured data accuracy, and simplified the data entry process. Additionally, the anonymity of respondents was strictly maintained, with no personal identifiers recorded. The questionnaire distribution and collection process occurred smoothly in mid-January 2025, resulting in full participation of the targeted 74 students, ensuring the representativeness and reliability of the data collected.

3.4.2 Interview data collection

Following questionnaire administration, semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain deeper insights and qualitative data. Six students, equally representing both English-specialized and non-specialized classes, along with three

teachers (each having over seven years of teaching experience), were purposefully selected for these interviews. Individual interviews were scheduled in private settings within Tran Hung Dao High School to ensure privacy and openness. Participants were briefed clearly about the purpose and nature of the interviews, and consent was explicitly obtained. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, covering carefully constructed questions related to Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, Psychological Factors, and potential instructional strategies. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' permission, transcribed verbatim afterward, and securely stored for subsequent analysis.

3.4.3 Summary

In summary, this rigorous and systematic data collection process, including both quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews, provided a comprehensive dataset. These steps were carefully planned and executed with strict adherence to ethical research standards and methodological rigor. The collected data formed a strong foundation for detailed analysis, which is elaborated in the following section, 3.5 Data analysis.

3.5 Data analysis

The analysis of data in this study will involve both quantitative and qualitative methods to thoroughly explore the factors influencing high school students' writing skill at Tran Hung Dao High School. These analyses will be conducted carefully, ensuring accuracy and reliability.

3.5.1 Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaires will be analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 26. Initially, the researcher will check the collected data for completeness and accuracy, performing necessary data cleaning procedures. Descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, will be computed to summarize students' responses. Cronbach's Alpha will be calculated to determine the internal reliability of each of the questionnaire constructs: Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and

Psychological Factors. The reliability results will be thoroughly reported and interpreted in Chapter 4 to confirm that the instrument effectively measures the intended constructs.

3.5.2 Qualitative data analysis

Responses to the two open-ended questions were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Common themes were identified based on frequency and significance across responses. Thematic coding was applied to group similar ideas, distinguishing variations between specialized and non-specialized students.

The qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis. Recorded interviews will be transcribed verbatim to maintain accuracy and authenticity of the data. The researcher will first perform open coding to identify initial categories and themes emerging from the responses. Next, axial coding will be conducted to systematically group these categories and explore relationships among them. Finally, selective coding will highlight illustrative examples and significant insights, allowing for deeper interpretation of participants' views regarding Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors.

3.5.3 Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data

To strengthen the validity and credibility of the findings, triangulation will be implemented by integrating quantitative questionnaire results and qualitative interview data. Through this approach, statistical trends identified in questionnaire responses will be explained and reinforced by qualitative insights from interviews. The integration of these two data types will provide a comprehensive understanding of the key factors affecting students' writing skill at Tran Hung Dao High School, enabling more robust conclusions and recommendations, which will be discussed thoroughly in Chapter 4.

3.6 Ethical considerations

The ethical integrity of this research was ensured through several strict measures. Participation of students and teachers was completely voluntary, with

informed consent clearly obtained from all participants before data collection. All participants were explicitly informed of their right to withdraw at any point without any negative consequences.

Participant confidentiality was carefully maintained throughout the study. Data collected from questionnaires and interviews were securely stored and coded to maintain anonymity, preventing any possibility of personal identification. Participants were assured that their responses would be used exclusively for research purposes and handled with utmost confidentiality.

Additionally, the study fully adhered to the ethical guidelines and regulations set forth by Tran Hung Dao High School, ensuring compliance with institutional research standards and maintaining ethical integrity throughout the research process.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the key findings derived from data collected via questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, addressing the two research questions from Chapter 1: identifying factors negatively influencing the writing skill of 74 high school students at Tran Hung Dao High School and exploring effective strategies to enhance their proficiency.

4.1 Findings from demographic data

This section presents the results of the demographic data collected from the students participating in this study. The analysis focuses specifically on two aspects: the number of years students have spent studying English and the number of hours per week students spend practicing English writing outside school. These factors provide background information to help understand the participants' overall familiarity with English, thereby contextualizing subsequent findings in this chapter.

4.1.1 Years of studying English

The distribution of participants according to their years of studying English is illustrated in Figure 4.1 below.

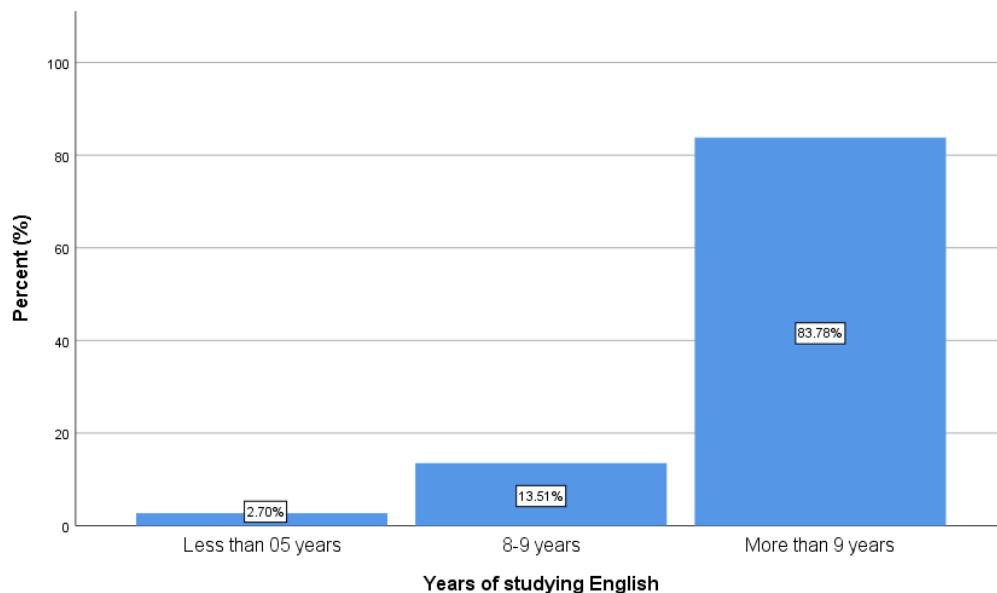


Figure 4.1 Distribution of participants by years of studying English

As presented in Figure 4.1, the majority of students (83.78%) have studied English for more than nine years. In contrast, only a small percentage (2.70%) has studied English for less than five years. This distribution indicates that most students possess a substantial foundation in English, suggesting they have adequate exposure to various English learning contexts. Therefore, their extensive experience with English could positively influence their ability to adopt and benefit from the writing enhancement strategies examined in this study.

4.1.2 Hours spent on English writing per week

Figure 4.2 below demonstrates the distribution of participants based on the average number of hours spent on English writing practice outside regular school hours.

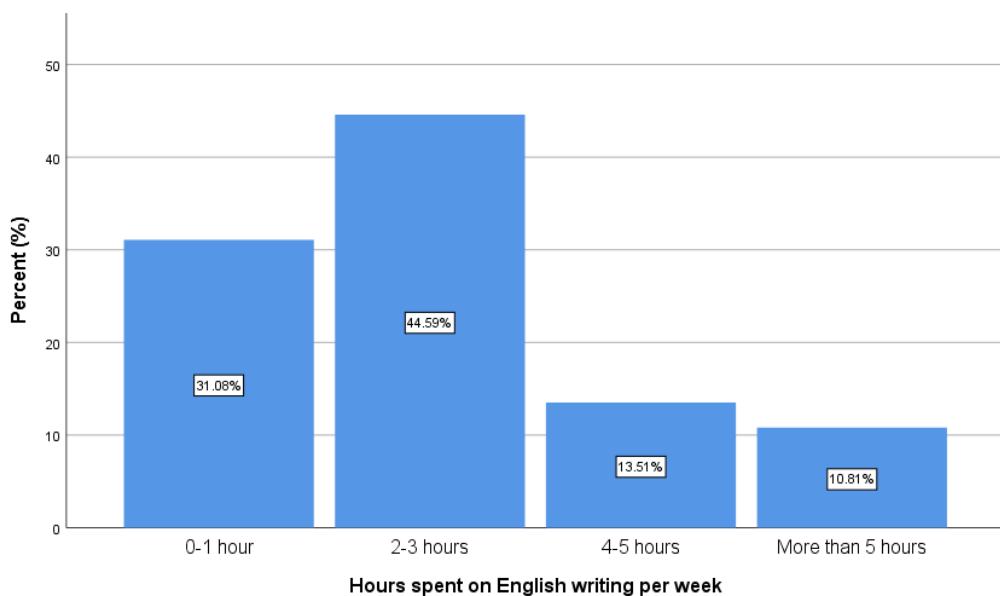


Figure 4.2 Distribution of participants by weekly English writing hours

As shown in Figure 4.2, nearly half of the participants (44.59%) reported spending an average of 2-3 hours per week practicing English writing. Meanwhile, approximately 31.08% of the students indicated spending only 0-1 hour per week, and a small proportion (10.81%) reported practicing for more than five hours weekly. These findings suggest that many students dedicate relatively limited time to practicing writing skill outside the classroom, potentially affecting their overall

writing proficiency. This issue will be further discussed in relation to strategies aimed at increasing students' engagement and practice time to enhance their writing skill.

4.2 Findings and discussions for research question 1

4.2.1 Findings from questionnaire data

This section presents the findings derived from the questionnaire data collected from 74 participants. The analysis includes descriptive statistics (Mean & Standard Deviation), reliability analysis (Cronbach's Alpha), and inferential statistics (Independent samples T-Test) for the three constructs under investigation: Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors.

Descriptive statistics of Social Knowledge

Table 4.1 provides the mean and standard deviation for each item within the Social Knowledge construct.

Table 4.1 Mean and standard deviation of Social Knowledge

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I regularly read diverse English materials (stories, newspapers, articles) provided by my teachers to improve my writing.	74	2.93	.782
My knowledge of social issues (e.g., family, community) helps me generate ideas for writing.	74	3.00	1.073
I feel confident using real-world experiences in my English writing.	74	2.77	1.129
I often struggle to generate ideas when I lack knowledge of social issues.	74	2.85	1.043
Thematic reading materials help me generate ideas for writing tasks.	74	2.93	.782
Learning through thematic reading improves my ability to write meaningful essays.	74	2.93	.782
Diverse reading materials increase my understanding of different social and global topics.	74	2.96	.784
I need more thematic reading activities to strengthen my Social Knowledge for writing tasks.	74	3.05	.809
Valid N (listwise)	74		

As illustrated in Table 4.1, participants demonstrated moderate levels of confidence regarding their social and cultural knowledge when writing, with mean scores ranging from 2.77 to 3.05 on a 5-point Likert scale. The highest-rated item, "I need more thematic reading activities to strengthen my Social Knowledge for writing tasks." ($M=3.05$, $SD=.809$), highlights participants' recognition of the need for greater exposure to cultural topics to enhance writing performance.

Descriptive statistics of Critical Thinking

Table 4.2 presents the mean and standard deviation for each item within the Critical Thinking construct.

Table 4.2 Mean and standard deviation of Critical Thinking

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I find it easy to organize my ideas logically before writing an essay.	74	2.76	.919
I often struggle to connect my ideas clearly in my English writing.	74	3.65	.928
I feel confident in using evidence to support my arguments in writing.	74	3.19	1.043
I need more practice to improve the structure of my essays.	74	3.65	.928
Commenting on my classmates' writings helps me develop ideas in my English writing, as I learn from their vocabulary and organization.	74	3.65	.928
I can easily identify the main idea and supporting details in my writing.	74	2.84	1.007
I find it difficult to write essays that require logical reasoning.	74	3.72	.944
Outlining before writing helps me create well-structured essays.	74	3.73	.911
Valid N (listwise)	74		

Table 4.2 indicates that students perceive both strengths and challenges in Critical Thinking during writing. Items such as "Outlining before writing helps me create well-structured essays" ($M=3.73$, $SD=.911$) and "I find it difficult to write essays that require logical reasoning" ($M=3.72$, $SD=.944$) scored the highest,

emphasizing students' awareness of the value of structured planning as well as their difficulties in logical argumentation.

Descriptive statistics of Psychological Factors

Table 4.3 shows the mean and standard deviation for each item related to Psychological Factors.

Table 4.3 Mean and standard deviation of Psychological Factors

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I feel anxious when I have to write essays in English.	74	3.19	1.341
I worry about making grammar mistakes when writing in English.	74	3.09	1.396
I feel motivated to write when my work is displayed or recognized by others.	74	3.01	1.429
I lack confidence in my English writing abilities.	74	3.01	1.429
Recognition from teachers and peers boosts my confidence in writing.	74	3.03	1.414
I enjoy writing in English when I receive positive feedback from my teacher.	74	3.01	1.429
I feel stressed about meeting deadlines for writing assignments.	74	3.01	1.429
I am afraid of receiving negative comments on my English writing	74	3.03	1.414
Valid N (listwise)	74		

In Table 4.3, the results indicate moderate emotional and motivational concerns among students, with the highest mean score for "I feel anxious when I have to write essays in English" ($M=3.19$, $SD=1.341$). This reflects prevalent anxiety issues among students regarding English writing tasks.

Reliability analysis

Reliability analysis for the questionnaire items was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, as presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Cronbach's Alpha reliability for Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors

<i>Reliability Statistics</i>			
Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Social Knowledge	.815	.848	8
Critical Thinking	.877	.884	8
Psychological Factors	.865	.862	8

The results show excellent internal consistency across all constructs, with Cronbach's Alpha scores ranging from .815 to .877, confirming the reliability and validity of the questionnaire items used in this study.

Inferential statistics: Comparison between specialized and non-specialized Classes

To investigate potential differences between specialized and non-specialized English classes, an Independent Samples T-Test was performed. Table 4.5 summarizes the key results.

Table 4.5 Summary of independent samples T-Test for Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors

Construct	Group 1	Group 2	Mean Difference	t-value	df	p-value	Cohen's d
Social Knowledge	3.12	2.96	0.16	2.44	72	0.017	0.45
Critical Thinking	3.34	3.15	0.19	1.92	72	0.058	0.39
Psychological Factors	3.18	3.05	0.13	1.33	72	0.188	0.29

The results revealed statistically significant differences in Social Knowledge between the specialized class ($M=3.12$) and the non-specialized class ($M=2.96$),

$t(72)=2.44$, $p=.017$, with a moderate effect size (Cohen's $d=0.45$). This indicates that specialized students hold a distinct advantage in social and cultural knowledge beneficial to their writing tasks.

Conversely, no statistically significant differences were found in Critical Thinking ($p=.058$) and Psychological Factors ($p=.188$), suggesting these areas similarly impact students irrespective of specialization. However, Critical Thinking showed a trend toward significance with a meaningful effect size (Cohen's $d=0.39$), indicating potential advantages for specialized students warranting further investigation.

Detailed results from each Independent sample T-Test analysis are provided in Appendices for transparency:

Appendix C: Independent samples T-Test for Social Knowledge

Appendix D: Independent samples T-Test for Critical Thinking

Appendix E: Independent samples T-Test for Psychological Factors

4.2.2 Findings from interview data

This section presents qualitative findings derived from semi-structured interviews with six students (three from the English-specialized class, 11A1, and three from the non-specialized class, 11C3) and three experienced teachers instructing these classes. The interviews explored students' perceptions of key factors influencing their English writing skill, aligning with the conceptual framework in Chapter 2, which emphasizes Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors.

Students across both English-specialized and non-specialized classes highlighted the importance of background knowledge, particularly regarding social and global issues, in shaping their writing effectiveness. A moderate-proficiency student from the Specialized class noted, "I struggle to find clear arguments and evidence for global issues because my background knowledge is limited," while a high-proficiency student from the non-specialized class added, "I manage culturally familiar topics well, but global debates are difficult due to limited familiarity." These responses underscore a common challenge in leveraging Social Knowledge

for critical writing tasks. Regarding Critical Thinking, students frequently cited difficulties in organizing ideas logically and maintaining coherence. A high-proficiency English-specialized student remarked, “I find it challenging to maintain coherence, especially on deeper topics,” reflecting a need for structured support, echoed by non-specialized students struggling with spontaneous writing habits.

Psychological Factors emerged as significant barriers, with anxiety about vocabulary, grammar, and overall confidence prominently mentioned. A low-proficiency non-specialized student expressed, “I feel anxious due to negative comments,” a sentiment supported by teachers who identified anxiety and lack of confidence as major obstacles. A Core curriculum teacher observed, “Psychological Factors limit motivation, requiring positive reinforcement and detailed feedback.” Teachers also noted challenges in logical structuring and background knowledge deficits, suggesting discussions on global topics and structured tasks as solutions. Table 4.6 summarizes these themes and their frequencies, providing a concise overview that reinforces the qualitative findings’ alignment with quantitative data, informing targeted writing interventions at Tran Hung Dao High School.

Table 4.6 Main themes from student and teacher interviews

Themes (Key factors influencing students' writing skill)	Frequency
Difficulty generating ideas (related to Social Knowledge)	6
Difficulty organizing ideas logically (Critical Thinking)	6
Writing anxiety (Psychological Factors)	4
Lack of confidence (Psychological Factors)	4
Limited background knowledge on global issues (Social Knowledge)	4

Note: *Frequency indicates how many students and teachers explicitly mentioned each theme during the interviews.*

4.2.3 Discussions of research question 1

The results indicate that limited background knowledge, particularly concerning real-world or global topics, significantly impedes students’ writing. As discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2), students require robust schemas, cognitive

frameworks encompassing topic knowledge and rhetorical organization (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2023; Hyland, 2003), to produce coherent texts. However, many interviewees admitted difficulty in generating ideas or logical arguments for unfamiliar issues, echoing the assertion by Grabe and Kaplan (1996) that insufficient exposure to diverse topics often leads to superficial or disjointed writing. These observations align with the constructivist perspective (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1990), which posits that students actively build knowledge through interaction and reflection; if they lack meaningful engagement with rich content, their writing remains formulaic. Consequently, addressing gaps in background knowledge becomes crucial for fostering more substantive EFL writing outcomes (Nunan, 2015).

Another major barrier centers on Critical Thinking, which in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3) is defined as the ability to analyze, evaluate, and structure ideas for clear argumentation (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Hyland, 2003). Despite possessing adequate grammar and vocabulary, many students reported challenges in organizing their thoughts or presenting persuasive arguments. This finding reflects the view of Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956; Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), where higher-order skills, analyzing, evaluating, and creating, are essential for advanced writing tasks. As Liu and Stapleton (2014) observe, EFL writers who lack practice in these cognitive processes often produce text that is either unstructured or lacks depth. Interviews corroborated this gap: teachers noted that even high-proficiency students struggled with complex topics due to weak argumentation skills, illustrating how insufficient emphasis on Critical Thinking can undermine overall writing quality (Pham, 2018).

Lastly, Psychological Factors play a decisive role in limiting students' writing performance. Echoing Horwitz et al. (1986), the data highlight anxiety about grammar accuracy and negative evaluation as key deterrents, prompting some students to produce minimal texts to avoid errors. Meanwhile, motivation, conceptualized through Dörnyei's (2001) future self-images and Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy, is also essential. Learners who lack confidence or see little personal

relevance in writing tasks tend to remain disengaged, corroborating the significance of motivational frameworks presented in Chapter 2 (Section 2.4). As Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1970) suggests, students who do not feel respected or acknowledged for their efforts may avoid the risk of creating complex texts, focusing instead on "safe" but simpler output. Interviews further revealed that low-proficiency students often felt overwhelmed by exams, intensifying their anxiety and limiting their willingness to develop more sophisticated writing.

Overall, these findings strongly validate the framework established in Chapter 2. Social Knowledge deficits lead to superficial content, Critical Thinking gaps hinder logical organization, and Psychological Factors, especially anxiety and low motivation, restrict students' performance. Together, they highlight that proficiency in grammar or vocabulary alone is insufficient without robust background knowledge, higher-order thinking skills, and supportive emotional conditions (Hyland, 2003; Pham, 2018). By recognizing these interlinked factors, educators and policymakers can tailor instructional approaches that not only enhance linguistic accuracy but also deepen cognitive engagement and nurture positive learner attitudes, key considerations for improving EFL writing at Tran Hung Dao High School and beyond.

4.3 Findings and discussions for research question 2

4.3.1 Findings from questionnaire data

This subsection presents students' suggested tasks and strategies to improve their English writing skill, derived from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire. The open-ended questionnaire responses were analyzed qualitatively by categorizing students' suggestions into predetermined themes, aligned with the conceptual framework introduced in Chapter 2. These recommendations reflect students' direct perceptions about what classroom practices and teacher supports would be most beneficial in addressing the specific factors, Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors, outlined in Chapter 2's conceptual framework. Table 4.7 below summarizes the main categories of suggested tasks and

strategies, their associated theoretical factors, and the frequency of mention, thus providing a clear foundation for further analysis.

Table 4.7 Summary of students' suggested tasks and strategies

Suggested Strategies	Associated Factor(s)	Q1: Frequency (Preferred writing activities)	Q2: Frequency (Preferred teacher support)	Total
Reading more diverse materials	Social Knowledge	28	-	28
Peer review	Critical Thinking	25	-	25
Practice in writing	Psychological Factors	20	-	20
Constructive teacher feedback	Psychological Factors		30	30
Displaying student work	Psychological Factors	-	26	26
Guidance on writing structure	Critical Thinking	-	20	20
Goal setting & motivation	Psychological Factors		15	15
Total Responses		73	90	163

Note: Frequencies indicate how often students explicitly mentioned each task or strategy in their open-ended questionnaire responses.

This table summarizes responses from two open-ended questionnaire items, where students were asked, first, about the kinds of writing tasks or activities they believed would help them improve (Q1), and second, about what teacher support they found most beneficial (Q2). The table also indicates how each suggested

strategy aligns with one or more of the three key factors identified in Chapter 2 and provides the total frequency of each item.

The first three rows relate to students' preferred writing activities (Q1). Most notably, reading more diverse materials, coded under Social Knowledge, appears 28 times in the Q1 column. This suggests that a substantial number of students recognize the importance of broad reading to expand their subject knowledge and idea generation. Peer review, associated with Critical Thinking, follows with 25 responses, implying students value peer collaboration for building arguments and organizing content. The third most common task is writing practice (Psychological Factors), mentioned 20 times, which reflects the belief that consistent practice can alleviate anxiety and enhance confidence.

The remaining four rows capture the types of teacher support students favored (Q2). Of these, Constructive teacher feedback emerges as the most prevalent theme, with 30 responses tied to Psychological Factors. Students appear to want direct, meaningful feedback on their writing, likely to reduce error-related anxiety and clarify expectations. Displaying student work, also in the Psychological Factors category, registers 26 mentions, indicating a desire for public recognition that might boost motivation and self-esteem. Meanwhile, guidance on essay structure, coded under Critical Thinking, was identified by 20 students who likely feel they benefit from explicit instructions on how to build coherent, logically organized essays. Finally, goal setting & motivation, with 15 responses, highlights students' wish for structured motivational support to maintain momentum throughout their writing process.

In total, 73 responses fall under Q1 (preferred writing activities) and 90 responses under Q2 (preferred teacher support), giving an overall count of 163. Students are thus clearly distinguishing between self-driven activities such as reading or practice and teacher-driven interventions like feedback, recognition, or structured guidance. Overall, these results underscore students' multifaceted needs, spanning content enrichment, peer collaboration, anxiety reduction, and

motivational strategies, all of which directly connect to the conceptual framework of Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors.

4.3.2 Findings from interview data

This subsection presents students' and teachers' suggested tasks and strategies identified through qualitative analysis of semi-structured interview data. These suggestions directly address the key factors, Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors, highlighted in the conceptual framework from Chapter 2. To enhance clarity, Table 4.8 provides a summary of the main strategies and their frequency of mention by both students and teachers.

Table 4.8 Summary of suggested tasks and strategies from interview data

Suggested Strategies	Associated Factor(s)	Frequency
Peer review & brainstorming	Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking	3
Thematic & diverse reading materials	Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking	8
Explicit instruction on writing structure (outlining)	Critical Thinking	6
Detailed and constructive feedback	Psychological Factors, Critical Thinking	7
Step-by-step guidance and scaffolded activities	Psychological Factors	5
Increased vocabulary and grammar support	Psychological Factors	2
Displaying student essays	Psychological Factors	6

Note: Frequency indicates how many interviewees (students and teachers) explicitly suggested each task or strategy.

The interview data yielded a variety of strategies that both students and teachers explicitly suggested for improving writing skill. Table 4.8 compiles these recommendations, showing how frequently each item was mentioned, as well as the key factors, Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, or Psychological Factors, to which they relate.

The highest frequency recorded was for thematic & diverse reading materials (8 mentions). Multiple interviewees pointed out the need to broaden students' reading scope in order to acquire background knowledge and build stronger arguments for complex topics. Closely linked to both Social Knowledge and Critical Thinking, this suggestion indicates a perceived gap in students' exposure to challenging texts.

A second notable strategy was detailed and constructive feedback (7 mentions), associated with both Psychological Factors and Critical Thinking. Teachers and students alike emphasized the importance of personalized, in-depth feedback, with students stating that it boosts their confidence and clarifies how to develop coherent ideas. Comments about the role of consistent feedback in reducing anxiety were also common, although the table does not detail specific reasons for this preference.

Next, explicit instruction on writing structure (outlining) appeared 6 times, centering on Critical Thinking. The data show a clear call for more structured guidance, particularly in organizing essays logically and ensuring coherence. Similarly, displaying student essays gathered 6 mentions, reflecting students' desire for recognition and increased motivation, both of which align with Psychological Factors.

Other items in the table included peer review & brainstorming (3 mentions), also connected to Social Knowledge and Critical Thinking. Interviewees mentioned peer collaboration and idea-sharing as a way to generate deeper insights. Additionally, step-by-step guidance and scaffolded activities (5 mentions) and increased vocabulary and grammar support (2 mentions) both fell under Psychological Factors, suggesting a link between structured support and reduced writing anxiety.

Overall, the findings highlight a recurring theme of combining exposure to diverse content, providing clear structural instruction, and offering supportive feedback. Interviewees viewed these strategies as essential for mitigating difficulties in writing, whether those challenges involve background knowledge,

logical organization, or emotional barriers such as anxiety. The frequencies in Table 4.8 reflect the number of interviewees who explicitly mentioned each strategy, illustrating consensus in some areas (e.g., reading materials, detailed feedback) and more modest interest in others (e.g., vocabulary and grammar support).

4.3.3 Discussions of research question 2

The findings presented above suggest several practical strategies that can be effectively implemented to enhance students' writing skill, addressing the key factors identified, Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors, aligned closely with the conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 2.

Firstly, the use of diverse reading materials emerges as one of the most critical strategies. This approach is deeply rooted in schema theory and the reading-to-write model, which suggest that extensive exposure to varied and thematically rich texts significantly enhances students' ability to generate ideas and develop coherent arguments (Rumelhart, 1980; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2023; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). Interview responses reinforce that students perceive thematic reading as crucial for broadening their social and cultural knowledge, directly influencing their writing content. This aligns with empirical evidence presented by Hyland (2003) and Tardy (2009), asserting that students benefit greatly from consistent engagement with authentic and diverse texts, leading to improved schema activation and higher-quality writing outcomes.

Secondly, explicit instruction in writing structure, particularly outlining and step-by-step guidance, was highlighted by both students and teachers. These strategies directly support Critical Thinking as they require students to analyze information systematically and logically structure their arguments (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Hyland, 2003). Bloom's taxonomy further validates this approach, emphasizing the importance of analytical and evaluative skills necessary for higher-order writing tasks. Students identified outlining specifically as a valuable practice for organizing their ideas clearly, suggesting it could help address common difficulties in logical coherence and argumentation noted in the findings.

Such structured guidance ensures that students progressively internalize Critical Thinking processes, ultimately facilitating more effective, persuasive writing.

Detailed and constructive feedback from teachers was frequently emphasized as an essential support mechanism linked with Psychological Factors. According to motivational theories, specifically Bandura's self-efficacy and Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory (SDT), constructive and positive feedback significantly enhances students' intrinsic motivation, reduces anxiety, and fosters greater self-confidence in writing tasks (Bandura, 1997; Ryan & Deci, 2000). This psychological support mechanism aligns with the findings where students explicitly mentioned the motivational boost they receive from constructive feedback. Teachers also recognized this strategy as key to building students' confidence, which in turn motivates more consistent engagement in writing activities.

Additionally, strategies like displaying student essays were consistently recommended to address Psychological Factors, echoing Maslow's hierarchy of needs by fostering esteem and acknowledgment from peers and teachers (Maslow, 1970). This public recognition strategy not only motivates students but also contributes positively to reducing writing anxiety and building self-confidence, as supported by the findings.

Finally, peer review and brainstorming were suggested to effectively bridge Social Knowledge and Critical Thinking. This strategy resonates with constructivist learning theory, highlighting active knowledge construction through peer interaction and collaboration (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1990). Discussions provide opportunities for students to articulate, evaluate, and refine their ideas collectively, promoting deeper analytical thinking and improving their capacity to develop well-structured arguments, consistent with the findings and previous research by Al-Ghazo and Al-Zoubi (2018).

These strategies altogether form a cohesive instructional approach that directly addresses the identified challenges in Social Knowledge acquisition, Critical Thinking development, and Psychological support. Their implementation could significantly enhance writing proficiency at Tran Hung Dao High School,

promoting a holistic learning environment where students are actively engaged, intellectually challenged, and emotionally supported, thus fully realizing the communicative objectives of Vietnam's 2018 High School Education Program.

4.4 Summary of key findings

This study investigated key factors negatively influencing the writing skill of students at Tran Hung Dao High School and explored practical strategies that can effectively address these challenges. Drawing from both quantitative and qualitative data, several significant findings emerged, reflecting core aspects outlined in the conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 2, specifically related to Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors.

Firstly, students exhibited notable difficulties in generating ideas and arguments, particularly concerning global and unfamiliar social issues. Both students and teachers acknowledged that limited Social Knowledge significantly hindered the depth and coherence of their written output. This finding aligns directly with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) and Schema Theory (Rumelhart, 1980), emphasizing the role of background knowledge in enabling students to construct meaningful and contextually appropriate texts. To mitigate this issue, students frequently highlighted the need for diverse reading materials. Teachers similarly recommended thematic reading tasks, emphasizing culturally familiar topics and gradually extending toward global issues to systematically expand students' Social Knowledge base.

Secondly, Critical Thinking posed considerable challenges, particularly evident in students' struggles to logically structure their arguments and maintain coherence throughout their essays. Explicit instruction in outlining and organizing essays emerged prominently as an essential support strategy, aligning closely with Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), which underscores the importance of analytical and evaluative skills in constructing coherent arguments. Interviews revealed that students benefited greatly from structured activities like peer review, brainstorming sessions, and detailed teacher feedback, confirming that

active, collaborative engagement significantly supports Critical Thinking development in writing tasks.

Psychological Factors were also consistently cited as major barriers. Anxiety related to vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, and overall confidence significantly impacted students' writing performance. Findings were closely aligned with Horwitz's Foreign Language Anxiety Theory (1986), reinforcing the notion that writing anxiety stems primarily from fear of negative evaluation and visible errors in written tasks. Students strongly preferred detailed and constructive feedback as a key strategy for alleviating anxiety and building writing confidence. Additionally, strategies such as explicitly setting achievable writing goals and displaying student work publicly were found to substantially boost motivation and reduce anxiety. These practical strategies resonate with motivation theories discussed in Chapter 2, including Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1997) and Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1970), highlighting the crucial role of positive reinforcement and recognition in fostering intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being.

Overall, English-specialized class students generally exhibited higher performance levels regarding Social Knowledge and Critical Thinking than non-specialized counterparts. However, Psychological barriers were common to both groups, emphasizing that targeted interventions addressing anxiety and motivational issues are universally needed across different proficiency levels. The convergence of questionnaire and interview data strongly underscores the necessity for an integrated approach, combining Social Knowledge enhancement through thematic reading, structured Critical Thinking activities such as explicit outlining instruction and peer discussions, and psychological support through detailed feedback, motivation strategies, and public recognition of students' writing accomplishments.

These key findings provide clear insights into the specific pedagogical strategies that could meaningfully enhance students' writing skill at Tran Hung Dao High School, thus fulfilling the study's primary objective.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a comprehensive summary and interpretation of the main findings of the present study, along with the pedagogical implications and practical recommendations for enhancing English writing skill among grade 11 students at Tran Hung Dao High School.

5.1 Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to identify the key factors that negatively affect the writing skill of high school students at Tran Hung Dao High School and explore practical strategies to address these challenges. After comprehensive analysis and synthesis of both quantitative and qualitative data, several critical conclusions have been drawn, directly addressing the study's research questions and aligning closely with the conceptual framework encompassing Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors.

Firstly, the study conclusively identifies limited Social Knowledge as a fundamental barrier impeding students' writing performance, especially when dealing with global or socially complex topics. Students at Tran Hung Dao High School exhibited notable difficulties in generating coherent ideas and arguments, primarily due to inadequate background knowledge. This finding corroborates schema theory (Rumelhart, 1980; Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983), which asserts that background knowledge significantly influences a learner's ability to interpret and produce meaningful content. Students and teachers consistently emphasized the necessity of incorporating diverse reading materials into the curriculum to broaden students' understanding and contextual awareness. The effectiveness of thematic reading tasks in improving writing proficiency emerged as a critical insight, suggesting that structured exposure to culturally and globally relevant materials can significantly enhance students' capacity for idea generation and argumentation.

Secondly, Critical Thinking emerged as another significant obstacle, prominently affecting students' ability to structure their essays logically and maintain coherence throughout their arguments. Data analysis highlighted

widespread challenges related to analytical and evaluative thinking, essential components of effective writing according to Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). The study underscores the necessity for explicit instruction in writing structure, notably the use of graphic organizers, detailed outlining methods, and structured classroom activities such as peer review and brainstorming sessions. These pedagogical strategies were acknowledged by students and teachers alike as highly beneficial in fostering higher-order thinking skills, ultimately facilitating better organization and clarity in student essays.

Thirdly, Psychological Factors significantly influenced students' writing skill. Writing anxiety related to fear of negative feedback was prevalent among students across proficiency levels. This aligns with Horwitz's Foreign Language Anxiety Theory (1986), indicating that anxiety profoundly affects student engagement and performance. Detailed and constructive feedback from teachers emerged as the most effective intervention for mitigating these psychological barriers. Additionally, motivational strategies such as public recognition and displays of student work significantly enhanced students' self-confidence and intrinsic motivation, in line with Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1997) and Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1970). This conclusion highlights the critical role of emotional and motivational supports alongside academic instruction.

Furthermore, although English-specialized class students generally demonstrated superior performance regarding Social Knowledge and Critical Thinking skills compared to non-specialized class students, Psychological barriers were universally evident. This underscores the necessity of adopting a comprehensive approach that integrates instructional strategies with psychological support, ensuring effectiveness across all student proficiency levels.

This study significantly contributes to the understanding of factors affecting students' writing skill within the context of Tran Hung Dao High School. It emphasizes the importance of a holistic instructional strategy that integrates thematic reading, explicit structural guidance, collaborative activities, detailed feedback, and motivational support. Implementing these integrated strategies

effectively can markedly enhance writing proficiency, fulfilling the educational objectives articulated by the 2018 High School Education Program and substantially benefiting both academic and professional futures of students.

5.2 Pedagogical recommendations

This section unveils a meticulously crafted framework of evidence-based pedagogical recommendations, designed to elevate the English writing proficiency of students at Tran Hung Dao High School. Drawing from the rich findings of Chapter 4 where Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors emerged as pivotal and anchored in the theoretical insights of Vygotsky (1978), Bloom (1956), and Horwitz et al. (1986), these recommendations are tailored with precision for teachers, students, and school management. Each action is presented as a bulleted point to ensure clarity, practicality, and immediate applicability, transforming theoretical understanding into actionable strategies.

5.2.1 Recommendations for teachers

Based on the study's findings, several targeted recommendations have been formulated to help teachers at Tran Hung Dao High School effectively enhance students' writing skill, specifically addressing challenges identified in Social Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Psychological Factors.

Firstly, teachers should systematically integrate diverse reading materials into the curriculum. Selecting texts that cover both culturally familiar and globally significant topics will enhance students' background knowledge, allowing them to generate richer and more coherent content. Structured reading activities, including guided discussions, and reflective journals, should be regularly implemented to help students engage deeply with the content, thereby activating and expanding their cognitive schemas.

Secondly, explicit and systematic instruction in writing structure is essential. Teachers should employ structured outlining techniques, utilizing graphic organizers and model essays to demonstrate effective structuring clearly. Providing explicit guidance on how to construct a logical argument, formulate thesis statements, and develop supporting evidence will significantly address the students'

identified difficulties with Critical Thinking. Regular practice sessions focusing on outlining and organizing ideas should be integrated into the teaching schedule to foster students' analytical and evaluative skills.

Thirdly, collaborative activities such as peer review sessions should be routinely incorporated into classroom practices. These activities offer students opportunities to collectively analyze, evaluate, and refine their ideas, promoting active engagement and higher-order cognitive development. Teachers should facilitate these sessions by providing clear instructions, structured guidelines, and targeted feedback, enabling students to learn collaboratively in a supportive environment.

Fourthly, detailed, constructive, and timely feedback should become a cornerstone of writing instruction. Teachers are encouraged to deliver feedback that not only corrects grammatical and lexical mistakes but also guides students in content development, argument clarity, and structural coherence. Feedback should be formative, emphasizing strengths and areas for improvement while offering specific suggestions for revisions. Encouraging students to engage in iterative revisions based on feedback will help mitigate writing anxiety, boost confidence, and foster a positive attitude toward writing tasks.

Lastly, motivational strategies are crucial in addressing Psychological Factors influencing students' writing performance. Teachers should set achievable writing goals and clearly communicate expectations to students, reinforcing a sense of direction and purpose. Creating opportunities for students' work to be publicly recognized, both through physical classroom displays by creating a 'wall of fame' and online platforms such as Google Classroom, significantly enhances students' motivation and confidence. Utilizing digital tools to showcase exemplary student essays allows broader visibility and peer recognition, fostering a positive online community and further reinforcing students' self-esteem. Regularly celebrating student progress, whether through verbal acknowledgment or tangible rewards, can cultivate a positive classroom culture that supports ongoing engagement and improvement.

5.2.2 Recommendations for students

Students at Tran Hung Dao High School play an important role in their own writing development. To enhance their writing skill, students are encouraged to actively engage in regular and systematic practices designed to address the identified challenges.

Firstly, students should commit to extensive and varied reading. Regular exposure to diverse texts, including culturally familiar and globally significant themes, will significantly enrich their vocabulary, background knowledge, and content comprehension. Keeping a reflective reading journal or summarizing key insights from their readings can enhance students' retention and application of new ideas and language structures in their writing.

Secondly, students should adopt structured planning techniques, such as outlining, before commencing any writing task. Creating outlines or graphic organizers can help students organize their thoughts logically and maintain coherence in their essays. Regular practice with these methods will gradually develop students' analytical and Critical Thinking skills, resulting in clearer and more persuasive writing.

Thirdly, students are encouraged to actively participate in collaborative activities, such as peer reviews. Engaging with peers allows students to exchange perspectives, refine ideas collectively, and gain insights into their writing strengths and weaknesses. Seeking and providing constructive peer feedback promotes a supportive learning community and builds essential communication and evaluative skills.

Additionally, students should embrace feedback from teachers and peers as an essential tool for growth. Rather than viewing feedback merely as criticism, students should carefully analyze comments and corrections, actively applying them in subsequent writing tasks. Regularly revising essays based on received feedback can help students significantly improve their writing quality and confidence.

Lastly, students are encouraged to cultivate intrinsic motivation by setting personal writing goals and recognizing their own progress. Utilizing digital

platforms, such as Google Classroom, to showcase and share their writing with peers can foster a sense of pride and achievement. Celebrating personal milestones and actively seeking opportunities for public recognition can further enhance students' motivation, confidence, and enthusiasm for writing.

5.2.3 Recommendations for school administrators

School administrators at Tran Hung Dao High School hold significant influence in fostering an environment conducive to enhancing students' writing skill. The following recommendations are designed to strategically support teachers and students by addressing systemic and resource-based needs identified by the research.

Firstly, administrators should ensure access to diverse reading materials in both English and Vietnamese by allocating appropriate resources and budget. Establishing well-stocked school libraries and digital resources accessible through platforms like Google Classroom will facilitate students' engagement with extensive reading materials, enhancing their background knowledge and social understanding.

Secondly, administrators should prioritize professional development programs for teachers focused on contemporary writing instruction techniques. Workshops on structured outlining, formative feedback, collaborative learning methods, and effective motivational strategies should be regularly provided. Equipping teachers with these skills will directly improve instructional quality and positively impact student outcomes.

Thirdly, administrators should facilitate small-group or class-size adjustments to enable effective collaborative and interactive learning activities. Smaller class sizes or additional instructional support staff can greatly enhance the feasibility of detailed feedback sessions, peer reviews, and guided discussions, all critical components identified for improving students' Critical Thinking and writing skill.

Moreover, school administrators are encouraged to institutionalize platforms for public recognition and celebration of student writing achievements. Organizing

writing contests, digital showcases via online school platforms, and physical displays within the school premises can significantly boost student motivation and confidence. Acknowledging outstanding student writing publicly reinforces a positive school culture emphasizing the value of strong writing skill.

Finally, administrators should actively monitor and evaluate the implementation of recommended practices, offering continuous support and adjustments based on feedback from teachers and students. Regular assessment of writing improvement initiatives ensures ongoing alignment with educational objectives and sustained enhancement of students' writing proficiency.

5.3 Limitations of the study

The limitations lie in the study's sample size and context. With only 74 students from a single high school, the investigation's findings may lack broader applicability across diverse educational settings in Vietnam. This localized focus, while enabling an in-depth case study, cannot fully cover the varied socio-cultural and pedagogical dynamics present in urban versus rural schools or across different educational systems.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

With the limitations and insights of the current study, several promising pathways for future research emerge. First, future investigations could expand the scope by incorporating larger and more diverse samples from multiple schools, including both urban and rural contexts. Such research would enhance the generalizability of findings and offer comparative insights into different educational environments.

Secondly, a long-term study could provide valuable insights into the sustained effects of recommended pedagogical interventions on students' writing development over time. Investigating long-term impacts would determine whether immediate improvements persist or evolve and reveal deeper insights into writing skill acquisition.

Lastly, future studies might explore technological innovations in writing instruction, such as digital writing platforms or artificial intelligence-assisted feedback, evaluating their effectiveness and acceptance among teachers and students. As educational technologies evolve, research assessing their practical applications in enhancing writing skill would provide valuable insights for modern educational practices.

5.5 Implications

The findings of this study can also be applied to students at non-specialized high schools in Binh Thuan Province. The challenges affecting the development of students' writing skill are largely similar, as these students are of the same age group and follow the same curriculum. However, the impact and solutions may be implemented at varying levels. Teachers at other high schools can flexibly apply the strategies proposed in this study to help students enhance their writing skill. For example, encouraging students to read various types of texts (newspapers, short stories, essays) or participate in peer review, which fosters collaboration, idea sharing, and mutual learning, can improve their thinking and writing coherence.

Furthermore, the results of this study can also be applied to first-year English-major students at universities. Although the writing proficiency and requirements for university students are higher, the fundamental difficulties in organizing ideas and constructing logical arguments remain common issues. Solutions such as outlining can be adapted by incorporating more advanced writing tasks, such as text analysis or academic essay writing, to meet the needs of English-major students. Instead of basic outlining, students can be required to deeply analyze a reading text and write an essay with well-structured arguments, aligning with university-level expectations.

Finally, this study provides practical solutions to improve students' writing skill, contributing to enhancing the quality of English teaching in Binh Thuan Province and similar regions. Implementing these strategies not only helps students develop their language skills but also better prepares them for their academic journey and global integration. This is a significant contribution, particularly in the

context where English is increasingly becoming an essential tool in education and career development.

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APPENDIX A .

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Students,

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. This survey is part of a research study on the key factors affecting high school students' writing skill in English at Tran Hung Dao High School. Your responses will help us better understand the challenges students face and identify effective strategies to improve writing proficiency.

The questionnaire consists of multiple-choice and rating-scale questions, along with a few open-ended questions. Your answers will remain anonymous and confidential, and the data will be used solely for research purposes. There are no right or wrong answers—please respond honestly based on your own experiences.

The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Your participation is highly valued and will contribute to meaningful improvements in English writing instruction.

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

1. How many years have you been studying English in school?

- (1) Less than 05 years
- (2) 8-9 years
- (3) More than 9 years

2. *On average, how many hours per week do you spend on English writing outside of school? (Please select one):*

- (1) 0-1 hour
- (2) 2-3 hours
- (3) 4-5 hours
- (4) More than 5 hours

No.	Question	Likert scale				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Construct 1: Social Knowledge					
3	<i>I regularly read diverse English materials (stories, newspapers, articles) provided by my teachers to improve my writing.</i>					
4	<i>My knowledge of social issues (e.g., family, community) helps me generate ideas for writing.</i>					
5	<i>I feel confident using real-world experiences in my English writing.</i>					
6	<i>I often struggle to generate ideas when I lack knowledge of social issues.</i>					

No.	Question	Likert scale				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
7	<i>Thematic reading and reflection assignments help me generate ideas for writing tasks.</i>					
8	<i>Learning through thematic reading improves my ability to write meaningful essays.</i>					
9	<i>Diverse reading materials increase my understanding of different social and global topics.</i>					
10	<i>I need more thematic reading activities to strengthen my Social Knowledge for writing tasks.</i>					
	Construct 2: Critical Thinking					
11	<i>I find it easy to organize my ideas logically before writing an essay.</i>					
12	<i>I often struggle to connect my ideas clearly in my English writing.</i>					
13	<i>I feel confident in using evidence to support my arguments in writing.</i>					

No.	Question	Likert scale				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
14	<i>I need more practice to improve the structure of my essays.</i>					
15	<i>Commenting on my classmates' writings helps me develop ideas in my English writing, as I learn from their vocabulary and organization.</i>					
16	<i>I can easily identify the main idea and supporting details in my writing.</i>					
17	<i>I find it difficult to write essays that require logical reasoning.</i>					
18	<i>Outlining before writing helps me create well-structured essays</i>					
	Construct 3: Psychological Factors					
19	<i>I feel anxious when I have to write essays in English.</i>					
20	<i>I worry about making grammar mistakes when writing in English.</i>					
21	<i>I feel motivated to write when my work is displayed or recognized</i>					

No.	Question	Likert scale				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	<i>by others.</i>					
22	<i>I lack confidence in my English writing abilities.</i>					
23	<i>Recognition from teachers and peers boosts my confidence in writing.</i>					
24	<i>I enjoy writing in English when I receive positive feedback from my teacher.</i>					
25	<i>I feel stressed about meeting deadlines for writing assignments.</i>					
26	<i>I am afraid of receiving negative comments on my English writing.</i>					

27. *What types of writing activities do you think would help you enhance your writing skill? (e.g. more feedback sessions)*

28. *What specific support or guidance from teachers would help you improve your writing skill?*

APPENDIX B .

Student Interviews

Student 1 (11A1 - High proficiency)

Interviewer: Can you describe your feelings when you write in English?

Student: Generally, I feel very confident. However, I sometimes worry about logical coherence.

Interviewer (follow-up): Could you elaborate on how you manage this concern?

Student: I often make outlines. If the teacher provides examples of structured essays, it helps me significantly.

Interviewer: What challenges do you face when writing essays requiring Critical Thinking, such as discussing global or social issues?

Student: I sometimes find it challenging to maintain coherence and logically support my ideas, especially on topics that require deeper thinking.

Interviewer: What activities in class do you find most beneficial?

Student: Definitely peer review, detailed teacher feedback sessions, and activities where our essays are displayed and recognized by peers and teachers.

Student 2 (11A1 - Moderate proficiency)

Interviewer: Do you face any difficulties while writing?

Student: Yes, especially generating ideas about unfamiliar topics.

Interviewer (follow-up): Can you give an example of an unfamiliar topic you've struggled with?

Student: Topics related to global issues like climate change or technology advancements.

Interviewer: What challenges do you face when writing essays requiring Critical Thinking, such as discussing global or social issues?

Student: I struggle to find clear arguments and evidence for global issues because my background knowledge is limited.

Interviewer: What support from your teacher do you feel would help?

Student: More brainstorming sessions, thematic reading assignments, diverse reading materials, and activities where our essays are recognized and displayed in class.

Student 3 (11A1 - Low proficiency)

Interviewer: How do you feel when starting an English writing task?

Student: Quite anxious, to be honest.

Interviewer (follow-up): What causes this anxiety?

Student: I'm afraid of getting negative comments.

Interviewer: What challenges do you face when writing essays requiring Critical Thinking, such as discussing global or social issues?

Student: It's very hard for me to write essays that need deep thinking because I don't have enough ideas.

Interviewer: What do you think could reduce this anxiety?

Student: More vocabulary exercises, grammar support, thematic reading activities, and opportunities to have my essays displayed and recognized by peers and teachers.

Student 4 (11C3 - High proficiency)

Interviewer: Do you enjoy writing tasks in English classes?

Student: Yes, especially thematic reading and reflection assignments.

Interviewer (follow-up): Why do you enjoy these tasks?

Student: Because thematic assignments provide clear contexts, which help me write fluently and confidently.

Interviewer: What challenges do you face when writing essays requiring Critical Thinking, such as discussing global or social issues?

Student: I can manage thematic assignments well, but global issues or social debates are difficult because they require stronger arguments and clearer structures.

Interviewer: Are there tasks you find less beneficial?

Student: I find repetitive writing exercises less helpful; diverse reading materials, thematic reflection tasks, and having my essays displayed and recognized by classmates and teachers are more engaging.

Student 5 (11C3 - Moderate proficiency)

Interviewer: What's your typical approach to writing an essay?

Student: I usually write spontaneously, which sometimes leads to structural issues.

Interviewer (follow-up): Have you tried any techniques to improve this?

Student: My teacher suggested outlining, but I'd like more guidance on creating effective outlines.

Interviewer: What challenges do you face when writing essays requiring Critical Thinking, such as discussing global or social issues?

Student: I feel confused about organizing ideas logically, especially when writing essays about social or global problems.

Interviewer: What type of teacher support would be ideal for you?

Student: More model essays, explicit explanations of structure, thematic reading materials, and displaying my essays with recognition from peers and teachers.

Student 6 (11C3 - Low proficiency)

Interviewer (in English): “Can you tell me how you feel when writing an essay in English?” (Em hãy nói cảm giác của mình khi viết một bài luận bằng tiếng Anh được không?)

Student (trả lời bằng tiếng Việt): “Dạ em thấy rất áp lực. Có nhiều ý tưởng em nghĩ ra nhưng em không biết làm sao để viết rõ ràng được, nên mỗi lần viết là em rất căng thẳng.”

(English translation) “I feel very stressed. Sometimes I have some ideas, but I don't know how to write them clearly, so every time I have to write, I feel very anxious.”

Interviewer: What challenges do you face when writing essays requiring Critical Thinking, such as discussing global or social issues? (Em gặp phải những khó khăn

nào khi viết các bài luận đòi hỏi khả năng tư duy phản biện, chẳng hạn như thảo luận về các vấn đề toàn cầu hoặc xã hội?)

Student (trả lời bằng tiếng Việt): “Em gặp khó khăn nhiều khi viết về các vấn đề xã hội hay toàn cầu vì em ít khi đọc các tài liệu về những vấn đề này, nên không biết cách lập luận logic hoặc đưa ra dẫn chứng cụ thể.”

(English translation) “I struggle a lot when writing about social or global issues because I rarely read materials on these topics, so I don't know how to create logical arguments or provide specific evidence.”

Interviewer (follow-up, in English): “What kind of support from teachers do you think would help you improve?” (Em nghĩ em cần giáo viên hỗ trợ như thế nào thì sẽ cải thiện tốt hơn?)

Student (trả lời bằng tiếng Việt): “Em nghĩ nếu giáo viên chỉ dẫn rõ hơn từng bước, cho em các bài đọc đa dạng về chủ đề, các mẫu câu rõ ràng và tổ chức các hoạt động trung bày, công nhận bài viết của em trước lớp thì em sẽ tự tin hơn.”

(English translation) “I think if teachers give clearer step-by-step guidance, provide diverse reading materials, explicit sentence models, and organize activities to display and recognize my essays in class, I will be more confident.”

Teacher Interviews

Teacher 1 (11A1 Core Curriculum)

Interviewer: From your experience, what are common writing issues among students?

Teacher: They often struggle with generating coherent ideas and maintaining logical structure.

Interviewer: Based on your teaching experience, what specific challenges do your students face when writing essays requiring Critical Thinking (e.g., global or social issues)? Could you provide examples?

Teacher: Students generally find it difficult to logically structure their ideas, particularly for topics that require deeper analysis, like global or social issues. For instance, topics related to technology or ethical dilemmas often pose difficulties for them. They usually have good ideas but find it challenging to structure these logically and persuasively.

Interviewer: How do your students perform when writing about culturally familiar topics compared to unfamiliar ones, such as global issues?

Teacher: They perform much better with culturally familiar topics. For example, when writing about Vietnamese traditions like Tet, their ideas are richer and more detailed, but they struggle with global issues like climate change due to limited background knowledge about such topics.

Interviewer (follow-up): How do you support students facing these challenges?

Teacher: I use graphic organizers and model essays to illustrate good structure. To address their lack of background knowledge, I also encourage thematic reading assignments on Vietnamese culture to help them build relevant Social Knowledge.

Interviewer: Which tasks or strategies have you found particularly effective?

Teacher: Peer-review sessions, as students can see examples from classmates and learn collaboratively. Additionally, assigning diverse reading materials on local topics has helped them generate more meaningful content in their essays.

Teacher 2 (11A1 Specialized Program)

Interviewer: What specific areas do your advanced writing lessons focus on?

Teacher: Critical Thinking, evidence-based arguments, and advanced coherence techniques.

Interviewer: Based on your teaching experience, what specific challenges do your students face when writing essays requiring Critical Thinking (e.g., global or social issues)? Could you provide examples?

Teacher: My students struggle most with developing and organizing arguments for essays that demand Critical Thinking. Although their language proficiency is high, they often lack background knowledge or confidence in arguing effectively about complex social or global issues.

Interviewer: How does their familiarity with cultural or societal contexts affect their writing on such topics?

Teacher: It makes a significant difference. For instance, they write confidently about topics like Vietnamese education reforms, drawing on their own experiences, but they find it hard to discuss topics like global economic trends because they lack the cultural and societal context to make their arguments persuasive.

Interviewer (follow-up): Do your students face any particular difficulties with these areas?

Teacher: Many students have difficulty formulating strong arguments due to limited background knowledge.

Interviewer: What would you recommend to address this issue?

Teacher: Integrating more discussions on social and global topics to broaden their perspectives. I also recommend thematic reading assignments on diverse cultural issues, such as comparing Vietnamese traditions with global practices, to enrich their Social Knowledge.

Teacher 3 (11C3 Core Curriculum)

Interviewer: What do you see as the biggest challenge your students face in writing?

Teacher: Mainly Psychological Factors: anxiety, fear of making errors, and low motivation.

Interviewer: Based on your teaching experience, what specific challenges do your students face when writing essays requiring Critical Thinking (e.g., global or social issues)? Could you provide examples?

Teacher: I notice my students find Critical Thinking particularly challenging when writing. They often provide superficial arguments or have difficulty supporting their points with evidence. Their limited exposure to critical discussions in class or daily life contributes to these issues.

Interviewer: Do your students face challenges in incorporating social or cultural knowledge into their writing? For example, how do they perform when writing about local versus global issues?

Teacher: Yes, they do. They perform better when writing about local issues, like family traditions or community events, because they can draw on their own experiences. However, with global issues like environmental protection, they struggle to generate ideas due to a lack of Social Knowledge about such topics.

Interviewer (follow-up): How do you currently address these psychological challenges?

Teacher: I focus on positive reinforcement, scaffolding activities, and clear step-by-step guidance.

Interviewer: What other strategies might be effective?

Teacher: More structured writing tasks, simpler prompts at the start, gradually increasing complexity as confidence builds. Additionally, exposing them to diverse reading materials about Vietnamese culture can help them build Social Knowledge and feel more confident in writing about familiar topics.

APPENDIX C .

Independent sample T-Test of Social Knowledge

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
I regularly read diverse English materials (stories, newspapers, articles) provided by my teachers to improve my writing.	Equal variances assumed	.183	.670	-.741	72	.461	-.135	.182	-.499	.229
	Equal variances not assumed			-.741	69.904	.461	-.135	.182	-.499	.229
My knowledge of social issues (e.g., family, community) helps me generate ideas for writing.	Equal variances assumed	1.255	.266	3.768	72	.000	.865	.230	.407	1.322
	Equal variances not assumed			3.768	71.076	.000	.865	.230	.407	1.322
I feel confident using real-world experiences in my English writing.	Equal variances assumed	.7849	.379	2.447	72	.017	.622	.254	.115	1.128
	Equal variances not assumed			2.447	70.719	.017	.622	.254	.115	1.128

I often struggle to generate ideas when I lack knowledge of social issues.	Equal variances assumed	.083	.774	1.231	72	.222	.297	.242	-.184	.779
	Equal variances not assumed			1.231	71.535	.222	.297	.242	-.184	.779
Thematic reading materials help me generate ideas for writing tasks.	Equal variances assumed	.183	.670	-.741	72	.461	-.135	.182	-.499	.229
	Equal variances not assumed			-.741	69.904	.461	-.135	.182	-.499	.229
Learning through thematic reading improves my ability to write meaningful essays.	Equal variances assumed	.183	.670	-.741	72	.461	-.135	.182	-.499	.229
	Equal variances not assumed			-.741	69.904	.461	-.135	.182	-.499	.229
Diverse reading materials increase my understanding of different social and global topics.	Equal variances assumed	.364	.548	-.442	72	.660	-.081	.183	-.446	.284
	Equal variances not assumed			-.442	70.162	.660	-.081	.183	-.447	.284
I need more thematic reading activities to strengthen my Social Knowledge for writing tasks.	Equal variances assumed	.105	.747	.572	72	.569	.108	.189	-.269	.485
	Equal variances not assumed			.572	71.380	.569	.108	.189	-.269	.485

APPENDIX D .

Independent sample T-Test of Critical Thinking

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
I find it easy to organize my ideas logically before writing an essay.	Equal variances assumed	.662	.418	-.251	72	.802	-.054	.215	-.483	.375
	Equal variances not assumed			-.251	70.485	.802	-.054	.215	-.483	.375
I often struggle to connect my ideas clearly in my English writing.	Equal variances assumed	1.524	.221	-.249	72	.804	-.054	.217	-.487	.379
	Equal variances not assumed			-.249	66.198	.804	-.054	.217	-.488	.379
I feel confident in using evidence to support my arguments in writing.	Equal variances assumed	.250	.618	1.117	72	.268	.270	.242	-.212	.753
	Equal variances not assumed			1.117	71.942	.268	.270	.242	-.212	.753
I need more practice to improve the structure of my essays.	Equal variances assumed	1.524	.221	-.249	72	.804	-.054	.217	-.487	.379
	Equal variances not assumed			-.249	66.198	.804	-.054	.217	-.488	.379

Commenting on my classmates' writings helps me develop ideas in my English writing, as I learn from their vocabulary and organization.	Equal variances assumed	1.524	.221	-.249	72	.804	-.054	.217	-.487	.379
	Equal variances not assumed			-.249	66.198	.804	-.054	.217	-.488	.379
I can easily identify the main idea and supporting details in my writing.	Equal variances assumed	1.831	.180	.459	72	.647	.108	.235	-.361	.577
	Equal variances not assumed			.459	66.470	.648	.108	.235	-.362	.578
I find it difficult to write essays that require logical reasoning.	Equal variances assumed	1.664	.201	-.367	72	.714	-.081	.221	-.521	.359
	Equal variances not assumed			-.367	66.155	.715	-.081	.221	-.522	.360
Outlining before writing helps me create well-structured essays.	Equal variances assumed	1.092	.300	-.763	72	.448	-.162	.212	-.586	.261
	Equal variances not assumed			-.763	68.897	.448	-.162	.212	-.586	.262

APPENDIX E .

Independent sample T-Test of Psychological Factors

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
I feel anxious when I have to write essays in English.	Equal variances assumed	.000	.993	.345	72	.731	.108	.314	-.517	.734
	Equal variances not assumed			.345	71.990	.731	.108	.314	-.517	.734
I worry about making grammar mistakes when writing in English.	Equal variances assumed	.043	.836	.414	72	.680	.135	.327	-.516	.786
	Equal variances not assumed			.414	72.000	.680	.135	.327	-.516	.786
I feel motivated to write when my work is displayed or recognized by others.	Equal variances assumed	.026	.873	.405	72	.687	.135	.334	-.531	.801
	Equal variances not assumed			.405	71.998	.687	.135	.334	-.531	.801
I lack confidence in my English writing abilities.	Equal variances assumed	.186	.668	.081	72	.936	.027	.334	-.640	.694
	Equal variances not assumed			.081	71.840	.936	.027	.334	-.640	.694

Recognition from teachers and peers boosts my confidence in writing	Equal variances assumed	.121	.729	.327	72	.745	.108	.331	-.551	.767
	Equal variances not assumed			.327	71.951	.745	.108	.331	-.551	.767
I enjoy writing in English when I receive positive feedback from my teacher.	Equal variances assumed	.186	.668	.081	72	.936	.027	.334	-.640	.694
	Equal variances not assumed			.081	71.840	.936	.027	.334	-.640	.694
I feel stressed about meeting deadlines for writing assignments.	Equal variances assumed	.186	.668	.081	72	.936	.027	.334	-.640	.694
	Equal variances not assumed			.081	71.840	.936	.027	.334	-.640	.694
I am afraid of receiving negative comments on my English writing	Equal variances assumed	.121	.729	.327	72	.745	.108	.331	-.551	.767
	Equal variances not assumed			.327	71.951	.745	.108	.331	-.551	.767