

The Effect of Socratic Seminar Technique on EFL Learners' Writing Anxiety and Writing Processes*

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Abstract

This explanatory mixed-methods study examined how the Socratic Seminar technique influenced the writing anxiety and writing processes of Turkish EFL learners in a tertiary-level English preparatory program. Grounded in cognitive writing theory, sociocultural theory, and dialogic teaching, the study conceptualized EFL writing as a recursive and socially mediated process involving idea generation, planning, organization, confidence, willingness to write, and anxiety management. 18 A2-level Turkish EFL learners participated in a four-week intervention in which structured Socratic Seminar discussions were implemented before opinion-paragraph writing tasks. Quantitative data were collected through Cheng's (2004) Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI), administered as a pre-test and post-test, and qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and reflective written responses. Thematic analysis indicated that learners perceived the seminars as beneficial for generating ideas, clarifying topic understanding, organizing thoughts, reducing idea-related uncertainty, improving time management, and increasing confidence. The integrated findings suggest that Socratic Seminar may serve as a dialogic pre-writing scaffold rather than as a stand-alone anxiety-reduction intervention.

Keywords: Socratic Seminar, EFL writing, writing anxiety, dialogic teaching, writing process

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The Cognitive and Affective Nature of EFL Writing

Writing in a foreign language is widely recognized as a cognitively demanding activity because it requires learners to generate ideas, organize content, translate thoughts into an additional language, monitor meaning, and revise emerging texts simultaneously (Hayes & Flower, 1980; Kellogg, 2001). These demands become more complex in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, where learners must manage grammar, vocabulary, discourse conventions, audience awareness, and content development at the same time (Galbraith & Vedder, 2019; Hyland, 2019; Ortega, 2009). Therefore, EFL writing should not be treated merely as the production of grammatically accurate sentences; rather, it should be understood as a recursive, cognitively intensive, and socially situated process shaped by linguistic, strategic, and affective factors. Recent second language (L2) writing research likewise emphasizes that writing performance is shaped by interactions among task demands, anxiety, and self-efficacy, particularly when learners manage cognitively demanding writing tasks (Abdi Tabari & Goetze, 2024).

Cognitive models of writing conceptualize composition as a recursive problem-solving process rather than a linear act of transcription (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Hayes & Flower, 1980). From this perspective, writers move dynamically among planning, translating, reviewing, and monitoring while constructing meaning (Deane et al., 2008; Flower & Hayes, 1981). Planning is especially important for EFL learners because idea generation and organization may become constrained when learners simultaneously attend to linguistic form and meaning development (Galbraith & Vedder, 2019; Ortega, 2009). Consequently, instructional practices that scaffold the pre-writing stage may help learners start writing tasks with clearer ideas, stronger organization, and reduced cognitive load.

Writing anxiety is a key affective variable influencing learners' engagement with writing tasks. It refers to tension, fear, apprehension, and avoidance tendencies experienced before or during writing and may negatively influence learners' motivation, confidence, performance, and willingness to participate in writing activities (Cheng, 2004; Daly & Wilson, 1983; McLeod, 1987). Learners with high writing anxiety may avoid writing, produce shorter or less developed texts, and demonstrate lower confidence in their writing abilities (Hassan, 2001; Zhang, 2011). In foreign language learning contexts, writing anxiety is closely related to broader foreign language anxiety and may operate as an affective barrier that restricts learners' engagement with language input, output, and classroom interaction (Horwitz et al., 1986; Krashen, 1981; Yalçın & Kırkıç, 2025). Recent studies further show that L2 writing anxiety is context-sensitive and may be shaped by evaluation concerns, cultural-academic expectations, and perceived linguistic difficulty (Rasool et al., 2023; Yu & Zhou, 2022).

In the Turkish EFL context, writing instruction may at times be shaped by product-oriented practices that emphasize grammatical accuracy and the final written product rather than the developmental process of writing. Such practices may limit learners' opportunities to plan, discuss, revise, and develop ideas collaboratively before composing texts. This limitation becomes particularly important in university preparatory programs, where learners are expected to produce academically acceptable writing within limited time frames despite insufficient experience with process-oriented and dialogic writing practices. Accordingly,

there is a pedagogical need to investigate instructional approaches that can support both the cognitive preparation and affective engagement of EFL learners during writing.

Dialogic Teaching, the Socratic Seminar Technique, and the Writing Process

Recent perspectives in L2 writing have emphasized interactive, process-oriented, and socially mediated approaches to writing instruction (Cumming, 2016; Hyland, 2019). Sociocultural theory suggests that learning develops through social interaction, collaborative engagement, mediation, and the use of language as a tool for thinking (Lantolf, 2000; Swain, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978, 1987). From this perspective, writing development is not solely an individual cognitive act but also a socially mediated activity shaped by interaction with peers, teachers, texts, and classroom discourse. Dialogic learning environments can therefore support EFL learners by enabling them to articulate ideas, negotiate meanings, test interpretations, and develop conceptual readiness before writing.

The Socratic Seminar technique involves structured, open-ended, question-based discussions centered on a shared text. These seminars are guided by teachers as facilitators or coaches, posing questions to outline the discussion and eliciting the reasons and implications (Copeland, 2005). Rooted in Socratic questioning, this technique encourages critical thinking and reflects the above-mentioned dialogic and sociocultural principles because it is based on text-based discussion, questioning, interpretation, and collaborative meaning-making (Copeland, 2005; Fischer, 2019). Unlike teacher-centered question-and-answer practices, Socratic Seminars position learners as active participants who explore ideas through dialogue, respond to peers, justify interpretations, and construct deeper understanding of shared texts (Copeland, 2005; Lambright, 1995; Strong, 1996).

Several studies have demonstrated the efficacy of the Socratic Seminar method in improving learners' reading comprehension (e.g. Acim, 2018; Abdullah & Yahya, 2023), and speaking skills (e.g. Balbay & Doğan, 2023; Sutanto et al., 2024). However, there is scarcity of studies exploring its effect on writing skills. One example to this is the study by Tillayeva (2023), involving 25 university freshmen students with intermediate proficiency in English. The researcher employed a mixed-methods design, with data collected through semi-structured interviews to identify the challenges that students experience in writing. Following the thematic analysis, students were found to have difficulty in generating ideas during the writing tasks. Before the Socratic Seminar intervention students wrote argumentative essays as pre-test. Later, the Socratic Seminar technique was conducted, and each student wrote an argumentative essay, and students gave peer-feedback to each other based on a rubric following the essay writing. The findings revealed that participation in the Socratic seminar enhanced the students' ability to generate ideas and organize arguments logically. Although challenges such as time constraints and large class sizes were reported, the study concluded that Socratic Seminars can be an effective instructional strategy for promoting critical thinking, collaborative discourse and improved writing performance among EFL learners.

This makes the technique pedagogically relevant for writing instruction because learners can use oral dialogue as a pre-writing space in which they generate ideas, clarify perspectives, rehearse arguments, and increase confidence before producing written texts. The pedagogical value of the Socratic Seminars for EFL writing lies in their potential to connect

collaborative dialogue with written production. Because writing requires the transformation of emerging ideas into organized textual meaning, learners may benefit from opportunities to verbalize, refine, and reorganize ideas before composing (Cumming, 2016; Hayes & Flower, 1980; Swain, 2000). In this sense, Socratic Seminars may function as a dialogic pre-writing scaffold by helping learners move from initial understanding to idea development, from individual uncertainty to collaborative exploration, and from hesitation to greater readiness for writing. This interpretation is broadly consistent with recent reviews of L2 collaborative writing, which emphasize the role of peer interaction, task structure, and collaborative preparation in supporting writing development (Li & Zhang, 2023; Zhang & Plonsky, 2020; Zhang et al., 2021).

Although writing anxiety has been examined in Turkish EFL contexts, intervention-based studies focusing on dialogic or collaborative instructional practices remain limited. Previous studies have shown that Turkish tertiary-level EFL learners may experience writing apprehension and that affective variables are associated with writing performance and self-efficacy (Erkan & Saban, 2011; Göncü & Mede, 2022). Research has also suggested that collaborative feedback practices may reduce writing anxiety by creating a more supportive writing environment (Yastıbaş & Yastıbaş, 2015). However, existing research has paid limited attention to how Socratic Seminar discussions influence the process dimensions of EFL writing, particularly idea generation, planning, organization, confidence, willingness to write, and idea-related anxiety. This gap is important because a statistically measurable decrease in general anxiety may not fully capture how learners experience cognitive and affective support during pre-writing.

Therefore, the present study investigates the effect of the Socratic Seminar technique on tertiary-level EFL learners perceived writing anxiety and writing processes. Unlike studies that focus only on whether writing anxiety scores decrease after an intervention, this study approaches writing as a multidimensional process involving cognitive preparation, affective engagement, and dialogic meaning-making. More specifically, the study examines how Socratic Seminar discussions influence learners' perceptions of idea generation, planning, organization, confidence, willingness to write, and writing-related anxiety within a tertiary-level preparatory program. Since exploring the effectiveness of the Socratic Seminar is still very new and needs to be supported with empirical evidence, the present study attempts to contribute to the EFL writing pedagogy by conceptualizing Socratic Seminar as a dialogic pre-writing strategy that may support tertiary-level learners' transition from oral thinking to written expression.

Research Questions

In line with the theoretical and conceptual background given above, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the levels of writing anxiety among tertiary-level Turkish EFL learners prior to Socratic Seminar intervention?
2. What is the effect of the Socratic Seminar intervention on tertiary-level Turkish EFL learners' writing anxiety?

3. What are the EFL learners' perceptions regarding the effect of Socratic Seminar technique on writing-related anxiety?
4. What is the effect of Socratic Seminar technique on EFL learners:
 - a) idea generation during writing processes?
 - b) planning and organization processes during writing?
 - c) confidence and willingness to write?

Method

Research Design

This study employed an explanatory mixed-methods design to investigate the effect of the Socratic Seminar technique on EFL learners' writing anxiety levels and writing processes. The mixed-methods structure enabled the researchers to examine both measurable changes in writing anxiety and learners' process-level experiences related to writing preparation and dialogic engagement by combining the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data.

The quantitative phase used a one-group pre-test/post-test design; the qualitative phase followed through semi-structured interviews and written responses to explain, extend, and contextualize the quantitative findings. Because the design did not include a control group, causal claims were deliberately avoided. The study represents a small-scale classroom-based intervention examining learner experiences and process-level pedagogical change. Threats to internal validity - including maturation, testing effects, classroom context, and short-term intervention effects - were considered when interpreting the results. The intervention was conducted over four weeks in a tertiary-level English preparatory program. During this process, students participated in structured Socratic Seminar discussions prior to writing tasks. The instructional process emphasized collaborative questioning, text-based interpretation, reflective dialogue, and the transformation of orally discussed ideas into written opinion paragraphs. Thus, the intervention was designed to function as a pre-writing scaffold that could support learners' cognitive preparation before written production.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in the English Preparatory School of a foundation university in İstanbul, Türkiye. The preparatory program provides intensive English instruction before students proceed to English-medium undergraduate programs. Most departments at the university adopt English as the medium of instruction; thus, students are obliged to complete the preparatory program with a minimum of B2 level of English proficiency that is aligned with the university assessment criteria, prior to entering their undergraduate studies. At the beginning of the program, students take an in-house proficiency and placement test to assess their English language competence. Based on their performance, they are placed into A1, A2, B1, or B2 level groups.

The intervention was implemented within the context of a writing course. The sample consisted of 18 Turkish EFL learners, including 13 female and 5 male students (See Table 1). All participants were placed at the A2 proficiency level based on the institutional placement test administered at the beginning of the academic year. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to

24. They were selected through purposive sampling because they were enrolled in the target writing course and were relevant to the phenomenon under investigation.

Table 1

Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	Description
Institutional context	English Preparatory School of a foundation university in İstanbul, Türkiye
Sample size	18 Turkish EFL learners
Gender distribution	13 female, 5 male
Age range	18-24
English level	A2 according to institutional placement procedures
Sampling strategy	Purposive sampling within an accessible writing course

The Intervention Procedure

The four-week intervention integrated the Socratic Seminar sessions into pre-writing instruction to create a dialogic bridge between reading, oral idea exploration, and written production. The instructional process was designed around dialogic teaching, collaborative inquiry, and reflective discussion. Before the intervention, students were introduced to the purpose, stages, expectations, and discussion rules of the Socratic Seminars. The researcher explained how participants should prepare discussion questions, respond to peers, support interpretations with textual evidence, and participate in collaborative turn-taking during seminar discussions. Students were additionally guided to prepare questions at different cognitive levels within Bloom's Taxonomy, including remembering, analyzing, and evaluating. A demonstration seminar was conducted before the intervention to familiarize learners with seminar procedures, seating arrangements, and participation expectations.

The intervention followed a three-stage structure consisting of pre-seminar preparation, seminar discussion, and post-seminar writing. During the pre-seminar preparation stage, students read assigned texts selected from *Q: Skills for Success Reading and Writing Level 1* published by Oxford University Press because the materials contained discussion-oriented and thought-provoking topics appropriate for A2-level learners. Students completed preparation worksheets requiring them to identify main ideas and supporting details, summarize key points, note unfamiliar vocabulary, and prepare discussion questions before class discussions. These preparation activities aimed to promote deeper engagement with the texts and support idea development prior to writing. During the seminar stage, students engaged in collaborative text-based discussions by referring to prepared questions, responding to peers' ideas, justifying interpretations, and negotiating meaning collectively while the instructor functioned primarily as a facilitator rather than a direct lecturer. The dialogic structure of the seminars encouraged learners to verbalize ideas, explore multiple perspectives, and rehearse arguments orally before composing written texts. In the post-seminar stage, students completed reflective activities and wrote opinion paragraphs related to the seminar topics. This sequence aimed to support the transition from oral meaning-making to written production through dialogically supported pre-writing activities. Sample seminar topics included the effects of exercise, the value of long or short vacations, the effects

of laughing on health, and strategies for improving memory. Table 2 presents the instructional stages, student activities, and pedagogical purposes of the intervention procedure.

Table 2

Intervention Procedure

Stage	Student activities	Instructional purpose
Pre-seminar	Get familiar with the Socratic Seminar technique, read assigned text; complete preparation worksheet; identify main ideas and supporting details; note unfamiliar vocabulary; prepare discussion questions.	Support comprehension, activate background knowledge, and prepare ideas before speaking and writing.
Seminar	Participate in text-based discussion; refer to the text; respond to peers; justify interpretations; negotiate meaning collaboratively.	Encourage critical thinking, collaborative dialogue, oral articulation, and idea expansion.
Post-seminar	Complete reflective worksheet; identify ideas emerging from the discussion; write an opinion paragraph related to the seminar topic.	Transfer dialogic meaning-making into written expressions and consolidate pre-writing preparation.

Data Collection Instruments

The Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI)

Quantitative data were collected through the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) developed by Cheng (2004). This reliable and valid scale is a 22-item five-point Likert-type scale designed to measure L2 writing anxiety across three dimensions: cognitive anxiety (items 1, 3, 7, 9, 14, 17, 20, and 21), somatic anxiety (items 2, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, and 19), and avoidance behavior (items 4, 5, 10, 12, 16, 18, and 22). Because the participants' A2-level English proficiency could have influenced their interpretation of the items, the instrument was translated into Turkish by three instructors working in the preparatory program to improve clarity and comprehension. The scale was administered to the same participant group as both a pre-test and a post-test before and after the four-week intervention to examine possible changes in learners' writing anxiety levels.

Semi-Structured Interviews And Written Responses

Qualitative data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews and reflective written responses gathered through Google Forms. Nine students were selected for interviews through purposive sampling based on their writing performance in an institutional writing quiz, while all 18 participants completed written open-ended responses. The qualitative instruments focused on learners' perceptions of the Socratic Seminar technique, its influence on idea generation, planning, organization, time management, confidence, willingness to write, and writing-related anxiety experiences. All interviews and written responses were conducted in Turkish to facilitate more detailed participant expression. The use of multiple qualitative data sources enabled a more comprehensive understanding of learners' classroom discussion experiences and writing preparation processes by providing both in-depth individual perspectives and whole-group qualitative evidence.

Data Analysis

In the present study, two sets of data, quantitative and qualitative, were separately analyzed first and then combined during the interpretation phase by associating the quantitative results with the qualitative findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were first calculated to determine participants' pre- and post-intervention writing anxiety levels. Internal consistency of the SLWAI and its subscales was examined through Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Prior to inferential analyses, normality assumptions were assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The non-significant results for the pre-test ($D = .133$, $p = .200$) and post-test ($D = .090$, $p = .200$) indicated that the assumption of normality was not violated. Accordingly, paired-samples t-tests were conducted to compare pre-test and post-test scores. Effect sizes (d_z) were calculated by dividing the t value by the square root of the sample size.

Qualitative data obtained from interviews and reflective written responses were analyzed through thematic analysis. Interview recordings were transcribed, written responses were compiled, and all qualitative data were read repeatedly prior to coding. Initial codes were subsequently grouped into broader themes related to idea generation, planning, organization, confidence, willingness to write, collaborative interaction, time management, and perceptions of writing-related anxiety. The analysis was drawn on systematic coding procedures and comparison across qualitative data sources to develop a more comprehensive understanding of learners' writing experiences during the intervention process. Another coder independently coded 10% of the data, and it produced a high level of agreement (more than 80%). Cases of disagreement were brought up and settled by a discussion. Interviews and written responses were collected in Turkish and translated into English during reporting. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enabled the researchers to interpret changes in writing anxiety together with learners' perceptions of dialogic pre-writing experiences and writing-process development.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles for research involving human participants. Prior to the data collection process, ethical approval for the study entitled "Sokratik Seminer Tekniğinin Yabancı Dilde Yazma Becerilerine ve Yabancı Dilde Yazma Kaygısına Etkisi" was obtained from the Yeditepe University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee. The ethics committee approved the study on April 30, 2025, under decision number 04/2025.

In addition, an official institutional research permission letter confirming the research was issued by Yeditepe University Rectorate, Institute of European Studies Directorate, on May 7, 2025. Participation in the study was voluntary, and all participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the research before data collection. Participants were also informed that their responses would remain confidential and would be used only for academic research purposes. Throughout the research process, anonymity and confidentiality principles were maintained, and no personal identifying information was disclosed during data analysis or reporting procedures.

Findings

This section presents quantitative and qualitative findings regarding the influence of the Socratic Seminar technique on EFL learners' writing processes and writing-related anxiety. Quantitative findings are presented to examine measurable changes in writing anxiety, whereas qualitative findings are used to explore learners' experiences related to idea generation, planning, organization, confidence, confidence, willingness to write, and writing preparation processes.

Writing Anxiety Levels Prior to the Intervention

To answer the first research question (What are the writing anxiety levels among tertiary-level Turkish EFL learners prior to the Socratic Seminar?), descriptive statistics were performed to identify the levels of writing anxiety at the pre-intervention stage as determined by the SLWAI. The findings showed that the overall average score for writing anxiety was $M = 2.73$ ($SD = 0.42$), indicating moderately anxious learners in the class before the intervention. However, when the analysis was done on the subscales, the score on somatic anxiety was $M = 2.88$ ($SD = 0.98$), which was almost twice the physiological symptoms of anxiety in the body suggesting a higher level of the students' anxiety in this area than in the other ones. Likewise, cognitive anxiety was reported with a similar average ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 0.28$), which shows the learners' worries and negative thoughts about writing. By contrast, avoidance behavior had a marginally lower average ($M = 2.42$, $SD = 0.36$), which indicates that students were less inclined to stay away from writing tasks than to experience cognitive and somatic anxiety. In general, these results reflect that before the use of the Socratic Seminar method, the participants felt a moderate degree of writing anxiety in all areas.

The Effect of the Socratic Seminar Intervention on Writing Anxiety

The second research question examined the effect of the Socratic Seminar technique on EFL students' writing anxiety levels. Quantitative findings obtained from the (SLWAI) indicated that the intervention did not produce statistically significant changes in learners' overall writing anxiety levels.

Table 3 presents pre-test and post-test writing anxiety scores across overall anxiety and SLWAI sub-dimensions. The mean writing anxiety score decreased slightly from the pre-test ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 0.42$) to the post-test ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 0.34$), $t(17) = 0.44$, $p = .666$. Analyses of anxiety sub-dimensions similarly revealed no statistically significant differences. Somatic anxiety decreased descriptively from $M = 2.88$ ($SD = 0.98$) to $M = 2.57$ ($SD = 0.64$), whereas cognitive anxiety demonstrated a slight increase from $M = 2.88$ ($SD = 0.28$) to $M = 3.01$ ($SD = 0.33$). Avoidance behavior remained relatively stable throughout the intervention process. Effect size estimates indicated negligible effects for overall anxiety and avoidance behavior and small effects for somatic and cognitive anxiety dimensions.

Table 3

Pre-Test and Post-Test SLWAI Scores Across Anxiety Dimensions

Variable	Pre-Test M	Pre-Test SD	Post-Test M	Post-Test SD	t	p
Overall Writing Anxiety	2.73	0.42	2.69	0.34	0.44	.666
Somatic Anxiety	2.88	0.98	2.57	0.64	1.37	.189

Variable	Pre-Test M	Pre-Test SD	Post-Test M	Post-Test SD	t	p
Avoidance Behavior	2.42	0.36	2.48	0.37	-0.42	.677
Cognitive Anxiety	2.88	0.28	3.01	0.33	-1.35	.195

Note. SLWAI = Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory.

Learner Perceptions of the Socratic Seminar Technique

The third research question focused on learner perceptions regarding the effect of the Socratic Seminar technique on writing-related anxiety. In contrast with the quantitative findings, qualitative findings provided a more differentiated interpretation of these quantitative results. According to the findings, Socratic Seminars seemed to lower the perceived writing anxiety mostly due to the fact that participants think seminar discussions reduced uncertainty related to idea generation, planning, and beginning the writing task. For example, a student stated that seminars *“helped me see the topic in a general framework and have ideas, so my anxiety decreased”*, while another participant said, *“I felt more comfortable because I already had some ideas before writing.”* Moreover, the interviews provided further support for this finding. Another participant stated, *“Because I had already talked and thought about the topic, I felt more comfortable when writing.”* Nevertheless, several learners indicated that grammar accuracy and vocabulary limitations remained important sources of anxiety despite improvements in brainstorming and preparation processes. Taken together, the findings suggest that Socratic Seminar primarily supported learners’ cognitive preparation and dialogic pre-writing processes rather than producing broad reductions in overall writing anxiety levels within the four-week intervention period.

The fourth research question explored the effect of Socratic Seminar technique on EFL learners’ idea generation during writing processes, planning and organization processes during writing, and confidence and willingness to write.

The Effect of Socratic Seminar Technique on EFL Learners’ Idea Generation during Writing Processes

Qualitative findings indicated that Socratic Seminar activities contributed positively to learners’ idea generation processes before writing tasks. Participants frequently reported that collaborative discussions enabled them to generate ideas more easily, encounter different perspectives, and develop a clearer understanding of discussion topics before writing. Table 4 presents the qualitative findings related to idea generation and cognitive engagement during writing processes.

As shown in Table 4, participants primarily emphasized the contribution of seminar discussions to brainstorming, perspective-taking, and idea development before writing. Collaborative dialogue appeared to support learners’ cognitive engagement and mental preparation during the pre-writing stage.

Table 4

Qualitative Findings Related to Idea Generation and Cognitive Engagement

Theme	Code	f	Sample Participant Statement
Exposure to multiple perspectives	Learning from peers’ ideas	12	“Different ideas stayed in my mind.”

Theme	Code	f	Sample Participant Statement
Exposure to multiple perspectives	Seeing alternative viewpoints	10	"I saw different perspectives."
Easier idea production	Generating ideas easily	14	"I can think more easily now."
Analytical thinking	Identifying main/supporting ideas	8	"We separated main and supporting ideas."
Deeper understanding	Understanding discussion topics better	11	"I understood the topic better."

Note. Frequencies reflect the number of participants expressing each idea.

The Effect of Socratic Seminar Technique on EFL Learners' Planning and Organization Processes During Writing

Participants also reported that seminar discussions supported planning and organization processes during writing. Learners frequently stated that discussing ideas before writing helped them structure thoughts more systematically and organize written responses more clearly.

Table 5

Qualitative Findings Related to Planning and Organization Processes

Theme	Code	f	Sample Participant Statement
Pre-writing support	Planning writing more clearly	11	"I can plan my writing more clearly."
Structuring ideas	Organizing thoughts before writing	10	"Topics are clear in my mind."
Writing stage support	Idea flow during writing	15	"Ideas come while I am writing."
Extended written production	Producing longer sentences	9	"I can write longer sentences."

Note. Frequencies reflect the number of participants expressing each idea.

Table 5 demonstrates that learners associate seminar discussions with improved idea organization and smoother writing flow. Participants particularly emphasized that discussing ideas collaboratively before writing reduces uncertainty during the writing process.

The Effect of Socratic Seminar Technique on EFL Learners' Confidence and Willingness to Write

Qualitative findings further demonstrated that Socratic Seminar activities positively influenced learners' confidence and willingness to participate in writing tasks. Participants frequently described feeling more prepared, less hesitant, and more willing to begin writing after collaborative discussions.

Table 6

Qualitative Findings Related to Confidence and Willingness to Write

Theme	Code	f	Sample Participant Statement
Confidence development	Feeling more confident	13	"I feel I can write."
Reduced hesitation	Reduced fear of writing	10	"I'm not afraid of writing anymore."
Increased willingness	Becoming more open to writing	9	"I became more open to writing."
Time management	Reduced thinking time	12	"I didn't waste time thinking."

Theme	Code	f	Sample Participant Statement
Time management	Increased writing speed	11	"I write faster now."

Note. Frequencies reflect the number of participants expressing each idea.

As presented in Table 6, learners frequently associated seminar discussions with increased confidence and reduced hesitation before writing. Several participants additionally emphasized improvements in writing fluency and time management during writing tasks.

Discussion

This study investigated the effect of the Socratic Seminar technique on EFL learners' writing processes in a tertiary-level preparatory program. Although the quantitative findings indicated that the four-week intervention did not produce statistically significant reductions in overall writing anxiety or its sub-dimensions, the qualitative findings revealed meaningful improvements in learners' idea generation, planning, organization, confidence, willingness to write, and time management during writing processes. Taken together, the findings suggest that Socratic Seminar primarily functioned as a dialogic pre-writing scaffold supporting cognitive and affective preparation before writing rather than as a direct intervention reducing all dimensions of writing anxiety.

The strongest qualitative finding concerned idea generation and cognitive preparation before writing. Participants repeatedly emphasized that listening to peers' perspectives and discussing topics collaboratively enabled them to generate ideas more easily and develop richer content before beginning to write. This finding is consistent with cognitive writing theories identifying planning and idea generation as central components of writing development (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Hayes, 1996). It also aligns with sociocultural perspectives suggesting that language-mediated interaction supports learning through collaborative meaning-making and idea negotiation (Cumming, 2016; Swain, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). In this respect, Socratic Seminar discussions appeared to create dialogic pre-writing spaces enabling learners to externalize, test, and reorganize ideas orally before transforming them into written expressions.

The findings additionally demonstrated that Socratic Seminar activities supported learners' planning and organization processes during writing. Participants reported that collaborative discussions helped them clarify topics mentally, structure ideas more systematically, and experience smoother idea flow while writing. These findings support process-oriented approaches to writing instruction emphasizing preparation, drafting, and meaning development rather than exclusive focus on final written products. Rather than confronting writing tasks individually without preparation, learners engaged in collaborative discussion before writing, which appeared to reduce uncertainty during the initial stages of composition. This interpretation is also consistent with Graham and Perin's (2007) emphasis on structured pre-writing support and collaborative writing preparation. Recent EFL and web-based collaborative writing studies more broadly suggest that peer interaction can support attention to form, idea development, and writing performance when interaction is pedagogically structured (Lázaro-Ibarrola & Hidalgo, 2024).

Another important finding concerned learners' confidence and willingness to write. Participants frequently described feeling more confident, less hesitant, and more prepared

after participating in seminar discussions. These findings are compatible with previous research emphasizing the relationship between self-efficacy, affective engagement, and participation in EFL writing contexts (Erkan & Saban, 2011; Pajares, 2003). However, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence that Socratic Seminar eliminates writing anxiety comprehensively. Instead, the intervention appeared to reduce uncertainty associated with idea generation and writing preparation while broader grammar- and vocabulary-related concerns remained relatively stable.

The absence of statistically significant changes in SLWAI scores may be interpreted in several ways. First, the intervention lasted only four weeks, which may not have been sufficient to produce measurable changes in a multidimensional affective construct such as writing anxiety. Second, the relatively small sample size limited statistical power. Third, qualitative findings indicated that learners continued to experience grammar- and vocabulary-related concerns even when they felt more cognitively prepared for writing tasks. This interpretation is consistent with Cheng's (2004) multidimensional conceptualization of second-language writing anxiety, including cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance behavior. The findings therefore suggest that Socratic Seminar activities may influence idea-related and process-oriented dimensions of writing experience more strongly than broader linguistic anxiety dimensions associated with grammatical accuracy and vocabulary use.

The study contributes to EFL writing pedagogy by positioning Socratic Seminar not merely as a discussion technique but as a dialogic pre-writing strategy supporting cognitive preparation before writing. Through structured questioning, collaborative interpretation, peer response, and oral exploration of ideas, the seminars created a bridge between oral interaction and written production. This contribution is particularly important in EFL writing contexts where instruction often emphasizes final written products while providing limited opportunities for collaborative idea development before writing tasks. Within this framework, Socratic Seminar may be understood as a pedagogical tool supporting the transition from thinking and speaking to writing in more process-oriented and interaction-rich classroom environments.

Pedagogical Implications

This study gives EFL educators a few useful suggestions on how to enrich their writing instruction. The findings suggest that Socratic Seminar activities may be integrated effectively into pre-writing stages at tertiary-level EFL classrooms to support learners' idea generation, planning, and cognitive preparation before writing tasks. Structured discussion activities may help learners explore multiple perspectives, clarify ideas collaboratively, and approach writing tasks with greater confidence and readiness. However, because grammar- and vocabulary-related anxiety remained relatively stable, dialogic pre-writing activities may be most effective when combined with explicit linguistic support practices focusing on grammatical accuracy, vocabulary development, and feedback during writing instruction. This also underlines the idea that writing anxiety is a multi-faceted phenomenon with different sources.

Another implication of this study is the need for teacher training in implementing Socratic Seminars. The effectiveness of this technique largely depends on teachers' ability to think critically and to formulate thought-provoking or sophisticated questions that facilitate

meaningful discussions. Whereas many EFL teachers have limited experience with different levels of questioning strategies, most are generally familiar with knowledge-level questions, which are not sufficient to promote students' critical thinking abilities. Therefore, pre-service and in-service teacher education should provide practical training on questioning techniques and Socratic discussions to maximize higher-order thinking skills.

Lastly, the classroom implementation of the Socratic Seminar technique is largely overlooked and uncommon despite its benefits. With the development of AI and the increasing use of AI tools in education has raised concerns about students' overreliance on technology for generating ideas and completing school tasks. While AI can serve as a valuable learning aid, excessive dependence on such tools may reduce opportunities for students to engage in independent thinking, discussion, and reflection. Accordingly, Socratic Seminars can serve as a highly effective way to enhance their reading, speaking, critical thinking, and discussion skills in a collaborative environment which is entirely different from the robotic digital world that they are used to. Therefore, integrating discussion-based instructional approaches into writing classes may help foster the higher-order thinking and communication skills that remain essential in the AI era.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be considered while interpreting the findings. The study employed a one-group pre-test/post-test design without a control group, which limits causal interpretation. In addition, the sample size was relatively small and drawn from a single institutional context, restricting broader transferability. The four-week intervention period may also have been insufficient to produce measurable long-term changes in writing anxiety. Furthermore, the study relied partly on self-reported qualitative perceptions and did not include independent measures of writing quality or writing performance development. Future research should therefore employ larger samples, control-group or quasi-experimental designs, longitudinal interventions, and direct assessments of writing performance in order to examine the long-term pedagogical effects of dialogic pre-writing practices more comprehensively.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings suggest that dialogically supported writing environments may help EFL learners' transition more confidently from thinking and speaking to writing. In this respect, Socratic Seminar appears to provide valuable pedagogical opportunities for creating more process-oriented, cognitively supportive, and interaction-rich EFL writing classrooms.

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