

GOAL SETTING IN THE EFL CLASSROOM: STUDENTS' WRITING COMPETENCE,
LINGUISTIC DEVELOPMENT, AND PERSPECTIVES

By

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ABSTRACT

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In recent years, a growing volume of research has consistently shown the positive impacts of goal setting in the language classroom. However, there is a lack of research on the relationship between goal setting and EFL students' writing competence and their linguistic development. The present study aims to address this gap. Thirty-nine Vietnamese university students were taught to write argumentative IELTS essays and practice setting writing goals over the course of ten weeks. It was found that students' writing competence significantly improved after the treatment. In terms of linguistic development, students used more advanced vocabulary and n-grams with higher mutual information. However, lexical diversity did not improve. For syntactic complexity, students tended to write shorter sentences, shorter clauses, and shorter T-units, with a reduction of coordination, subordination, and verb phrases. Instead, they tended to use more noun and preposition phrases. Regarding writing fluency, no significant change was seen in text length. However, there was a significant increase in the number of participants who were able to satisfy the word requirement of argumentative IELTS essays. The questionnaire data also revealed that students believed that it was unnecessary to increase the difficulty of their writing goals, and that students were less committed to their writing goals. The correlations showed that among the four goal factors, goal commitment showed the strongest correlation with students' perspectives toward the effectiveness of goal setting over time. Because there was no control group, the findings were confirmed in interviews with nine participants. Pedagogical and theoretical implications will also be discussed in the study.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW	3
1.1 Factors affecting Goal Setting	3
1.2 Assigned Goals versus Self-set Goals.....	6
1.3 Goal Setting in Writing Classes.....	7
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY	11
2.1 Participants and Context.....	11
2.2 Assessment Materials and Raters	12
2.3 The Writing Course.....	14
2.3.1 Teaching Materials.....	15
2.3.2 Goal-setting Intervention.....	15
2.4 Research Instruments	16
2.4.1 Linguistic Measures	16
2.4.1.1 Lexical Diversity	17
2.4.1.2 Lexical Sophistication	18
2.4.1.3 Syntactic Complexity	22
2.4.1.4 Writing Fluency	24
2.4.2 Goal-setting Questionnaire.....	25
2.4.2.1 Stage 1: Developing the Goal-setting Questionnaire	26
2.4.2.2 Stage 2: Distributing the Goal-setting Questionnaire.....	27
2.4.3 Interviews	27
2.4.3.1 Participants.....	27
2.4.3.2 Interview Procedures	28
CHAPTER 3: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	29
3.1 Writing Competence	29
3.2 Linguistic Development	32
3.2.1 Lexical Diversity.....	32
3.2.2 Lexical Sophistication.....	34
3.2.3 Syntactic Complexity.....	37
3.2.4 Writing Fluency	40
3.3 Students' Perspectives toward Goal Setting	42
3.3.1 Goal-setting Questionnaire.....	42
3.3.1.1 Stage 1: Developing the Goal-setting Questionnaire	42
3.3.1.2 Stage 2: Distributing the Goal-setting Questionnaire.....	48
3.3.2 Interviews	59
3.3.2.1 Goal Commitment	59

3.3.2.2	Teacher Feedback.....	60
3.3.2.3	Goal Specificity.....	61
3.3.2.4	Goal Challenge.....	62
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION		64
4.3	Summary of the Findings	64
4.4	Implications	65
4.4.2	Pedagogical Implications	65
4.4.3	Theoretical Implications.....	67
4.5	Limitations and Future Studies	68
APPENDICES		70
APPENDIX A		71
	The Writing Syllabus	71
	Sample Goal-Setting Plan	78
APPENDIX B		79
	Goal-setting Questionnaire Stage 1	79
	Goal-setting Questionnaire Stage 2	85
APPENDIX C		94
	Interview Questions: At the beginning of the study	94
	Interview Questions: At the middle and at the end of the study.....	97
REFERENCES		101

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Students' Writing Competence	29
Table 2. Lexical Diversity	32
Table 3. Lexical Sophistication	34
Table 4. Syntactic Complexity	37
Table 5. Writing Fluency.....	40
Table 6. 819-response dataset.....	43
Table 7. Intercorrelation matrix of the 819-response dataset	44
Table 8. Group with goal-setting experience.....	44
Table 9. Intercorrelation matrix of the 353-response dataset	45
Table 10. Group without goal-setting experience.....	46
Table 11. Intercorrelation matrix of the 466-response dataset	46
Table 12. A rerun of EFA with the group without goal-setting experience	50
Table 13. A rerun of the intercorrelation matrix of the 466-response dataset.....	51
Table 14. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each factor (based on 19 items).....	51
Table 15. Goal-Setting Questionnaire.....	52
Table 16. Students' Perspectives.....	55
Table 17. My Writing Goals # Week 1	78

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Goal Commitment and Goal Setting	56
Figure 2. Teacher Feedback and Goal Setting.....	57
Figure 3. Goal Specificity and Goal Setting.....	57
Figure 4. Goal Challenge and Goal Setting.....	58

INTRODUCTION

Goal setting can be regarded as the process in which one is making conscious efforts to achieve a goal (Schunk, 1990), an important skill that "successful people have mastered to help them realize both short-term and long-term desires" (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001, p. 93). In educational contexts, goal setting provides clear learning objectives and directions for students (Moeller, Theiler, & Wu, 2012). When students set learning goals, they have an opportunity to take responsibility for and ownership of their learning by self-determination of priorities. This in turn creates a learning environment which is conducive to the development of learner autonomy (Koda-Dallow & Hobbs, 2005). Harford (2008) also acknowledged that goal setting in conjunction with self-reflection is particularly useful in the classroom as it enables students to identify gaps in their knowledge and simultaneously encourages them to document action plans to work on their shortcomings. Goals can also improve students' self-efficacy, a belief in one's capability to complete the learning tasks, which subsequently fosters learning motivation and academic achievement (Muñoz & Jojoa, 2014; Schunk, 1990, 2003). Locke and Latham (2002, 2006) also suggested that goals impact performance by indirectly contributing to the acquisition of new knowledge and the development of novel strategies. One reason is that when people encounter high goals, they not only resort to their extant knowledge, but they also draw on and/or seek new strategies to deal with the tasks at hand.

Almost four-hundred studies on goal setting have been implemented across different countries, task types, and settings, with about forty thousand participants in total (Locke & Latham, 1990). In the language classroom, substantial evidence also exists in support of the use of goal setting. For example, Moeller et al., (2012) revealed that students' Spanish proficiency demonstrated a significant improvement when the goal intervention was introduced in the

curriculum. Studies conducted by Al-Murtadha (2018) and Munezane (2015) also suggested that goal setting in conjunction with visualization bolsters students' willingness to communicate in a second language (L2). Findings from Shih and Reynolds's (2018) study indicated that the goal intervention not only enhances students' reading proficiency but also promotes their intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy. Goal setting has also been found to be effective in English for special purposes (ESP) classes because it draws students' attention to specific language functions and lexical items necessary for the completion of the task, which heightens their awareness of the learning process and builds up their confidence (Lozano-Velandia, 2015).

In recognition of the positive impacts of goal setting, attention has been paid to the examination of goal setting in the writing class. However, most studies have focused on young students' writing achievement (Alitto et al., 2016; Hansen & Wills, 2014; Koenig et al., 2016; Page-Voth & Graham, 1999; Schunk & Swartz, 1993). Other studies have concentrated on revision behaviors (Huang, 2015; Zhang et al., 2017) or goals in collaborative writing (Cho, 2017). There is a dearth of research on the relationship between goal setting and university students' writing competence and their linguistic development, especially with English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) students. The purpose of the current study aims to fill this gap.

Particularly, the present study aims to answer the following three questions:

1. How does goal setting affect the linguistic development of EFL students?
2. Does goal setting improve the quality of their essays?
3. What are their perspectives toward goal setting?

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I will provide a brief overview of factors that affect the performance of goal setting. Following this, I will provide a detailed discussion on whether goals set by students are more useful than goals assigned by the teacher. The literature review ends with studies that examine the relationship between goal setting and students' writing skills.

1.1 Factors affecting Goal Setting

The effectiveness of goal setting has been found to be influenced by a variety of factors. First, it has been asserted that specific, difficult goals result in greater performance as opposed to vague or “do your best” goals (Locke & Latham, 2002). Wicker et al., (1991) found that when university students were told to hypothetically set goals for the upcoming exam, the more specific and challenging goals they set, the more positive feelings they reported toward the upcoming examination. Chang's (2012) study also indicated that students who were assigned specific vocabulary-learning goals achieved significantly higher scores than students who were told to “do your best” on the test day. However, it should be noted that goals should not be too specific, especially if they are assigned by the teacher (Marzano et al., 2001) since too specific goals set by the teacher do not allow room for flexibility and thus inhibit students' personalization of their goals. In addition, if goals are set far beyond one's ability, performance will also be negatively affected (Roose & Williams, 2018). Therefore, to maximize the performance of goal setting, the level of goal specificity and goal difficulty must be taken into consideration.

Another factor contributing to the success of goal setting is feedback. Clearly, feedback is useful in that it provides transparent evidence on students' progress and performance, based on which students can make alterations to their action plans. The necessity of feedback during the

goal-setting process has been realized in a great deal of studies (Alitto et al., 2016; Schunk & Swartz, 1993; Earley et al., 1990). For example, Alitto et al., (2016) showed that goal setting combined with feedback significantly improves students' writing fluency. Students wrote longer stories with more correctly spelled words and more correct word sequences. However, Koenig, Eckert, and Hier (2016) revealed that students in the goal-setting plus feedback group performed less satisfactorily than those in the feedback only group. It was concluded that although the result was statistically nonsignificant, to ensure the effectiveness of the integrated intervention (goal setting plus feedback), students need to fully understand the purpose of their goals. They must realize why their goals are crucial and how they can successfully achieve them. Otherwise, they may not have commitment in pursuit of their goals.

Ample research has consistently shown that commitment has a strong correlation with performance (Latham, Seijts, & Crim, 2008; Locke & Latham, 2002; Pedersen, 2016; Tang et al., 2019). For instance, Tang et al., (2019) found that compared to other groups in the study, the high goal-commitment and grit-perseverance group attain the highest academic achievement when other factors, such as gender, educational ambitions, and socio-economic backgrounds, are considered. To enhance goal commitment, Locke and Latham (2002) suggested that one needs to realize the importance of the outcome and have a belief that achieving the goals is possible. Seo et al., (2018) also showed that if students set goals by themselves, an implementation plan is necessary to increase their goal commitment. Klein et al., (1999) conducted a meta-analysis on goal commitment and postulated that the link between goal commitment and performance was stronger for difficult goals rather than easy goals. Overall, it seems that in the language classroom, to increase students' commitment to the learning goals, teachers should assist students

to realize the importance of the learning tasks, create opportunities for them to specify the action plans, and at the same time, introduce challenging tasks at appropriate difficulty levels.

Finally, task complexity has also been found to moderate the effects of goal setting on performance (Winters & Latham, 1996; Wood et al., 1987). Task complexity can be defined as knowledge and skills required to complete a task. Wood (1986) proposed that there are three types of task complexity. The first is component complexity which refers to the number of actions and events one must be aware of to complete the task. The second is coordinative complexity which indicates the relationship between the task and the product. For instance, typing a document is less complex than baking a cake. For the former task, one can stop and then restart typing the document, while for the latter task, there is a contingency between the acts in that one must know which acts should be performed first. The third type of task complexity is dynamic complexity which refers to the influence of external changes on the relationship between the task and the product. Wood (1986) suggested that all three types of task complexity should be taken into consideration to determine the total task complexity. Wood et al., (1987) also conducted a meta-analysis on task complexity and found that task complexity is negatively correlated with goal effects, that is, the effect of goal setting is stronger when the task is less complex. Meanwhile, Donovan, Hafsteinsson, and Lorenzet (2018) examined task complexity in two goal-setting conditions and found that the complex task condition intensifies the positive effects of mastery goals (i.e., goals focus on the learning process), whereas the simple task condition ameliorates the favorable effects of performance goals (i.e., goals concentrate on the completion of the task).

1.2 Assigned Goals versus Self-set Goals

Another equally important question to ask is whether goals assigned by teachers are more effective than goals set by students. Bruhn et al., (2016) conducted a systematic review of studies on goal setting with students having behavior problems and found that when students are engaged in establishing their personal goals, they will complete more goals than when they follow goals dictated by others. Cumming (2012) also stressed that "goals cannot be predicted in advance nor separately from close analyses of individual students' abilities at specific points in time" (p. 135). In his study, it was found that meaningful goals emerge as students are provided with opportunities to discuss their learning experience with instructors. Through purposeful discussion, instructors can gain insights into students' expectations and goals in the class. Similarly, Rubin (2015) showed that goal setting will be more effective if the teacher and students involve in discussion to identify learning problems and develop well-defined goals to address them. Zhou, Busch, and Cumming (2014) emphasized that in the classroom, goals set by teachers are sometimes incompatible with goals set by students. Their study showed that in a writing class, while students established goals to improve grammatical accuracy, the teachers wished to help students develop "grammatical complexity" and "stylistic appropriateness" (p. 249). This consequently has detrimental influence on students' learning motivation. Cho (2017) also maintained that in collaborative writing, students adopt various personal goals. It is advisable for teachers to realize students' expectations to ensure smooth interactions between group members.

On the other hand, goals assigned by teachers have been found to be effective in many studies as well (Alitto et al., 2016; Ritzema et al., 2016; Seo et al., 2018). However, it should be noted that participants in both the Alitto and Ritzema studies are elementary students. In this

regard, it could be argued that young learners may not develop strong learner autonomy, and therefore, they should follow teacher goals. Seo et al., (2018) pointed out that self-set goals only increase performance and commitment if students have specific actions to attain them. Otherwise, assigned goals by teachers will be more useful. Perhaps, one of the arguments against self-set goals could be that they are usually vague regarding cognitive actions, assessment standards, and the learning content (McCardle et al., 2017). In addition, as Huang (2015) pointed out, goal setting alone is not of much help. Students need to be explicitly taught what they should focus on and be equipped with various learning strategies. Overall, goal setting should be a joint effort between the teacher and students in the classroom. Goals assigned by teachers should not be too specific. Otherwise, it will impede students' personalization of the assigned goals (Marzano et al., 2001). On the other hand, as self-set goals usually lack specificity, teachers should encourage students to specify their action plans and suggest sample learning strategies for students to adopt. Finally, teachers can also occasionally engage in dialogue with students to better understand their goals and expectations, and then suggest appropriate learning goals if necessary.

1.3 Goal Setting in Writing Classes

Goal setting has been found to promote students' writing achievement, however; most of the studies have focused on young learners (Alitto et al., 2016; Hansen & Wills, 2014; Koenig et al., 2016; Page-Voth & Graham, 1999; Schunk & Swartz, 1993; Silver, 2013). For instance, Alitto et al., (2016) found that when elementary school students are given assigned goals and performance feedback, their stories are longer with more correctly spelled words and correct word sequences. A similar result was also found in Koenig et al., (2016), which showed that students in the goal group used significantly more correct writing sequences, compared to the

control group. In the case of middle school students, Silver (2013) also uncovered a positive link between goal setting and students' writing achievement in terms of both quality (measured by holistic scores) and quantity (measured by word count and functional element units).

Goal setting can also affect students' revision behaviors during the writing process (Huang, 2015; Zhang, Schunn, & Baikadi, 2017). In Zhang et al., (2017), it was found that university students mostly set revision goals that focus on the addition of novel ideas, clarity of the ideas, and logical reasoning rather than linguistic issues related to grammar or vocabulary. It should be highlighted that the majority of participants in this study are native-English speakers. Therefore, it is unsurprising that they would not concentrate on word choice or grammatical structures. Huang (2015) also examined the relationship between goal setting and students' revision behaviors. Participants in this study were divided into three groups: The control group (revision only), the goal group (revision with specific goals), the goal plus group (revision with specific goals and writing strategies). After the treatment, no significant differences in writing quality and draft-to-revision improvement were seen across the three groups. However, the goal group produced the worst quality of revisions, whereas the quality of revisions was the best in the goal plus group. Huang (2015) postulated that goal setting alone does not help students revise their essays. Students not only need revision goals, but they also need to be provided with writing strategies on how to achieve their goals.

The quality of the goal also contributes to the quality of the text. Beauvais, Olive, and Passerault (2011) split the participants into two groups: One standard goal group was instructed to set goals before writing, whereas the quality-based goal group was told to focus on the content and style of the text. Findings showed that texts produced by students in the quality-based goal group were awarded higher scores than texts written by students in the standard goal group. In

collaborative writing, Cho (2017) suggested that individuals develop distinct learning goals (e.g., reviewing the content or checking the errors), and this affects their expectations and interactions with other group members. Thus, it is recommended that teachers should recognize what students wish to achieve while concisely explaining to students what is expected of them during the collaborative writing process. Finally, Cumming (2012) found that highly motivated English-as-a-second-language (ESL) students are able to set writing goals and work diligently to achieve them. For this student group, goal setting considerably accelerates their writing development. In contrast, at-risk adolescent students in Cumming's (2012) study hold negative emotions toward writing, and their writing goals are just to obtain high scores on the assignment. It seems that students' motivational and educational profiles can mediate the effect of goal setting on writing development.

Overall, empirical research evidence has lent credence to the use of goal setting in writing classes. However, most studies have focused on the writing development of young students (Alitto et al., 2016; Hansen & Wills, 2014; Koenig et al., 2016; Page-Voth & Graham, 1999; Schunk & Swartz, 1993). On the other hand, goal-setting studies on adult learners have paid attention to revision behaviors (Huang, 2015; Zhang et al., 2017) or goals in collaborative writing (Cho, 2017). The Cumming (2012) study discusses writing development across the two different social groups. However, no explicit measures regarding the linguistic development were mentioned. Little research has been done on the relationship between goal setting and students' writing competence and their linguistic development, especially with EFL students. The current study aims to fill this important gap, in the hope that findings can shed light on the relationship between goal setting and writing development as well as provide pedagogical

implications for the integration of goal setting in writing courses. To this end, the study aims to answer the following three questions:

1. How does goal setting affect the linguistic development (e.g., lexical diversity, lexical sophistication, syntactic complexity, and writing fluency) in EFL students' essays?
2. How does goal setting affect the essay quality of EFL students?
3. What are EFL students' perspectives toward goal setting in the writing class?

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

This no-control group study was conducted in Vietnam, where a ten-week free writing class was offered for university students. To triangulate the findings from the quantitative data on linguistic development, writing improvement, and student perceptions, qualitative data in the form of interviews were collected.

2.1 Participants and Context

A poster about the writing course was created and posted on Facebook to recruit participants. One hundred and one Vietnamese university students took part in the pretest in which they wrote a simulated IELTS essay within 40 minutes to determine their writing ability. In the end, 55 students who got a writing score between 4.0 to 6.0 out of 9.0 were selected for the study. Based on the IELTS scale, this score range indicates that students' writing proficiencies are between limited and competent (IELTS, 2020). I was aware that there was a difference in writing proficiencies among students who scored between 4.0 and 6.0. However, I decided to select this score range for two reasons. First, as there was no control group in the study, and students could withdraw without consequences, the score range helped increase the sample size of my study. After attrition, the remaining sample size was 39 participants. Second, on the IELTS scale, students who score 7.0 to 9.0 are defined as good users of English. Thus, it will be difficult to expect significant changes in this group. Meanwhile, students who score 3.0 out of 9.0 are defined as extremely limited users of English. It will be a challenge to include the 3.0 group since those students are not ready to practice writing IELTS essays.

Out of the 39 Vietnamese participants, 30 were female and 9 were male. Their ages ranged from 20 to 37 ($M = 22.47$, $SD = 12.02$). Two-thirds of the participants were English majors. Only two participants have been taught to set learning goals before. However, their goal-

setting experience is limited. One participant reported that the teacher simply asked her to write timed essays and find possible topics in the IELTS exam to practice, whereas the other reported that she was given a goal-setting table and then filled out what she needed to improve. In addition, most of the participants did not have experience with the IELTS test. Only 4 participants have taken the IELTS exam, and 16 have enrolled in an IELTS preparation class before.

Participants enrolled in my writing course for various reasons. First, they wanted to improve their writing skills. Others joined the course because it was organized in summertime. For some participants, they wanted to learn about the goal-setting technique, and most importantly, participants attended because the course was offered free. All participants were given a consent form for their voluntary participation in the study, and they would also receive \$10 for their participation after the end of the course.

2.2 Assessment Materials and Raters

To control the writing topic effect, in the pre-test, students who selected time slot 1 (Group 1) wrote on topic A, while students who picked time slot 2 (Group 2) wrote on topic B. In the posttest, the topics were switched between the two groups. The students were also given 40 minutes for the posttest. Below are the two writing prompts:

Topic A: University education should be free for all students. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Topic B: Universities should accept equal numbers of male and female students in every subject. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

The two writing prompts were selected for four main reasons. First, the target participants were university students. Therefore, they would find it easy to write topics about education.

Second, the two writing topics did not appear in the past IELTS exam papers during the last three years in Vietnam, which minimized the possibility that participants had known the topics in advance. Third, the two topics shared the same functional goal, that is, to ask students whether they agree or disagree with the ideas presented. Finally, these prompts helped frame the course as an IELTS test preparation course which made it easier to recruit and motivate participants.

Two experienced Vietnamese raters were invited to rate the essays based on the official IELTS grading rubric (IELTS, 2020). On the IELTS grading scale, argumentative writing is evaluated based on the four criteria: Task Achievement (TA), Coherence and Cohesion (CC), Lexical Resources (LR), and Grammatical Range and Accuracy (GRA). The raters are experienced teachers of English, with at least 6 years of teaching experience. Both took the IELTS exam and their overall IELTS score was between 8.0 and 8.5 out of 9.0 on the IELTS scale. For the writing score, rater 1 got 7.5 out of 9.0, while rater 2 got 8.0. Rater 1 has a master's degree in applied linguistics, and rater 2 is doing a Ph.D. in this field, too. After the raters had submitted the scores for the pretest essays, both informed me that they could not continue rating the posttest essays because of their personal issues. To tackle this issue, I rated all the pretest essays by myself and then ran the interclass correlation coefficient (ICC) between the three raters. The ICC value was .90 for TA, .89 for CC, .87 for LR, and .85 for GRA. I reread all the essays and awarded the final scores.

Since the first two raters could not rate the posttest essays, I invited a third rater, who would rate all the pretest and posttest essays (78 essays in total). The third rater did not have degrees in fields related to linguistics or education. However, he has four years of experience in teaching IELTS writing. He has also received training in grading IELTS essays from British

Council, one of the organizations that manages and distributes the IELTS test. He took the IELTS examination, and his writing score was 8.0 out of 9.0.

For this rating round, I rated all the posttest essays and then randomly took 10% of all student essays (8 out of the 78 essays) to train the third rater based on the official IELTS grading rubric. I mingled the essays to ensure that the third rater was unaware of which topic was written first. Following this, I ran the ICC between me and the third rater. The ICC value was .90 for TA, .86 for CC, .86 for LR, and .91 for GRA. Finally, we went over the essays to resolve disagreements to finalize the score for each essay.

2.3 The Writing Course

The writing course was free of charge and organized in summertime. I created two different time slots to ensure that the writing course would not clash with participants' schedules. Time slot 1 was from 5:45 pm to 7:15 pm and time slot 2 from 7:30 pm to 9 pm every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. The writing course lasted 10 weeks from June to mid-August 2019. On Tuesday and Thursday, I taught students how to write different types of IELTS essays (e.g., advantages and disadvantages, problems and solutions, or causes and effects). On Saturday, students received goal-setting instruction, practicing their goal-setting skills as well as discussing their writing goals in small groups. Overall, participants had a total of 3 hours of writing instruction and 1.5 hours of goal-setting instruction per week. In addition, I created a Facebook group where students could post questions about the assignments. I also set up a Google Drive folder where students would submit their weekly essays and writing goals. Each student was assigned a distinct number on the Google Drive folder to ensure anonymity. Finally, I kept an attendance checklist to keep track of students' attendance.

2.3.1 Teaching Materials

The writing course was ten weeks with three hours of writing instruction a week. Therefore, the study materials focused on familiarizing students with different types of IELTS essays and the four marking criteria. During the course, students also had a chance to read IELTS writing samples to better understand the structure of a good IELTS essay. The coursebook used in this class was *Barron's Writing For the IELTS* (Lougheed, 2016). I selected this book because it had a clear focus on the marking criteria and many small exercises, which students could self-study because of the limited class time. For a full description of the syllabus, please refer to Appendix A.

2.3.2 Goal-setting Intervention

The two groups met every Saturday (1.5 hours) to receive goal-setting instruction. On the first day of the class, students were taught about the importance of goal setting and provided with a sample goal-setting plan (Please refer to Appendix A.) It was stressed that the goal-setting plan was just a sample. Students should personalize their writing goals. In addition, students had a chance to discuss their long-term and short-term writing goals and how to achieve them. Participants were also instructed that they should have a specific plan to attain the goals. For example, students were told that on the IELTS scale, there were four grading criteria: TA, CC, LR, and GRA. Therefore, they should set goals that targeted these criteria and specify the date they would complete their goals. Moreover, students were encouraged to set increasingly challenging goals, but not too far beyond their current abilities. Finally, students were asked to submit their weekly writing goals on a Google Drive folder. Once students submitted their writing goals online, I would read and provide feedback.

In the following weeks of the class, students were told to bring their writing goals to class either in paper or digital forms. They would work in small groups, sharing their goals and reporting how many goals they achieved over the past week. Students were given opportunities to share their problems meeting the goals and strategies they used to overcome them. Both the writing instruction and goal-setting instruction were videotaped with students' consent.

2.4 Research Instruments

In this section, I will provide a detailed discussion on the research instruments used in the study. In terms of students' linguistic development, I employed various software programs to obtain scores for lexical diversity, lexical sophistication, syntactic complexity, and writing fluency. Detailed discussion on the choice of linguistic measures will also be discussed. To examine students' perspectives toward goal setting, I used questionnaires and interviews.

2.4.1 Linguistic Measures

In my study, students' linguistic development was measured by improvements in lexical diversity, lexical sophistication, syntactic complexity, and writing fluency. Lexical diversity was evaluated based on the type-token ratio (Templin, 1957) and the moving-average type-token ratio (MATTR) (Covington & McFall, 2010). In terms of lexical sophistication, it was assessed by word frequency, word range, academic language, and n-grams with mutual information. Syntactic complexity was calculated by both large-grained measures (e.g., sentence length, coordination, and subordination) and fine-grained measures (e.g., phrasal complexity). Finally, writing fluency was determined by words written per minute. In what follows, the choice of these measures will be discussed in more detail.

2.4.1.1 Lexical Diversity

Lexical diversity can be defined as "the range of different words used in a text, with a greater range indicating a higher diversity" (McCarthy & Jarvis, 2010, p.381). In other words, to attain higher lexical diversity, speakers/writers employ a variety of words with minimal word repetition (Johansson, 2008). Lexical diversity is thought to mirror the degree of sophistication in students' lexical knowledge as well as their language proficiency levels (Jarvis, 2013). In fact, numerous studies have shown a positive correlation between lexical diversity and students' lexical proficiency (Crossley et al., 2011; Gregori-Signes & Clavel-Arroitia, 2015; Treffers-Daller, Parslow, & Williams, 2016; Yu, 2010). However, research on the relationship between lexical diversity and writing proficiency has yielded conflicting findings. While there are studies that establish a strong correlation between lexical diversity and writing proficiency (Crossley & McNamara, 2012; González, 2017; Yu, 2010), such a relationship has not been determined in other studies (Lavallée & McDonough, 2015; Wang, 2014).

Lexical diversity can be measured in many ways. One of the most traditional measures is the ratio between the word type (i.e., the unique lexical items) and the word token (i.e., the total number of words in a text) (Templin, 1957). However, the type-token ratio (TTR) measure can be affected by the length of the text (Covington & McFall, 2010; McCarthy & Jarvis, 2007). In other words, the longer the text is, the more likely certain words reoccur. Thus, to tackle the text length issue, more sophisticated measures have been devised, such as vocd-D (McKee, Malvern, & Richards, 2000), the measure of textual, lexical diversity (MTLD) (McCarthy, 2005), HD-D (McCarthy & Jarvis, 2007), and the moving-average type-token ratio (MATTR) (Covington & McFall, 2010). Following this, numerous studies have been conducted to examine the reliability and validity power of these measures (e.g., Crossley et al., 2013; McCarthy & Jarvis, 2007;

McCarthy & Jarvis, 2010; Fergadiotis, Wright, & Green, 2015; Kapantzoglou, Fergadiotis, & Buenavides, 2019; Treffers-Daller, 2013). McCarthy and Jarvis (2007) found that text length still has influence on the D index value, whereas Kapantzoglou et al., (2019) indicated that the HD-D scores demonstrated a systemic covariance with the text length. Treffers-Daller et al., (2016) found that if text length does not show great variation across texts, basic traditional measures, such as TTR, are more powerful in discriminating B1 - C2 CEFR levels than sophisticated measures, such as D, HD-D, or MTLD. McCarthy and Jarvis (2007, 2010), therefore, recommended that the interpretation of lexical diversity indices should be treated with caution, and that researchers should employ different lexical diversity measures in their studies instead of depending on one single measure. In the current study, I used the tool for automatic analysis of lexical diversity (TAALED) developed by Kyle (2020) to obtain lexical diversity scores for one traditional measure (e.g., TTR) and for one advanced measure (e.g., MATTR). The use of both traditional and advanced measures will complement each other, and therefore, provide more insights into the results.

2.4.1.2 Lexical Sophistication

Lexical sophistication can be defined as the proportion of advanced lexical items in a text (Lindqvist, Gudmundson & Bardel, 2013; Read, 2000) based on the assumption that higher-proficiency students will employ more advanced vocabulary in the text, compared to their lower-proficiency counterparts (Knoch, Macqueen, & O'Hagan, 2014). However, what counts as advanced words is a cause of controversy. Some researchers (e.g., Laufer & Nation, 1995; Meara & Bell 2001) link the degree of vocabulary sophistication with word frequency (i.e., less frequent words are believed to be more sophisticated), while other researchers (e.g., Kyle & Crossley, 2015; Yoon, 2018) postulate that linguistic features, such as n-grams, word range, or

psychologicistic properties of the word, are contributors to the difficulty of a lexical item. In L2 writing studies, lexical sophistication is a crucial construct (Kyle & Crossley, 2015; Storch, 2009) because it has been found to correlate with learners' lexical proficiency and writing quality (Dabbagh & Enayat, 2019; Kim, Crossley, & Kyle, 2018; Kyle & Crossley, 2016; Vögelin et al., 2019; Yoon, 2018).

Regarding lexical sophistication measures, perhaps one of the most popular approaches is the use of word frequency information, based on the assumption that low-frequency words indicate greater lexical sophistication. To retrieve word frequency indices, researchers (e.g., Laufer & Nation, 1995; Nation, 1990; Xue & Nation, 1984; West, 1953) developed wordlists that are categorized into distinct frequency bands. For example, Laufer and Nation (1995) created a Lexical Frequency Profile (LFP), which consists of four frequency bands – the first 1000 most frequent words, the second 1000 most frequent words, words in the university wordlist, and words off all the three lists above. Following this, students' vocabulary size is expressed in terms of the proportion of word families at varying frequency bands. The LFP has been extensively used to evaluate lexical sophistication (East 2004, 2006; Higginbotham & Reid, 2019; Muncie, 2002; Zheng, 2016). However, the LFP has also been found to be affected by text length, and incapable of capturing small changes in students' developing lexical repertoire (Meara, 2005). Hence, instead of using frequency bands, some researchers suggest using frequency counts which are obtained from a reference corpus. For example, raw frequency scores of the following two texts can be calculated through COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) (Davies, 2008-). Text 1: *The* (33088646) *plan* (98656) *will* (1196997) *fail* (16963) *if* (1396190) *we* (2796990) *do* (1984123) *not* (2487460) *work* (468733) *hard* (64586) *enough* (226205), and Text 2: *Her* (2156057) *failure* (36019) *in* (11109533) *the* (33088646)

examination (13580) *made* (448115) *her* (2156057) *parents* (147712) *disappointed* (11652).

Subsequently, all the individual word frequency scores in the two texts will be averaged to provide the overall frequency score of the texts. The text with a lower frequency score is judged to be more lexically sophisticated. Crossley, Cobb, and McNamara (2013) also posited that the count-based frequency measure turns out to be a more reliable indicator of language proficiencies than the band-based frequency. In their study, students' essays were first graded into three language levels: beginning, intermediate, and advanced. Two band-based frequency measures, LFP (Laufer & Nation, 1995) and P_Lex (Meara & Bell, 2001), and one count-based frequency measure, CELEX (Baayen et al., 1995) were used to classify students' essays into their respective language proficiency levels. It was found that the count-based frequency approach achieved an accuracy rate of 58%, while the accuracy rate for the band-based approach was lower, 48% for the LFP and 36% for P_Lex.

Lexical sophistication can also be measured by the proportion of academic words, which are commonly found in academic writing, but not in general writing (Coxhead, 2000; Coxhead & Nation, 2001; Xue & Nation, 1984). Academic language is one common linguistic feature in texts written by advanced writers (Morris & Cobb, 2004). This argument is supported in Durrant's (2016) study, which showed that students significantly increased their use of academic vocabulary when they progressed throughout their academic years. Given the importance of academic language in vocabulary research, many academic wordlists have been developed over the past decades. For example, Xue and Nation (1984) created the University Word List of 836 word families, which was subsequently incorporated in the Lexical Frequency Profile (Laufer & Nation, 1995). Since then, the LFP has enjoyed popularity in research that examines lexical sophistication (East 2004, 2006; Higginbotham & Reid, 2019; Muncie, 2002; Zheng, 2016).

Coxhead (2000) also compiled an influential academic wordlist of 570 word families from a corpus of 3.5 million words, which has also been used in various studies that investigate lexical sophistication (Mazgutova & Kormos, 2015; Storch, 2009; Zheng, 2016). Recently, Gardner and Davies (2014) released an academic vocabulary list compiled from a large-scale study of 120 million words in the academic subcorpus of COCA (Davies, 2008-). Overall, it is a common practice to assess lexical sophistication based on the size of academic vocabulary.

New measures have been proposed to evaluate lexical sophistication. One of the novelties is the use of n-grams, known as the contiguous sequence of words. Bestgen and Granger (2014) found a correlation between the absence of bigrams and the overall text quality. The more absence of bigrams, the lower score the text will receive. Kim et al., (2018) also found that more advanced students use a greater proportion of bigrams and trigrams in their essays. It is worth mentioning that mutual information (MI), which statistically indicates the association strength of n-grams (Ellis, Simpson-Vlach, & Maynard, 2008), should be taken into consideration, as well. Ellis et al., (2008) revealed that the processability of native-English speakers is affected by the MI of n-grams, while the processability of their counterparts, advanced learners of English, is influenced by the frequency of n-grams. In a similar vein, Kim et al., (2018) showed that essays with high MI of bigrams and trigrams receive both higher lexical proficiency scores and holistic writing scores. Another newly-developed measure to investigate lexical sophistication is word range, which demonstrates how widely a word appears across documents in a corpus (Kyle & Crossley, 2015, 2016). The assumption is that lower-frequency words would appear in fewer texts; therefore, texts with lower word range scores are judged to be more lexically sophisticated (Yoon, 2018). In one study conducted by Kyle and Crossley (2016), word range was found to be an important scoring predictor for the independent TOEFL writing tasks. Specifically, the word

range index alone explained 16.7% variance in the holistic writing scores. Vögelin et al., (2019) also used word range values to manipulate lexical sophistication in their research. It was revealed that there was a strong correlation between lexical sophistication, which was measured by the word range index, with teachers' judgment of the overall text quality.

In the current study, given the fact that lexical sophistication is a multidimensional construct, I used a wide variety of lexical sophistication indices. Specifically, I used the tool for the automatic analysis of lexical sophistication (TAALES) developed by Kyle and Crossley (2015) to obtain scores for word frequency, word range, academic words, and n-grams with MI.

2.4.1.3 Syntactic Complexity

Syntactic complexity indicates the diversity and sophistication of syntactic constructions in language production (Lu, 2011; Ortega, 2003, 2015; Wofle-Quintero, Inagaki, & Kim, 1998). In L2 writing research, syntactic complexity has been found to correlate with students' writing quality (Jagaiah, 2017; Kyle & Crossley, 2018; Shadloo, Ahmadi, & Ghonsooly, 2019). It also provides useful information to discriminate between language proficiencies (Lu, 2010; Polat, Mahalingappa, & Mancilla, 2019) and to characterize changes in the employment of grammatical constructions (Polat et al., 2019). Syntactic complexity has been found to be mediated by a variety of factors (Ortega, 2015), such as topic prompts (Yang, Lu, & Weigle, 2015), audience and mode of discourse (Marion & Piche, 1979; Ryshina-Pankova, 2015), and L2 backgrounds (Kuiken & Vedder 2019; Lu & Ai, 2015).

Over the past decades, many measures have been devised to examine syntactic complexity. Wofle-Quintero et al., (1998) reviewed one hundred measures of fluency, accuracy, syntactic complexity, and lexical complexity in L2 writing development studies and found that clauses per T-unit (C/T) and dependent clauses per clause (DC/C) were the most commonly

used. In fact, Ortega's (2003) review on syntactic complexity showed that a great number of studies made use of measures related to the T-unit (e.g., mean length of the T-unit and clause per T-unit). Norris and Ortega (2009) also pointed out that the five common measures of syntactic complexity are related to length (e.g., length of the sentence or T-unit), amount of coordination, amount of subordination, variety, sophistication and acquisitional timing of grammatical forms, and total frequency of sophisticated forms.

Nevertheless, Biber et al., (2011) affirmatively asserted that neither measures of coordination nor the T-unit successfully captures non-clausal features in academic writing. Their argument was empirically supported by Kyle and Crossley's (2018) study, which revealed that phrasal complexity indices were much stronger predictors of writing quality than clausal complexity indices. However, to measure syntactic complexity of a sample text, one must take into consideration the discourse-semantic function attached to the complexity of grammatical forms (Ryshina-Pankova, 2015). For instance, Crossley and McNamara (2014) found that there is a mismatch between human judgments and the development of linguistic features in descriptive writing. Specifically, it was revealed that when L2 proficiency grows, students' descriptive essays show greater phrasal complexity. Contradictorily, human ratings of the text quality were influenced by clausal features. Based on this result, the authors suggested that descriptive writing tasks may not be useful for the examination of syntactic growth in longitudinal studies.

Another crucial factor to decide on which syntactic complexity measures for research use is students' language proficiency (Celaya, 2019; Norris & Ortega, 2009). Specifically, in Celaya's study, syntactic patterns (e.g., Subject + Verb + Adverbial) instead of fine-grained measures (e.g., subclausal or phrasal complexity) were used to track syntactic changes in students' writing

due to students' low-language proficiency. Norris and Ortega (2009) also explained that the T-unit is more appropriate to describe syntactic complexity at intermediate or advanced levels, as higher-proficiency students can write full sentences and clauses. Still, they also suggested that as syntactic complexity is a multidimensional construct, all three dimensions of syntactic complexity (i.e., coordination, subordination, and subclausal and phrasal complexification) should be examined, which will offer a more comprehensive picture of the development of syntactic complexity in students' writing. Lu (2010) developed Second Language Syntactic Complexity Analyzer (L2SCA) from the college-level written data set. Thus, he recommended that the tool is appropriate to examine syntactic complexity at intermediate or advanced level students.

In the light of what has been discussed so far, to explore the development of syntactic complexity, I included both large-grained and fine-grained syntactic complexity measures, which aim to tap into multifaceted dimensions of syntactic complexity, which are coordination, subordination, and subclausal and phrasal complexification. For large-grained measures, I used L2SCA (Lu, 2010) to obtain values for measures related to length, subordination, and coordination. The two measures, clause per sentence and complex T-units per T-unit, were excluded because of their weak predictive power (Lu, 2011). For fine-grained measures, I used Coh-Metrix (Graesser et al., 2004) to obtain values for noun phrases, verb phrases, and preposition phrases.

2.4.1.4 *Writing Fluency*

Abdel Latif (2013) proposed that a wide range of measures have been developed to assess writing fluency; however, most of the measures have failed to provide a valid assessment of writing fluency. To examine the underlying components of writing fluency, Waes and Leijten

(2015) utilized a factor analysis and found that writing fluency can be measured by four indicators, which are production, process variation, revision, and pausing.

In my study, in both pre- and posttests, students were required to write an argumentative IELTS essay within 40 minutes. Thus, given the nature of the task (e.g., paper-based timed essay), writing fluency is measured by the total number of words produced within this time limit. It should also be noted that in the IELTS test, students are asked to write at least 250 words for the argumentative essay. It is an important requirement which will affect their writing score. I hypothesized that students would develop writing goals that meet the word limit, and at the same time, they would not want to write such a long essay (e.g., 350 or 400 words) since they might not have time to revise their essay before submission. Therefore, in addition to writing fluency, I also examined students' awareness of the essay length.

2.4.2 Goal-setting Questionnaire

In my study, I developed a goal-setting questionnaire to examine changes in students' perspectives toward goal setting. There were two stages involved in the development and administration of the goal-setting questionnaire. First, I designed the questionnaire based on the principles of the goal-setting theory, which are goal specificity, goal challenge, goal commitment, and teacher feedback. Following this, I piloted the questionnaire in my language research and assessment class. Then, I collected questionnaire responses and used exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to extract latent factors on the questionnaire. Based on the EFA results, I revised the questionnaire and used it to investigate how students' perspectives toward goal setting changed over time in my writing class.

2.4.2.1 Stage 1: Developing the Goal-setting Questionnaire

I wrote all statements on the questionnaire by myself based on the key goal-setting elements. In addition, I added statement 23 "Goal setting can help me improve my writing skills." to elicit students' overall opinion about goal setting. The questionnaire is in the form of a 10-point Likert scale, from 1 "strongly disagree" to 10 "strongly agree". Furthermore, since it is the online questionnaire, I added questions regarding genders, majors, places of study, and goal-setting experience to achieve a better understanding of participants' backgrounds. Please refer to Appendix B for the goal-setting questionnaire stage 1.

Following this step, I translated the questionnaire into Vietnamese. I invited two native-Vietnamese teachers who hold a master's degree in applied linguistics and one Vietnamese high school student to read the translation. Small changes were made to improve the clarity of the Vietnamese statements. The final questionnaire was in both English and Vietnamese because a bilingual questionnaire would maximize the chance that participants fully understood the statements on the questionnaire.

Subsequently, I piloted my questionnaire in the language research and assessment class with my classmates (about 15 international students and 10 domestic students). Follow my classmates' suggestions, small revisions were made to improve the clarity of the English sentences. Finally, I put the questionnaire on Qualtrics and started to collect the data. All responses were set in the "forced response" format on the questionnaire.

There were 953 responses (134 from teachers and 819 from students in Vietnam). Since the focus of the study is on students' perspectives toward goal setting, the 134 teacher responses were excluded from the questionnaire. Among the 819 student responses, 3 are from secondary school, 172 from high school, 24 from language centers, 530 from university, and 90 from other

English learning contexts. Regarding goal-setting experience, 466 respondents indicated that they did not have goal-setting experience, while the other 353 respondents said that they had experience with goal setting.

2.4.2.2 Stage 2: Distributing the Goal-setting Questionnaire

At this stage, I did not do any analysis with the questionnaire since I did not know whether participants in the experimental study had goal-setting experience or not. Therefore, I used the same questionnaire in Stage 1 for the experimental study (All the statements were kept the same.) However, I modified the background information questions and added questions about participants' IELTS learning experience. In the goal-based writing course, thirty-nine participants completed the goal-setting questionnaire in Week 1, Week 5, and Week 9 (Please refer to Appendix B for the goal-setting questionnaire in stage 2.) Later, it was found that the participants in the experimental study had no goal-setting experience. Thus, I used the EFA matrix from the group without goal-setting experience (N= 466) to further analyze participants' perspectives in the experimental study (N=39).

2.4.3 Interviews

In the study, I also conducted interviews with nine students to examine changes in their goal-setting behaviors and perspectives toward goal setting. The interviews were conducted three times to capture changes in students' goal-setting behaviors and their perspectives toward goal setting.

2.4.3.1 Participants

Emails were sent to all participants to ask for their voluntary participation in the interviews. Nine (8 females and 1 male) out of the thirty-nine participants agreed to take part in interviews. Six interviews were from Group 1, and three from Group 2. Their ages ranged from

20 to 24 ($M = 22.11$, $SD = 1.27$). All the interview participants had at least ten years of learning English, and five out of them were English majors. In terms of goal-setting experience, only one interviewee has been taught to set writing goals before, and one once took the IELTS test. Among the nine interviewees, five responded that they had enrolled in an IELTS preparation class before.

2.4.3.2 Interview Procedures

In my study, I interviewed participants three times (in Week 1, Week 5, and Week 10) to investigate changes in their perspectives toward goal setting. I conducted the interviews online because of time and geographic constraints, and in students' native language (Vietnamese) so that they could easily express their opinions. Each semi-structured interview lasted about 20-25 minutes. The interview questions were divided into distinct categories based on the key features of goal setting. Therefore, I transcribed the interviews and manually coded the predetermined sets of questions instead of using a coding software program. Specifically, in the first interview round, there were four categories: students' background information, their perspectives toward writing skills, their goal-setting experience, and aspects of goal setting. In the second interview round, I focused on three categories: impacts of goal setting, aspects of goal setting, and students' difficulties in setting goals. In the final interview round, I also concentrated on the three categories as in the second interview round. However, I included questions about students' comments and suggestions for the implementation of a goal-based writing course. Two weeks after the preliminary coding, I recoded the interview data. Only small changes were made to improve the reliability of the coding. For complete question sets, please refer to Appendix C.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Since there is no control group in the current study, I will first present the major findings of the study and then provide possible explanations for the results. To this end, the quantitative data will be first presented, followed by the interpretation of the qualitative data.

3.1 Writing Competence

Table 1.

Students' Writing Competence

Analytic Scores	Time 1 Md	Time 2 Md	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Task Achievement (TA)	5.0	6.0	-4.65	.00**	0.53
Coherence and Cohesion (CC)	5.0	7.0	-4.89	.00**	0.55
Lexical Resources (LR)	5.0	6.0	-4.84	.00**	0.55
Grammatical Range and Accuracy (GRA)	5.0	6.0	-4.82	.00**	0.55

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

The Shapiro-Wilk tests showed that the analytic scores were not normally distributed. Therefore, Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were used, and it was revealed that a significant improvement was seen across the four writing areas, with a large effect size, based on Cohen's (1998) criteria of 0.1 = small effect, 0.3 = medium effect, and 0.5 = large effect. To further examine the holistic quality of students' essays, all four writing criteria scores were averaged to produce holistic scores. The Shapiro-Wilk tests indicated the normal distribution of the holistic scores (the pretest scores, $W(39) = .97$, $p = .39$ and the posttest scores, $W(39) = .96$, $p = .18$). Thus, a paired-samples t-test was run, and it was found that there was a significant improvement in the holistic scores between Time 1 ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 0.57$), and Time 2 ($M = 6.30$, $SD = 0.72$),

$t(38) = -10.09, p < .01$, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.8$). This result suggests that the goal-setting intervention helped students gain an additional 1.18 score for their essays.

The interview data also showed students' positive perspectives toward goal setting. All participants in the interviews agreed that goal setting fostered their writing skills. Participant 8 explained, *"Now I can write essays with a clear structure and ideas. I also learned more vocabulary. I think when I set goals, I listed what I needed to improve and how I could improve it. When I could improve my weaknesses. I wrote with more confidence."* Participant 4 added, *"I think that when I set goals, I knew more about my weaknesses and then set goals to improve them. I could see that I made fewer mistakes in my writing."* Participant 2 commented, *"I made significant improvements in arranging ideas. I wrote my essays in a more coherent way."* Such positive findings can be explained by various factors.

First, participants in the interviews reported that goal setting increased their motivation. Participant 1 reported a sense of excitement to see what she could achieve the previous week, while participant 4 commented that upon completion of the task, she usually rewarded herself for her achievement; in her opinion, goal setting was like a vision board which increased her motivation to complete her goals. Undoubtedly, motivation is necessary for the learning process, and many studies have uncovered a positive link between motivation and writing performance (Graham, et al., 2017; Tran, 2007; Troia et al., 2013; Wright, Hodges, & McTigue, 2019). Graham et al., (2017) found that students with greater motivation produce longer narrative stories with better quality. Tran (2007) also added that when students have strong writing motivation, they write more "independently, creatively, and passionately" (p. 151). Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that goal setting has positive impacts on students' motivation, which consequently helps promote their writing competence.

Second, Locke and Latham (2002) maintained that goals impact performance by directing one's effort and attention, both cognitively and behaviorally, toward activities that are goal-relevant and away from activities that are goal-irrelevant. Moeller, Theiler, and Wu (2012) also affirmed that goal setting provides clear learning objectives and directions for students. The directive function of goal setting is useful because it enables students to properly prioritize their time and effort investment in the right task. In the current study, students were told to set goals that specifically targeted the four marking criteria on the IELTS rubric. Participant 6 shared, *"I wrote a better essay because during the goal-setting process I better understood how my essays would be rated by examiners. Then, I focused on these important aspects of my essay. So, if we study in that way, we will write better."* Similarly, participant 4 said, *"I divided my goals according to the four IELTS marking criteria and identified what issues I was having. Then, I created deadlines to complete specific tasks."* A clear understanding of the task requirements in conjunction with goal setting is an important contributor to improvement in students' writing competence.

Finally, goal setting creates a personalized student-centered environment where students can adapt goals in accordance with their current abilities. As Harford (2008) maintained, goal setting, combined with self-reflection, draws students' attention to gaps in their knowledge and simultaneously encourages students to set goals that tackle their shortcomings. In the current study, students received personalized written feedback which they could utilize to set goals that specifically aimed at their personal writing issues. Participant 6 explained, *"When I received teacher feedback that my ideas were not well linked. I would think about it. I once received comments that in addition to using linking words, there were other ways to connect ideas together. From that feedback, I set goals that focused on coherence and cohesion."* Meanwhile,

participant 5 discussed, *"In the first week, the teacher commented that I made grammatical errors, and that I just needed to focus on important structures in the IELTS. What I did was to find books written about these grammar structures and do grammar practice in the books. I saw great improvement."*

At the same time, students' goals are not static, but dynamic and changeable over time. This claim is confirmed in the qualitative data, which showed that students would change their goals if they considered it necessary to do so. Participant 7 said, *"At first, my goals focused on grammar such as plural nouns and subject-verb agreement. I felt that my grammar improved. Therefore, I changed my goals to focus on vocabulary."* Apparently, different learners will have different problems with writing skills, and goal setting provides them a unique opportunity to take ownership of their learning and develop action plans to remedy their personal writing issues. In other words, goal setting helps shape learners into more independent learners. The development of such strong learner autonomy has played a positive role in students' enhanced writing competence.

3.2 Linguistic Development

In this section, I will present the findings on the development of lexical diversity, lexical sophistication, syntactic complexity, and writing fluency. The quantitative data on these linguistics measures will be supported by the qualitative data.

3.2.1 Lexical Diversity

Table 2.

Lexical Diversity

	Time 1	Time 2	<i>t</i> (38)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)			

Table 2. (cont'd)

TTR	0.49 (0.07)	0.47 (0.05)	1.56	.13	0.32
MATTR	0.78 (0.04)	0.79 (0.03)	-1.26	.22	0.28

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

The paired-samples t-test indicated no significant difference between Time 1 and Time 2 for both measures. In other words, students' essays are not more lexically diverse after the treatment. This result is consistent with findings in Li and Schmitt (2009), Yasuda (2011), and Yoon and Polio (2017), which observed no changes related to lexical diversity. One possible reason is that students seemed to focus more on *appropriate* use of vocabulary. For example, Li and Schmitt (2009) examined the acquisition of lexical phrases of a Chinese master's student over one academic year and found that no discernible patterns for the development of lexical diversity were observed. Instead, the student showed more appropriate use of known phrases. Similarly, Yasuda (2011) also detected no significant improvement related to lexical diversity; however, students' use of vocabulary becomes more appropriate after a genre-based writing course.

The qualitative data also showed that students set goals to learn new vocabulary, but simultaneously, they wanted to use lexical items more appropriately. Participant 2 explained, "*In the past, I spent much time thinking about which words I should use. Now, when I learned vocabulary in the wordlist and practiced writing essays, I was able to use vocabulary more precisely and make fewer lexical errors.*" Participant 3 also added, "*For the learning of vocabulary, I attempted to expand my lexical repertoire by learning synonyms and the contextualized meaning of the words so that I could apply the words appropriately.*" It is still unknown why students tended to concentrate on using words more appropriately. One tentative

explanation could be that students' writing proficiencies were between limited and competent. At these levels, students had great concern about their lexical errors. Therefore, they intended to set goals that helped reduce lexical errors by using lexical items more appropriately. An analysis of lexical errors in the dataset could shed more light on this argument.

3.2.2 Lexical Sophistication

Table 3.

Lexical Sophistication

	Time 1	Time 2	<i>t</i> (38)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)			<i>d</i>
1. Word frequency					
COCA written frequency academic word	7812.68 (1360.92)	7230.43 (1515.41)	1.73	.09	0.40
2. Word range					
COCA written range academic word	0.63 (0.03)	0.62 (0.03)	2.65	.01**	0.33
3. N-grams with mutual information					
COCA academic bigram MI	1.52 (0.15)	1.64 (0.13)	4.79	.00**	0.85
COCA academic trigram MI	2.93 (0.29)	3.10 (0.23)	2.75	.01**	0.65
4. Academic language					
All academic wordlist normed	0.055 (0.02)	0.064 (0.02)	2.53	.02*,+	0.45

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, +Not significant with Bonferroni adjustment. The alpha value was adjusted to 0.05/5 (or 0.01) by the Bonferroni correction as 5 t-tests were run.

The overall findings demonstrated that word use in students' essays became more lexically sophisticated after the goal-based writing course. Students were able to use words in the lower frequency range. This finding is in line with Kim et al., (2018)'s study, which showed that after the course of one year, students began to use function words that are less frequent and of lower range. Students in the current study also seemed to use more academic language although the *t*-statistics was not significantly different ($p = .02$) due to the Bonferroni correction. The finding is consistent with Durrant (2016)'s research which revealed that learners significantly increased their use of academic vocabulary when they progressed throughout their academic years. In terms of n-grams, students in the current study significantly used both bigrams and trigrams with higher MI. The effect size was medium for trigrams ($d = .65$) and large for bigrams ($d = .85$). Such findings, however, are in contrast with the results in other studies (Bestgen & Granger, 2014; Garner & Crossley, 2018; Li & Schmitt, 2010), which found minimal changes in bigrams and trigrams with MI over time. Research on lexical sophistication has shown that lexical sophistication demonstrates a slow progression (Laufer, 1998; Morris & Cobb, 2004; Muncie, 2002). This claim has been confirmed in many longitudinal studies (e.g., Knoch et al., 2015; Storch, 2009; Yoon & Polio, 2017), which have failed to detect significant improvement in lexical sophistication, even after three years of learning at an English-medium institution (Knoch et al., 2015). Laufer (1998) offered an explanation that in school-based contexts, students are usually not encouraged to use advanced words since lexical accuracy is often emphasized over lexical richness.

Improvements in lexical sophistication, especially in n-grams with MI, within the course of 10 weeks, may be attributed to the impact of goal setting. One requirement on the IELTS writing rubric to achieve high lexical scores (e.g., from 7.0 to 9.0) is that essays must include

uncommon words and collocations. On this scale, one could easily see phrases such as "sophisticated control of lexical features", "uncommon lexical items", "occasional inaccuracies in word choice and *collocation*", or "awareness of style and *collocation*". When students set writing goals, they might have taken such requirements into consideration and attempted to use more sophisticated vocabulary as well as less common phrases in their essays. The qualitative data indicated that students realized the need to incorporate sophisticated words in IELTS essays. Participant 3 commented, *"I find that words in IELTS are academic. I cannot find these words in other types of writing. So, I set goals to read IELTS sample essays and learned new words in the sample"*. Other students also believed that it was important to use academic noun phrases to achieve good lexical scores in IELTS. Participant 9 shared, *"In IELTS, I think examiners want to see "colorful" academic words. Thus, I tried to use a lot of academic noun phrases in my writing. However, I realized that I sometimes overused them in my essay"*.

To further examine this claim, I collected students' writing goals from Week 1 to Week 8. Writing goals in Week 9 were excluded because in this week students were asked to set goals for the writing test in Week 10. In total, students generated 309 writing goals on lexical resources. Following this, I searched for words such as "collocations" and "lexical phrases". Results showed that goals on collocations and lexical phrases accounted for about 71% of students' vocabulary goals. Such results showed that goal setting not only draws students' attention to lexical requirements in the IELTS but also encourages them to have action plans to meet the requirements. This helps explain students' use of more sophisticated vocabulary, especially in the case of n-grams.

3.2.3 Syntactic Complexity

Table 4.

Syntactic Complexity

	Time 1	Time 2	<i>t</i> (38)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)			<i>d</i>
1. Length-based measures					
Mean length of sentence	19.59 (3.56)	18.21 (2.48)	2.27	.03 ^{*,+}	0.45
Mean length of T-unit	18.05 (3.59)	17.23 (2.22)	1.39	.17	0.27
Mean length of clause	9.72 (1.38)	9.68 (1.01)	0.16	.87	0.03
2. Clausal complexity					
2.1.Subordination					
Clauses per T-unit	1.87 (0.34)	1.78 (0.19)	1.52	.14	0.32
Dependent clauses per clause	0.43 (0.09)	0.43 (0.06)	0.03	.98	0.00
Dependent clauses per T-unit	0.83 (0.30)	0.77 (0.19)	0.99	.33	0.24
2.2.Coordination					
Coordinate phrases per clause	0.23 (0.16)	0.21 (0.15)	0.66	.52	0.13
Coordinate phrases per T-unit	0.41 (0.27)	0.37 (0.29)	0.59	.56	0.14
T-units per sentence	1.09 (0.08)	1.06 (0.06)	2.29	.03 ^{*,+}	0.42
3. Phrasal complexity					
Noun phrase	356.33 (29.63)	369.73(27.53)	-2.15	.04 ^{*,+}	0.47
Verb phrase	230.12 (35.48)	218. 60 (33.70)	1.29	.21	0.33
Preposition phrase	116. 59 (18.12)	127. 34 (19.35)	-2.22	.03 ^{*,+}	0.57

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, + Not significant with Bonferroni adjustment.

The alpha value was adjusted to 0.05/12 (or 0.004) by the Bonferroni correction as 12 t-tests were run. All findings were nonsignificant. However, the descriptive statistics showed that students tended to write shorter sentences, shorter T-units, and shorter clauses after the goal-based writing course. The results are at odds with findings found in Bulte´ and Housen (2014) and in Polat et al., (2019) where a significant increase in length-based measures was reported when students' L2 proficiency improved. A closer examination of the length-based measures showed that at the beginning of the Bulte´ and Housen (2014) and Polat et al., (2019) studies, students wrote about 12 and 7 words per sentence, respectively. At the start of the current study, students were able to write about 19 words per sentence, which is a very good sentence length. Such findings support the argument put forward by Biber et al., (2011) that length-based measures are not effective in capturing syntactic complexity, since it will be difficult to expect significant changes in sentence length if students can produce long sentences right at the beginning of the study.

One reason why students seemed to shorten the length of the sentences, T-units, and clauses was possibly because they wanted to produce error-free sentences, which is one of the requirements on the IELTS grading rubric in terms of grammatical range and accuracy. Specifically, on the scale 7.0 to 9.0, which indicates very good grammar, phrases such as "rare minor errors", "sentences are error-free", or "few errors" keep showing up, which probably caught students' attention when they set their writing goals. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed that there was a significant decrease in spelling errors in students' essays after the treatment (Time 1, Md = 1.00; Time 2, Md = .00, $z = -3.29$, $p < .01$, $r = 0.4$). On the other hand, students showed a decreased use of verb phrases, coordinate, and subordinate clauses, while an increased use of noun phrases and preposition phrases, which are common features of more

advanced syntactic structures (Biber et al., 2011; Crossley & McNamara, 2014; Polat et al., 2019).

The interview data added further interesting discussion about syntactic complexity and accuracy. During the interviews, there were not many instances where students discussed setting goals to write complex structures. Rather, they concentrated on describing strategies to reduce grammatical errors. Participant 4 shared, *"I collected all the errors I usually made and put them into a file. When I wrote, I kept reminding myself of these errors. When I finished writing, I looked over my essay, and then went over the error file to see if I still made the same error."* Participant 5 discussed, *"In the first week, the teacher commented that I made grammatical errors, and that I just needed to focus on important structures in the IELTS. What I did was to find books written about these grammar structures and do grammar practice in the books. I saw great improvement."* In fact, from students' perspectives, improvement in grammar was tied to accuracy. Participant 5 shared, *"I feel that my grammar was tremendously improved. I could correct my grammar errors. When I write, I do not often make grammatical errors now."*

Students' focus on grammatical accuracy may stem from the language teaching context in Vietnam, where there is a heavy focus on grammar in the English classroom. On Vietnam's national English test for university entrance, discrete grammar questions make up over 30% of the total mark (Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam, 2019). Thus, Vietnamese university students usually know a wide range of complex syntactic structures upon their graduation from high school. Paradoxically, most of them fail to apply grammatical rules correctly because of a lack of opportunities for language production (Phuong, 2017, as cited in Pham & Bui, 2019). The context factor could add to the discussion why students set goals on syntactic accuracy. One final reason for students' focus on syntactic accuracy is teacher

feedback. Busse (2013) discussed that students might want to avoid using complex syntactic structures because of comprehensive teacher feedback. That could be true because in the current study students received detailed and specific feedback. However, the proportion of noun phrases and preposition phrases, which are features of greater syntactic complexity, also seemed to increase in students' essays after the treatment. This suggests that students developed both syntactic accuracy and syntactic complexity although a more systematic analysis of syntactic errors could help confirm this claim.

3.2.4 Writing Fluency

Table 5.

Writing Fluency

	Time 1	Time 2	<i>t</i> (38)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)			
Number of words	262.13 (55.41)	271.74 (31.85)	-.95	.35	0.21

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

The paired-samples t-test showed that there was no significant difference in the number of words in students' essays between Time 1 and Time 2. The result contrasts with findings in previous studies (e.g., Knoch et al., 2014; Yasuda, 2011; Yoon & Polio, 2017) which found a significant change in students' writing fluency (evaluated by text length). One reason could be that the writing course was only 10 weeks, and therefore, students were not able to develop their writing fluency. As Knoch et al., (2014) suggested, it takes more than one semester to expect changes in writing fluency. The result in the current study is also inconsistent with findings in other goal-setting studies (Alitto et al., 2016; Koenig et al., 2016; Page-Voth & Graham, 1999; Silver, 2013), which showed that goal setting significantly improves students' writing fluency. It

is worth mentioning that participants in these goal-setting studies are young learners. It could, therefore, lead to the conclusion that goal setting does not have effect on the development of writing fluency of adult learners.

However, when I used the 250-word requirement as a baseline and ran the McNemar test, it was found that there was a significant number of students who were able to satisfy the word requirement after the treatment ($p = .049$). Specifically, at Time 1, 18 out of the 39 participants failed to reach the 250-word threshold, while at Time 2, this figure dropped to only 9 participants. The result suggested that students did improve their writing fluency. Furthermore, the standard deviation value indicated that there was much less variation in the total number of words in essays written at Time 2 ($SD = 31.85$) than at Time 1 ($SD = 55.41$), which demonstrates students' increased awareness of the essay length in the IELTS writing test.

One possible reason is that goal setting drew students' attention to the word length requirement and assisted them to develop writing strategies to reach the threshold of 250 words. This claim was confirmed in the interview data. Participant 2 commented, *"My writing skills were more organized. In the pretest, I wrote three paragraphs, but the idea was not fully developed. In the end, I did not have time. I just quickly wrote the conclusion. When I set goals, I better managed the time. In the posttest, I well managed the time, but I did not know whether this essay was good enough."* Participant 9 also shared, *"We [Vietnamese students] are usually taught to write in a stylish way. If we want to develop an argument, we need to have the hook and beat around the bush before presenting the main idea. This affects the quality of the IELTS essays. We put lots of effort into writing an excellent introduction. Then, we do not have time to write the other parts. In this course, I knew what I needed to do to improve my writing"*. A closer look at the essays written by these two interviewees showed that in the pretest, both failed to

write enough 250 words. Participant 2 only wrote 209 words, while participant 9 wrote 221 words. In the posttest, they both reached the 250-word baseline. The essay length of participant 2 was 265 words, while participant 9 wrote 276 words.

Abdel Latif (2013) proposed that a wide range of measures have been developed to assess writing fluency; however, most of them have failed to provide a valid assessment of writing fluency. Waes and Leijten (2015) further recommended that writing fluency can be measured by four indicators, which are production, process variation, revision, and pausing. The result of the current study adds another important consideration to measure writing fluency, that is, the task requirement. When students write under time pressure and with a specific word count in mind, they will attempt to reach the word requirement, but at the same time, they do not want to considerably exceed the benchmark. Part of the reason is that in the case of IELTS writing, word count is only one of the requirements, and many other factors (e.g., lexical resources and grammatical range and accuracy) are also equally important to achieve good writing scores. Writing such a long essay will leave students no time to revise their essays to improve other task requirements.

3.3 Students' Perspectives toward Goal Setting

3.3.1 Goal-setting Questionnaire

3.3.1.1 Stage 1: Developing the Goal-setting Questionnaire

First, an EFA was run on the 819-response dataset. The principal component analysis with the direct oblimin rotation was applied due to "the conceptual interrelatedness of goal setting attributes and elements" (Lee et al., 1991, p. 471). The cutoff point of 1.0 was set for eigenvalues and 0.4 for factor loadings. Results revealed that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was 0.96, suggesting that the data were suitable for EFA. The Bartlett's test of specificity χ^2

(231) = 10759.122, $p < .01$ indicated that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix. In other words, there was a relationship among the variables. Three factors were extracted, altogether accounting for a cumulative variance of 59.95%.

Table 6.

819-response dataset

	Components			Communalities
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	
Item 17	.841			.627
Item 11	.737			.519
Item 8	.734			.561
Item 7	.725			.520
Item 15	.718			.498
Item 16	.694			.658
Item 20	.666			.522
Item 18	.639			.527
Item 10	.630			.429
Item 22	.611			.520
Item 14	.604			.604
Item 12	.540			.567
Item 9	.510			.410
Item 6		-.839		.729
Item 5		-.816		.716
Item 13		-.736		.687
Item 19		-.725		.721
Item 21		-.696		.632
Item 1		-.583	.498	.667
Item 3	.410		.677	.748
Item 4			.610	.680
Item 2		-.502	.523	.648
Eigenvalues	48.035	7.128	4.787	

($N=819$, KMO value = 0.96, Bartlett's test of specificity χ^2 (231) = 10759.122, $p < .01$)

Table 7.

Intercorrelation matrix of the 819-response dataset

Factor	1	2	3
1	-		
2	-.60**	-	
3	.39**	-.28**	-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Interpretation of the results presented some difficulties because of cross loadings. Furthermore, factor 1 was composed of 13 items, and the intercorrelation between factor 1 and factor 2 was quite high ($r = -.60$, $p < .01$). This gave rise to my suspicion that students' goal-setting experience might influence the extraction of the latent factors. Therefore, I split the responses into two groups: the group without goal-setting experience ($N = 466$) and the group with goal-setting experience ($N = 353$). I followed the same EFA procedures described above. For the group with goal-setting experience, three factors were found with a cumulative variance of 61.50%. For the group without goal-setting experience, four factors emerged, altogether explaining a cumulative variance of 63.81%.

Table 8.

Group with goal-setting experience

	Components			Communalities
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	

Table 8. (cont'd)

Item 15	.823			.606
Item 20	.799			.619
Item 17	.749			.677
Item 22	.620			.564
Item 8	.609			.584
Item 10	.563			.473
Item 11	.460		-.409	.496
Item 9	.452			.484
Item 7	.404			.473
Item 5		-.912		.761
Item 6		-.884		.789
Item 21		-.811		.661
Item 13		-.796		.676
Item 19		-.716		.658
Item 1		-.584		.549
Item 2		-.463		.525
Item 3			-.874	.717
Item 4			-.813	.740
Item 14			-.597	.719
Item 16			-.587	.689
Item 18			-.442	.536
Eigenvalues	50.251	6.583	4.661	

(N = 353, KMO value = 0.95, Bartlett's test of specificity $\chi^2(231) = 4981.145, p < .01$)

Table 9.

Intercorrelation matrix of the 353-response dataset

Factor	1	2	3
1	-		
2	-.61**	-	
3	.58**	.53**	-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 10.

Group without goal-setting experience

	Components				Communalities
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	
Item 10	.802				.545
Item 8	.788				.653
Item 9	.698				.497
Item 7	.675				.577
Item 20	.581				.556
Item 17	.541				.580
Item 6		-.886			.711
Item 5		-.839			.716
Item 13		-.828			.721
Item 19		-.771			.748
Item 21		-.730			.629
Item 12		-.429			.570
Item 1			.726		.826
Item 2			.716		.805
Item 3				-.836	.750
Item 4				-.737	.646
Item 16				-.669	.679
Item 18				-.642	.644
Item 14				-.554	.677
Eigenvalues	46.159	7.574	5.420	4.653	

(N = 466, KMO value = 0.94, Bartlett's test of specificity $\chi^2(231) = 6062.263$, $p < .01$)

Table 11.

Intercorrelation matrix of the 466-response dataset

Factor	1	2	3	4
1	-			
2	-.56**	-		
3	.15**	-.19**	-	
4	-.54**	.46**	-.13**	-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Comparison between the two groups showed that there was not much difference between them, except for item 1 and item 2, which concern goal specificity. For the group without goal-setting experience, item 1 and item 2 formed a new factor, while the group with goal-setting experience perceived that these two items should be merged with items about teacher feedback. Below are the items in factor 2.

- 5. Teacher feedback on my essays helps me set better writing goals.
- 6. Teacher feedback helps me improve the quality of my essays.
- 21. I feel delighted when I receive teacher feedback on my essays.
- 13. When I receive teacher comments on my essays, I read them carefully.
- 19. Teacher feedback on my writing goals helps me set better future goals.
- 1. Personal writing goals should be specific.
- 2. Personal writing goals should include a detailed plan for achieving them.

One possible reason is that specific teacher comments allow students to obtain better understanding of their writing issues. Without specific teacher comments, students would not be able to know which writing areas they should concentrate on. Meanwhile, to ensure the success of goal setting, writing goals should be specific and include detailed action plans. Students who experienced goal setting might perceive that both teacher feedback and goal specificity share the same latent element, that is, the level of specificity, which led to their belief that these two factors should merge into one. On the other hand, those without goal-setting experience do not have such experience. They might not know how to use specific feedback to improve the effectiveness of goal setting as well as how to set specific writing goals. Thus, they perceived that these two factors should be separated.

3.3.1.2 Stage 2: Distributing the Goal-setting Questionnaire

In the experimental goal-based writing course, thirty-nine participants completed the same goal-setting questionnaire in Stage 1 in Week 1, Week 5, and Week 9. The background information question revealed that 37 out of the 39 participants did not have goal-setting experience. As a result, I decided to use the factor matrix based on the perspectives of the group without goal-setting experience. It should be stressed that the main goal of the study is to explore students' perspectives toward goal-setting rather than validate the goal-setting questionnaire. Thus, the four-factor matrix from the group without goal-setting experience was more appropriate to explore students' perspectives in the experimental study.

For further analysis, the extracted factors were first renamed and revised. Factor 1 was named "goal commitment" as Salancik (1977, p.4) proposed that "action is the necessary ingredient of commitment". In factor 2, item 12 "If I cannot achieve my writing goals, I will work harder to achieve them next time" was more about goal commitment, which was conceptually unrelated to the other five items about teacher feedback. Furthermore, there was a noticeable difference in variance scores between item 2 and the other five items. Specifically, the loading of item 2 was -.429, while the loadings of the other five items were all above -.730. In other words, item 2 contributed to a much smaller variance in factor 2, compared to other items. Following Phakiti (2018)'s recommendation, I reran the EFA with the removal of item 12. The result produced a similar pattern matrix (see Table 12). For these reasons, item 12 was removed.

Factor 3 consisted of only two items, which are subject to elimination as Brown (2015) suggested. However, other researchers (e.g., Worthington & Whittaker, 2006; Yong & Pearce, 2013) maintain that it is still possible to retain a factor of 2 items provided that these two variables have a high correlation with each other ($r > .70$), but not with other variables. On the

questionnaire, items 1 and 2 had high loadings (.741 and .736 respectively) and were also strongly correlated ($r = .86, p < .01$). The correlation between factor 3 and the other three factors was also weak, ranging from $r = -.23$ to $r = .19$. For these reasons, factor 3 was retained and named "goal specificity". Finally, factor 4 was named "goal challenge". Below are the 19 items classified into four factors.

Factor 1: Goal Commitment

- 10. I know which writing goals are more important than others.
- 8. I take time to review my personal writing goals.
- 9. I change my learning strategies if I cannot complete my writing goals.
- 7. I commit myself to completing my personal writing goals.
- 20. I set a deadline to complete my writing goals.
- 17. I devote time to completing my writing goals.
- 11. I use different learning strategies to improve my writing skills.

Factor 2: Teacher Feedback

- 6. Teacher feedback helps me improve the quality of my essays.
- 5. Teacher feedback on my essays helps me set better writing goals.
- 13. When I receive teacher comments on my essays, I read them carefully.
- 19. Teacher feedback on my writing goals helps me set better future goals.
- 21. I feel delighted when I receive teacher feedback on my essays.

Factor 3: Goal Specificity

- 1. Personal writing goals should be specific.
- 2. Personal writing goals should include a detailed plan for achieving them.

Factor 4: Goal Challenge

3. I want my writing goals to be challenging.
4. Challenging goals push me.
16. I want my writing goals to be increasingly challenging.
18. Difficult writing tasks help improve my writing skills.
14. Challenging goals speed up my writing improvement.

Table 12.

A rerun of EFA with the group without goal-setting experience

	Components				Communalities
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	
Item 10	.801				.547
Item 8	.790				.657
Item 9	.696				.499
Item 7	.680				.580
Item 20	.583				.559
Item 17	.545				.574
Item 11	.401				.523
Item 6		-.885			.719
Item 5		-.837			.722
Item 13		-.823			.722
Item 19		-.765			.752
Item 21		-.727			.635
Item 1			.741		.830
Item 2			.736		.812
Item 3				-.817	.746
Item 4				-.723	.645
Item 16				-.662	.681
Item 18				-.643	.647
Item 14				-.557	.681
Eigenvalues	45.914	7.928	5.593	4.872	

(N = 466, KMO value = 0.94, Bartlett's test of specificity χ^2 (210) = 5717.727, $p < .01$)

Table 13.

A rerun of the intercorrelation matrix of the 466-response dataset

Factor	1	2	3	4
1	-			
2	-.55**	-		
3	.19**	-.23**	-	
4	-.53**	.44**	-.16**	-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 14.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each factor (based on 19 items)

	Items	No of items	Cronbach's alpha
Factor 1	Item 10, Item 8, Item 9, Item 7, Item 20, Item 17, Item 11	7	.86
Factor 2	Item 6, Item 5, Item 13, Item 19, Item 21	5	.90
Factor 3	Item 1, Item 2	2	.86
Factor 4	Item 3, Item 4, Item 16, Item 18, Item 14	5	.86
Overall		19	.93

In the experimental study, thirty-nine participants completed the questionnaire three times. The Cronbach's alpha value was .81 for the Time 1 questionnaire, .89 for the Time 2 questionnaire, and .93 for the Time 3 questionnaire. Below are the descriptive statistics of students' perspectives toward goal setting.

Table 15.

Goal-Setting Questionnaire

	Week 1	Week 5	Week 9
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Goal Commitment			
7. I commit myself to completing my personal writing goals.	8.46 (1.50)	7.26 (2.20)	7.28 (1.59)
8. I take time to review my personal writing goals.	7.74 (1.46)	7.38 (1.80)	7.44 (1.50)
9. I change my learning strategies if I cannot complete my writing goals.	7.62 (1.97)	8.03 (1.76)	7.74 (1.55)
10. I know which writing goals are more important than others.	7.87 (1.91)	8.23 (1.93)	8.21 (1.42)
11. I use different learning strategies to improve writing skills.	7.26 (2.10)	7.62 (1.76)	7.82 (1.55)
17. I devote my time to completing my writing goals	8.31 (1.47)	7.69 (1.58)	7.56 (1.55)
19. I set a deadline to complete my writing goals.	8.00 (1.82)	8.49 (1.88)	8.21 (1.53)
Average Score	7.89 (0.98)	7.81 (1.30)	7.75 (1.18)
Teacher Feedback			

Table 15. (cont'd)

2. Teacher feedback helps me improve the quality of my essays.	9.51 (0.97)	9.72 (0.56)	9.56 (0.72)
5. Teacher feedback on my essays helps me set better writing goals.	9.31 (0.92)	9.26 (0.85)	9.23 (0.93)
13. When I receive teacher comments on my essays, I read them carefully.	9.38 (0.91)	9.44 (0.97)	9.28 (0.86)
18. Teacher feedback on my writing goals helps me set better future goals.	9.31 (0.98)	9.67 (0.66)	9.36 (0.96)
20. I feel delighted when I receive teacher feedback on my essays.	9.59 (0.68)	9.59 (0.94)	9.54 (0.72)
Average Score	9.42 (0.60)	9.53 (0.56)	9.40 (0.68)
Goal Specificity			
1. Personal writing goals should be specific.	9.33 (0.98)	8.97 (1.31)	9.33 (1.01)
6. Personal writing goals should include a detailed plan for achieving them.	8.64 (1.50)	8.54 (1.76)	8.49 (1.10)
Average Score	8.99 (1.07)	8.77 (1.37)	8.91 (0.93)
Goal Challenge			
3. I want my writing goals to be challenging.	7.90 (1.67)	7.18 (1.57)	7.13 (1.56)
4. Challenging goals push me.	7.92 (1.86)	6.74 (2.00)	6.90 (1.71)
14. Challenging goals speed up my writing improvement.	7.95 (1.85)	7.31 (1.84)	7.21 (1.81)

Table 15. (cont'd)

16. I want my writing goals to be increasingly challenging.	7.69 (1.85)	7.26 (1.97)	6.82 (1.52)
22. Difficult writing tasks help improve my writing skills.	7.97 (1.97)	8.31 (1.42)	7.95 (1.34)
Average Score	7.89 (1.50)	7.36 (1.41)	7.20 (1.41)
Goal Setting			
23. Goal setting can help me improve my writing skills.	9.10 (1.17)	8.62 (1.33)	8.54 (1.12)

(Note. The questionnaire statements in the experimental study were reordered.)

The descriptive statistics suggested a small decrease in students' commitment to their writing goals. Teacher feedback was rated the most positive during the goal-setting process, with the student rating being around 9.4 out of 10 over the course. In terms of goal specificity, the descriptive data revealed that there was a fluctuation in students' perspectives. For goal challenge, it was showed that in the first week, students perceived that increasing goal challenge could push them to improve their writing skills. However, over time, students' ratings became less positive.

To further examine changes in students' perspectives, Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were performed on the average score of each of the factors. The choice of the Wilcoxon test was due to the non-normal distribution of the data based on the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test. Moreover, I only compared data collected in Week 1 and Week 9 since it would be difficult to anticipate significant changes within a five-week interval (e.g., from Week 1 to Week 5, or from Week 5 to Week 9).

Table 16.

Students' Perspectives

	Week 1 Md	Week 9 Md	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Goal Commitment	8.2	7.8	-.68	.50	.08
Goal Specificity	9.5	9.0	-.36	.72	.04
Goal Challenge	8.0	7.2	-2.02	.04 ^{*+}	.23
Teacher Feedback	9.6	9.6	-.07	.95	.01
Goal Setting	9.0	8.3	-2.08	.04 ^{*+}	.24

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, +Not significant with Bonferroni adjustment. The alpha value was adjusted to 0.05/4 or 0.0125 since 4 Wilcoxon tests were performed.

None of the statistics showed significant changes due to the Bonferroni correction. However, the z -statistics seemed to suggest that students did not believe that goal challenge was necessary. Interestingly, students' perspectives toward the effectiveness of goal setting showed a decreasing pattern, as well. This could be due to the ceiling effect where students had already rated the importance of goal setting very highly at the beginning of the study (e.g., 9.10 out of 10 in Week 1). In fact, students' rating of the necessity of goal setting was still very positive at the end of the course, at 8.54. The qualitative data further showed that all interviewees agreed that goal setting promoted their writing skills. Participant 8 explained, *"Now I can write essays with a clear structure and ideas. I also learned more vocabulary. I think when I set goals, I listed what I needed to improve and how I could improve it. When I could improve my weaknesses. I wrote with more confidence."* Participant 4 added, *"I think that when I set goals, I knew more about my weaknesses and then set goals to improve them. I could see that I made fewer mistakes in my writing."*

Following this, I examined correlations between the four factors and students' perspectives toward the effectiveness of goal setting over time. I used the R code written by Bakdash and Marusich (2017) to perform repeated measures correlation (RMC). RMC was used because it "captures the strong intra-individual relationship between the two variables that is missed by using averaged data" (Bakdash & Marusich, 2017, p.2). Results indicated that all four factors were significantly correlated with students' perspectives toward the effectiveness of goal setting over time. However, the correlations varied across the factors. Goal challenge, goal specificity, and teacher feedback had a moderate correlation with students' perspectives toward the effectiveness of goal setting ($r = .33$, $r = .42$, and $r = .47$ respectively), whereas goal commitment demonstrated the strongest correlation ($r = .69$). Figures below show the results of 39 participants with 3 data points. Each participant data point is matched with the corresponding line in different colors.

Figure 1. Goal Commitment and Goal Setting

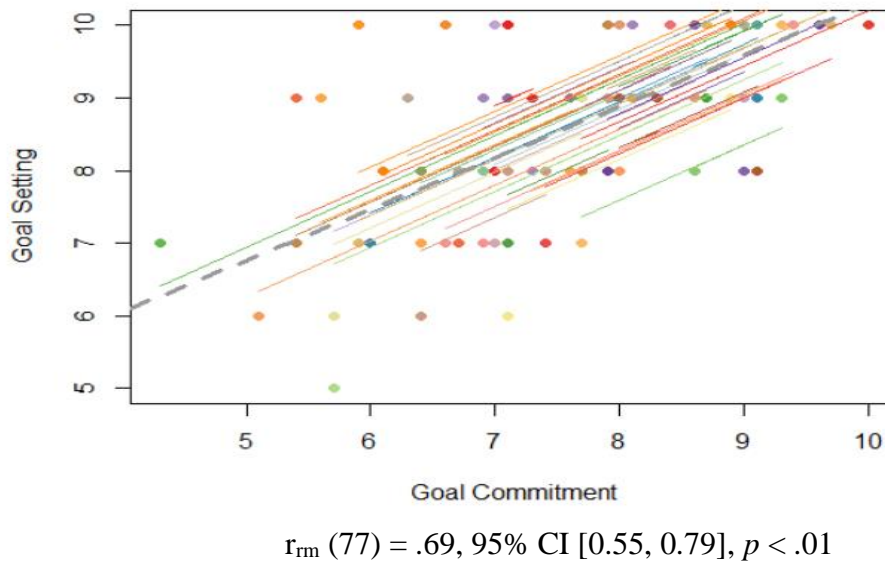
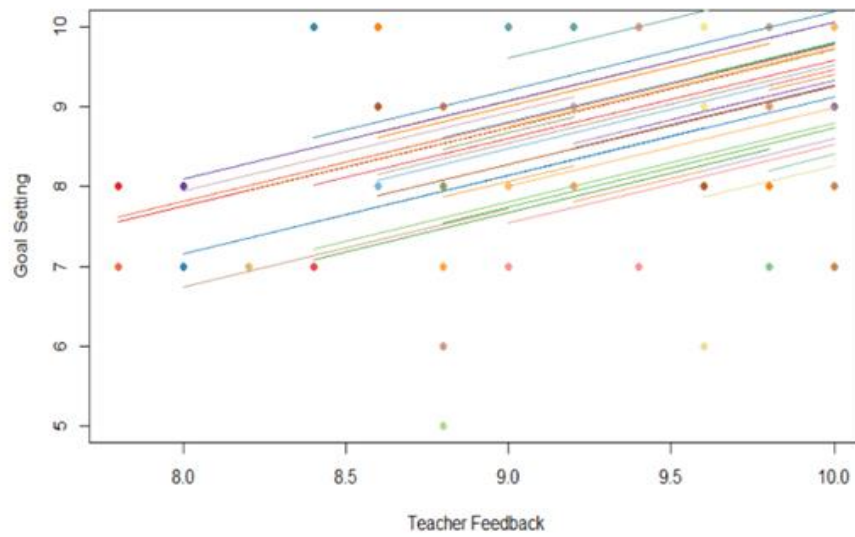
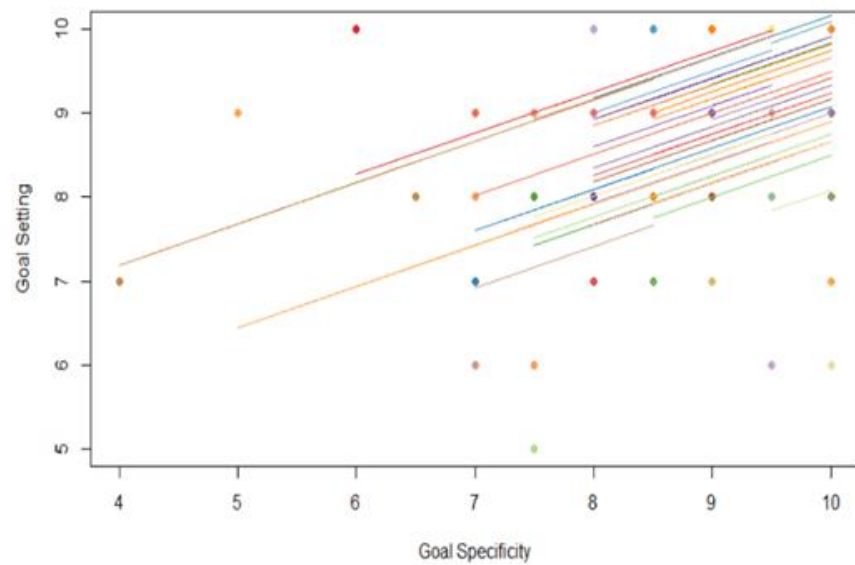


Figure 2. Teacher Feedback and Goal Setting



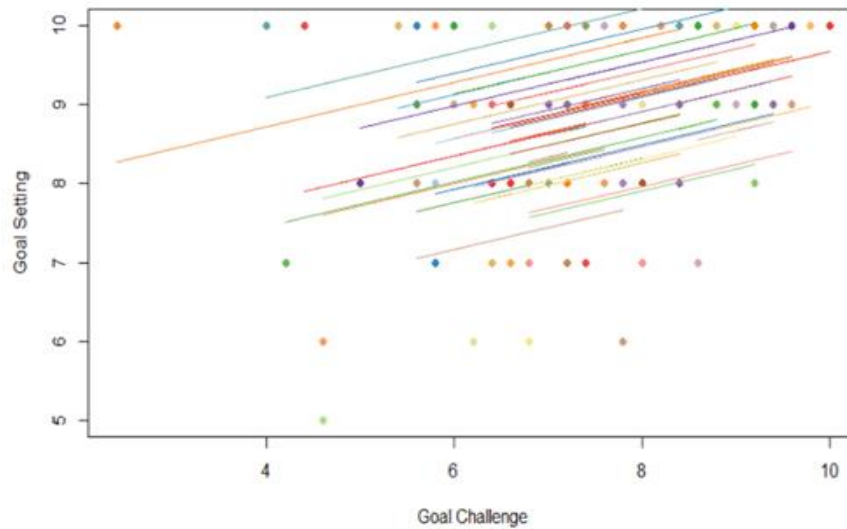
$$r_{rm}(77) = .47, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.28, 0.63], p < .01$$

Figure 3. Goal Specificity and Goal Setting



$$r_{rm}(77) = .42, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.21, 0.59], p < .01$$

Figure 4. Goal Challenge and Goal Setting



$$r_{\text{rm}} (77) = .33, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.12, 0.52], p < .01$$

The correlations affirmed the findings from the questionnaire and the interviews. First, from students' viewpoint, goal challenge was not very important in the goal-setting process. Second, despite students' awareness of the necessity of goal specificity, they still met with difficulties in setting specific goals. Finally, although teacher feedback was rated the most positive, it was students' commitment that demonstrated the strongest correlation with students' attitudes toward goal setting over time.

Sonnentag (2012) contended that the time dimension in theory building is critical because it makes significant contributions to the building and refinement of a theory. Time also promotes our understanding of "the essential nature of a phenomenon" and its current existence since time provides "a reflection of both the past and the anticipation of the future" (George & Jones, 2000, p. 660). Unfortunately, the role of time has not been comprehensively discussed in the goal-setting theory (Fried & Slowik, 2004). Findings in the current study not only add a theoretical contribution to the goal-setting theory but also demonstrate changes in students' perspectives

toward their writing goals over time. In what follows, the four goal elements will be discussed in more detail.

3.3.2 Interviews

3.3.2.1 Goal Commitment

Findings from the questionnaire indicated a slight decrease in students' commitment over time. There are a wide range of reasons for this. First, the course was organized in summertime, an ideal time to take a break from school. Thus, students were not fully committed to the goal-based writing course. Participant 9 shared, *"The semester just ended, and we started this writing course. I felt like we did not have a break at all. Thus, we were not committed to our goal setting. Some students dropped out not because they disliked the course, but because they did not have time to relax."* Participant 9 also discussed that personal issues could have an impact on students' devotion to the completion of the writing goals. He shared his experience, *"In summer, my parents often asked me to come back to my hometown. So, I missed the deadlines to complete the goals"*. Another reason is that students' withdrawal was not subject to any form of penalty because the writing course was free. The completion of students' writing goals was completely voluntary, which potentially affected their goal commitment. Furthermore, Cumming (2012) found that students who were preparing for university were more motivated to achieve the writing goals, while at-risk adolescent students formed negative emotions toward writing, and their writing goals were just to obtain high scores on the assignment. This indicates that if students have concrete goals to achieve in the future, it will intensify their goal commitment. Unfortunately, in the current study, participants were not under pressure to achieve good IELTS writing scores since they did not need to take the IELTS right after the course. Such a contextual factor could contribute to students' decreasing commitment. Finally, teacher feedback might

exert unfavorable impacts on students' goal commitment as it can give rise to negative emotions (Han & Hyland, 2015). Participant 3 expressed, "*Teacher feedback was very detailed, and I felt disappointed a little bit because I felt like I made so many mistakes.*"

3.3.2.2 Teacher Feedback

The necessity of teacher feedback during the goal-setting process has been realized in many studies (Alitto et al., 2016; Schunk & Swartz, 1993; Earley et al., 1990). In the current study, students received personalized and specific feedback on their essays. Both the questionnaire and the interview data showed students' positive attitudes toward teacher feedback. However, a more important question is how students engaged with teacher feedback. Student engagement can be investigated through their cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal perspectives (Ellis, 2010, as cited in Han & Hyland, 2015). Goal setting engaged students at all three levels.

Cognitively and behaviorally, during the goal-setting process, teacher feedback increased students' awareness of their writing issues, which was subsequently translated into action plans. Participant 6 said, "*When I received teacher feedback that my ideas were not well linked. I would think about it. I once received comments that in addition to using linking words, there were other ways to connect ideas together. From that feedback, I set goals that focus on coherence and cohesion.*" Attitudinally, teacher feedback coupled with goal setting produced positive reactions among learners. Such positive attitudes toward teacher feedback were reflected on the questionnaire where it was consistently rated highly throughout the course and in the interview data where most interviewees expressed their excitement and enthusiasm to receive teacher comments. Participant 1 reported, "*I looked forward to teacher feedback every day. I also logged on Google Drive folders to read teacher comments on my friends' essays*". Students' attitudinal engagement with teacher feedback possibly stemmed from a sense of goal achievement as Busse

(2013) postulated feedback can naturally affect students' perception of accomplishment and progress. Apparently, the attainment of writing goals requires serious efforts, and thus, students were keen to see whether they could successfully achieve their goals. Participant 4 commented, *"I was really looking forward to teacher feedback. I wanted to see how much I achieved over the past week. I wanted to see whether my goals helped me improve my errors"*. More importantly, the current study showed that there was a significant positive correlation between teacher feedback and goal setting over time ($r = .47, p < .01$). All these findings demonstrate that teacher feedback was perceived important in the goal-based writing course, and that the goal-setting process could keep learners constantly engaged with teacher feedback over time.

3.3.2.3 Goal Specificity

The goal-setting theory states that goals should be specific and challenging to improve performance (Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002). Adding to the discussion about the time dimension related to goal specificity, the current study showed that at the beginning of the course, students were aware of the importance of specific goals. Paradoxically, they struggled writing specific goals, which subsequently affected their rating of this factor in the middle of the course. When students progressed throughout the second half of the course, their ratings became more positive. Such findings confirm Fried and Slowik (2004)'s hypothesis about the exploration and systemization stage during the goal-setting process. In the exploration stage, students are exploring the tasks at hand, which give rise to "ambiguity concerning processes and outcomes" (Fried & Slowik, 2004, p. 416). When students move to the systemization stage, they achieve a greater knowledge of the tasks and procedures of goal setting, which consequently sharpens their goal-setting skills. Participant 9 shared, *"At the beginning of the course, my goals were not specific because I did not know how to set specific goals. Later, I had chance to discuss my goals*

with friends and learned from their goal-setting skills, which enabled me to set better goals."

Furthermore, students' background information showed that 37 out of the 39 participants have not been taught about goal setting. The lack of goal-setting experience further confirms students' difficulties in setting specific goals at the beginning of the course.

3.3.2.4 Goal Challenge

Goals should be challenging (Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002). Nevertheless, it remained unknown as to "whether involvement in such challenging goals will be consistently beneficial over time" (Fried & Slowik, 2004, p. 412). In the current study, students at first believed that goals should be more challenging. However, when they progressed over the course, their rating of this factor became less positive. Lock and Latham (1990) suggested that when people could not accomplish challenging goals, they would either attempt more challenging goals in compensation for their failure or reduce goal challenge to achieve success. The current study indicated students' attempt to complete all the goals rather than increase goal challenge.

Participant 1 commented, *"At first when I set my goals, I thought there should be a challenge. However, when I practiced goal setting for 3-4 weeks, I thought developing good goal-setting behaviors is more important than aiming for challenging goals"*. This finding is in line with Fried and Slowik (2004)'s hypothesis that those who have a strong future orientation will have stronger motivation in pursuit of challenging goals. Participants in the current study were not obliged to take the IELTS test immediately. Most of them attended the writing course because it was organized in summertime and because they wanted to improve their writing skills.

Participant 5 shared her view, *"If we are serious about completing the goals, we can increase goal difficulty, but if we cannot complete the goals, then we should not"*.

Fried and Slowik (2004) also discussed two time-related conditions that affected goal challenge. First, longer time intervals improve people's attraction to the challenging aspect of the task, and second, there should be novelty added to the task over time to keep the favorable aspect of challenging goals. In the current study, the time interval was quite short (Students were required to submit their goals every week.). The pressure to set goals and complete all the goals within a week might prevent students from setting more challenging goals. Moreover, the writing task itself might not produce novelty (Students were asked to write one essay per week.) The time interval and the nature of the task could account for students' unfavorable ratings of the goal challenge factor.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

4.3 Summary of the Findings

The findings suggest that goal setting could positively improve students' writing competence. Second, it is also speculated that goal setting could affect students' linguistic development. Although there was no improvement in lexical diversity, students tended to use more advanced words and n-grams with higher mutual information in their essays. For syntactic complexity, students showed an intention to write shorter sentences, shorter T-units, and shorter clauses, and use fewer verb phrases in favor of noun phrases and preposition phrases. The findings also indicate no improvement in terms of writing fluency measured by text length. However, there was a significant increase in the number of students who reached the 250-word threshold in IELTS writing after the treatment. Finally, students reported that goal setting enhanced their writing motivation, and that it increased their responsibility for and ownership of their learning. Students believed that goal specificity and teacher feedback were important in the goal-setting process, while they did not think that it was necessary to increase goal challenge. Finally, it was found that compared to other goal factors, goal commitment demonstrated the strongest correlation with students' perspectives toward the effectiveness of goal setting.

Despite the promising impacts of goal setting, attention to this important skill in writing class has been neglected. In my study, only two out of the thirty-nine participants have been taught to set writing goals. The findings in this research should provide teachers with more confidence to implement a goal-based writing course. Meanwhile, future studies can examine the effects of goal setting in different contexts with different groups of learners. The results will shed light on how students' writing behaviors and their linguistic development are affected by goal setting.

4.4 Implications

4.4.2 Pedagogical Implications

Goal setting is an effective intervention in the writing classroom. To implement the goal-setting intervention successfully, there are many important steps that teachers should take into consideration. First, it is a skill that needs constant practice. As the qualitative data showed, although students were aware that goal setting should be specific. They still struggled writing a specific plan to achieve their goals. This issue will be even more serious, especially with students who have not had any goal-setting experience. Therefore, teachers should clearly explain the writing tasks, the goal-setting procedures, and provide students with opportunities to constantly practice their goal-setting skills. For example, teachers can have students bring their writing goals in class and share their writing goals with their friends. Some students reported that sharing goals in groups was particularly useful since they learned a great deal from their friends' goal-setting experience. Moreover, in the current study, students believed that it was unnecessary to increase goal challenge. To increase students' attraction to challenging goals, teachers might take into consideration the time intervals between the writing tasks and add novelty to the writing tasks over time, as well. The study also showed that students encountered personal issues in setting more challenging goals. Thus, teachers can also engage in dialogue with students to see what problems students are having with their writing goals and then suggest suitable strategies for students to tackle their problems.

As mentioned in the previous section, teacher feedback is important during the goal-setting process. Specific and detailed feedback enables students to realize which language areas they should set their writing goals for. However, it can lead students to believe that their writing skills are not improving, which could negatively affect their commitment to goal setting. To

tackle this issue, teachers can offer detailed feedback, and at the same time, include positive comments to encourage students to continue with the goal-setting process. Another concern related to teacher feedback is that teachers often do not have time to provide specific feedback on all students' essays every week. To remedy this issue, in the current study, students were encouraged to set revision goals. To assist students with their revision goals, online grammar checkers such as Grammarly were introduced in the classroom. It should be stressed that students may heavily depend on the use of online tools instead of attempting to revise their essays themselves. However, the introduction of online tools will help students develop their autonomy outside the classroom context. Finally, peer feedback sessions should be organized so that students would read each other's essays and provide feedback. It was found that when students moved throughout the course, they started to develop strong revision skills, which tremendously reduced the burden of teachers giving feedback on students' essays.

Finally, the use of a grading rubric is useful in a goal-based writing course. As shown in the current study, most changes in students' essays were linked with the requirements on the grading rubric. For instance, on scale 7.0 to 9.0, which indicates very good grammar range and accuracy, phrases such as "rare minor errors", "sentences are error-free", or "few errors" keep showing up, which probably caught students' attention. This explained why they shortened their sentences to produce error-free sentences when they set their writing goals. Meanwhile, in terms of the lexical resources, on the scale from 7.0 to 9.0, one could see phrases such as "sophisticated control of lexical features", "uncommon lexical items", "occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation", or "awareness of style and collocation". This could account for students' use of more advanced vocabulary and n-grams with higher mutual information. Overall, the grading rubric provides a clearer idea of which area students should focus on to enhance their writing

skills. Thus, in the goal-based writing course, teachers should spend time discussing the grading rubric with students and help them set goals that specifically target the marking requirements.

4.4.3 Theoretical Implications

In terms of lexical diversity, there was no significant improvement. It could be due to students' writing proficiencies (between limited and competence) that students tended to focus more on appropriate use of vocabulary. An analysis of lexical errors could supplement the results on lexical diversity. On the other hand, although lexical sophistication has been found to slowly progress, the goal-based writing instruction could speed up the development of lexical sophistication. Therefore, longitudinal studies on lexical sophistication should provide a description of the writing instruction since it will shed more light on the results.

For syntactic complexity, Polat et al., (2019) recommended, researchers should clarify the amount and type of writing instruction students receive. Without such information, it will be difficult to make claims about the growth of syntactic complexity. The findings of the current study support this argument. In the study, students received 3 hours of writing instruction and 1.5 hours of goal-setting instruction. At the end of the course, students seem to shorter sentences, shorter T-units, and shorter clauses. The results are at odds with findings in other studies (e.g., Bulte & Housen, 2014; Polat et al., 2019). However, there seems a decrease in clausal complexity, while an increase in phrasal complexity. Such findings are consistent with those found in the study conducted by Crossley and McNamara (2014). The goal-setting intervention, to some extent, influenced the growth of syntactic complexity in different manners. On the other hand, the finding lends support to the argument put forward by Biber et al., (2011) that length-based measures are not effective in capturing syntactic complexity. One reason, as the current study showed, is that it will be difficult to expect significant changes in sentence length if

students are able to produce long sentences right at the beginning of the study. Finally, given the classroom context, Vietnamese university students usually have a good knowledge of a wide range of complex syntactic structures. Paradoxically, most of them fail to apply them in language production. This could explain why the qualitative data showed many instances where students set goals to improve their syntactic accuracy. Studies that measure the development of syntactic complexity should, therefore, take into consideration students' educational profiles and learning experience.

In terms of writing fluency, it is usually assessed by either the product-based or processed-based measures (Abdel Latif, 2013). However, a very important factor (but usually ignored in writing fluency research) is the requirement of the writing task that can influence students' writing fluency. As showed in my study, the total number of words in students' essays written at Time 1 and Time 2 did not show any significant changes. However, the number of students who could reach the 250-word threshold (the IELTS word requirement) at Time 2 significantly increased. Such findings suggest that writing fluency researchers should also pay attention to the task requirement to assess writing fluency.

4.5 Limitations and Future Studies

There are some important limitations of my study. First, the sample size is small (only 39 participants). Studies with bigger sample sizes could help confirm findings in the current study. Second, there was no control group in my study. Although there was significant improvement in students' writing competence and linguistic development, which was later confirmed by the qualitative data, studies with a control group would shed more light on the results. Finally, the study was conducted in a very specific context with a specific group of students: Vietnamese university students who were voluntarily enrolling in an IELTS class in summertime. Thus,

claims in my study cannot be generalized to other writing contexts. However, it should be stressed that most of the changes related to students' writing competence and linguistic development were linked to the marking criteria in IELTS. Therefore, it is promising to claim that replication studies will find positive effects of goal setting on students' writing development as long as students have a clear idea of the task requirement and develop concrete plans to achieve their writing goals.

Given the lack of research on the relationship between goal setting and students' writing competence. There are many important research areas that should be examined. First, future work can focus on ESL learners to examine the impacts of goal setting in different learning environments. Second, the majority of students in the current study did not have prior goal-setting experience. Would the results be different if students have goal-setting experience? The comparison between students who have goal-setting experience and those without would reveal insights into their writing behaviors. Third, the writing course in the current study was free, and students could withdraw without consequences. It will be interesting to examine how students set goals in school-based contexts where there is pressure to pass the writing tests. Would students increase the difficulty of their goals over the weeks? Would they have more commitment to their writing goals to achieve better scores? Fourth, in the study, students set individual writing goals. Future work can move one step further, that is, to examine if students set group writing goals (e.g., collaborative writing with specific group goals), how would it affect their writing behaviors and linguistic development? and would goal-based collaborative writing be better than goal-based individual writing?

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

The Writing Syllabus

Week 1

1. Tuesday

- +Introduce the syllabus
- +Have students practice writing thesis statements
- +Teach students to avoid memorized phrases

Homework: Write five thesis statements

2. Thursday

- +Learn about paraphrasing skills
- +Have students learn vocabulary lists 1-3
- +Have students practice outlining the main idea

Homework: Write one AGREE/DISAGREE essay

Topic: When choosing a job, the salary is the most important consideration. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own experience or knowledge. You should write at least 250 words.

3. Saturday

- +Distribute the consent form
- +Have students complete the goal-setting questionnaire (1st)
- +Have students practice how to outline the main idea
- +Provide goal-setting instruction

Week 2

1. Tuesday

- +Have students practice writing the essay introduction
- +Have students write the essay body based on the sample ideas

2. Thursday

- +Introduce the theme and rheme development technique
- +Have students practice writing the essay conclusion

Homework: Write one DISCUSSION essay

Topic: Some people say that the best way to discourage smoking is to make smoking illegal in public places. Other people say that this is not enough and that other measures are needed.

Discuss both views, and give your opinion

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own experience or knowledge. You should write at least 250 words.

3. Saturday

- +Have students share about their goal-setting experience
- +Do revision on idea development, subject-verb agreement, and plural nouns

Week 3

1. Tuesday

- +Learn about coherence and cohesion
- +Learn about paraphrasing skills
- +Learn how to use transition words
- +Do grammar practice (subject-verb agreement and plural nouns)

2. Thursday

- +Learn how to use transition words

+Do grammar practice (subject-verb agreement and plural nouns)

Homework: Write one CAUSE-EFFECT essay

Topic: The percentage of overweight children in society has increased greatly in the past decade.

Discuss the causes and effects of this disturbing trend.

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own experience or knowledge. You should write at least 250 words.

3. Saturday

+Share about goal-setting experience

+Do revision on coherence and cohesion exercises (rearrange the idea + fill in the blanks with suitable connectives)

Week 4

1. Tuesday

+Learn about word families

+Learn about synonyms

+Learn how to use dictionaries

2. Thursday

+Learn about phrases and collocations (Use dictionaries to find collocations)

+Learn about problem-solution essays

Homework: Write one PROBLEM-SOLUTION essay

Topic: With the development of social media, more and more youngsters are being allowed unsupervised access to the Internet to talk with others. What are the problems related to this trend? And what solutions can you suggest to deal with these issues?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own experience or knowledge. You should write at least 250 words.

3. Saturday: No classes (self-study)

Week 5

1. Tuesday

- +Learn about writing revisions

- +Practice grammar: subject-verb agreement and parallel structure

- +Announce grammar homework

2. Thursday

- +Correct the grammar homework

- +Practice grammar: articles, subject-verb agreement, and passive voice

Homework: Write one ADVANTAGE-DISADVANTAGE essay

Topic: In order to solve traffic problems, governments should tax private car owners heavily and use the money to improve public transportation. What are the advantages and disadvantages of such a solution?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own experience or knowledge. You should write at least 250 words.

3. Saturday

- +Share about goal-setting experience

- +Practice grammar exercises

- +Have students complete the goal-setting questionnaire (2nd)

Week 6

1. Tuesday

- +Provide general comments on submitted essays
- +Practice writing the essay introduction, body, and conclusion
- +Learn about task achievement

2. Thursday

- +Learn how to brainstorm examples

Homework: Write one AGREE-DISAGREE essay

Topic: As well as making money, businesses also have social responsibilities. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own experience or knowledge. You should write at least 250 words.

3. Saturday

- +Share about the goal-setting experience
- +Practice critical thinking

Week 7

1. Tuesday

- +Provide general comments on submitted essays
- +Learn about coherence and cohesion (introduction/conclusion/body)
- +Practice planning the outline

2. Thursday

- +How to develop ideas in an essay
- +Practice revision skills

Homework: Write one DISCUSSION essay (Choose one of the two topics below)

Topic 1: Some people say that the only reason for learning a foreign language is in order to travel to or work in a foreign country. Others say that these are not the only reasons why someone should learn a foreign language. Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own experience or knowledge. You should write at least 250 words.

Topic 2: Some people think that all university students should study whatever they like. Others believe that they should be only allowed to study subjects that are useful in the future, like science and mathematics. Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own experience or knowledge. You should write at least 250 words.

3. Saturday

- +Share about the goal-setting experience
- +Practice revision skills
- +Practice coherence and cohesion exercises

Week 8

1. Tuesday

- +Learn about grammar and vocabulary
- +Brainstorm ideas through debates

2. Thursday

- +Practice revision skills
- +Learn about grammar structures [prepositions and verb patterns]

Homework: Write one advantage-disadvantage essay

Topic: Countries are becoming more and more similar because people are able to buy the same products anywhere in the world. Do you think this is a positive or negative development?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own experience or knowledge. You should write at least 250 words.

3. Saturday

+Share about the goal-setting experience

Week 9

1. Tuesday

+Revise grammar structures (Students made sentences with new phrases)

+Learn about vocabulary

Homework: write topic sentences for the paragraph.

2. Thursday

+Focus on vocabulary and grammar

Homework: Write one cause-solution essay

Topic: Many people prefer to watch foreign films rather than locally produced films. Why could this be? Should governments give more financial support to local film industries?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own experience or knowledge. You should write at least 250 words.

3. Saturday

+Share about the goal-setting experience

Week 10 – Final week

1. Tuesday

+Learn how to develop ideas

+Practice grammar structures

2. Thursday

+Practice grammar structures

+Practice writing a paragraph within 20 minutes.

+Plan and share goals in groups on how to perform well on the test

3. Saturday

+Have students complete the goal-setting questionnaire (3rd)

+Have students write the posttest within 40 minutes

Sample Goal-Setting Plan

Table 17.

My Writing Goals # Week 1

Task achievement	Cohesion and Coherence	Lexical resources	Grammatical range and accuracy	Revision
-Read one IELTS sample every day -Underline key words in the topic before writing	-Use connectives in my essays -Read books about referencing in writing	-Study three new collocations every day -Translate one short Vietnamese paragraph into English	-Spend one hour(s) learning about passive voice -Spend one hour(s) doing exercises about relative clauses	-Spend one hour(s) reading teacher feedback -Spend one hour(s) rewriting the essay
Are your writing goals specific?				
Do you believe that you can achieve your writing goals?				

APPENDIX B

Goal-setting Questionnaire Stage 1

Hello everyone,

I am Quy Pham, currently a Fulbright MA TESOL student at Michigan State University. For the MA thesis, I am conducting a questionnaire on goal setting in English writing. Your responses are extremely important for the completion of my MA thesis. I hope you can spend about 10 minutes completing the questionnaire. Your responses will be kept completely confidential. Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Chào các bạn,

Tôi là Quý Phạm, hiện là sinh viên cao học ngành giảng dạy tiếng Anh tại đại học Michigan State, theo chương trình học bổng Fulbright. Đây là bảng câu hỏi về việc thiết lập mục tiêu trong việc học kỹ năng viết tiếng Anh cho dự luận văn thạc sĩ của tôi. Để hoàn thành luận văn này, tôi rất mong nhận được sự phản hồi quý giá từ các bạn. Tôi hi vọng các bạn có thể dành khoảng 10 phút để trả lời các câu hỏi. Câu trả lời của các bạn sẽ được giữ bí mật tuyệt đối. Quý chân thành cảm ơn các bạn đã hỗ trợ!

Before you start, please answer these questions below.

(Trước khi bắt đầu, các bạn vui lòng trả lời những câu hỏi bên dưới.)

1. *What is your gender?* (Giới tính của bạn là gì?)

☐ Male (Nam)

☐ Female (Nữ)

☐ Other (Khác)

2. *Are you an English major student?* (Bạn hiện là sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh?)

☐ Yes (Phải)

☐ No (Không)

3. Which year are you in at your university?

☐ First year

☐ Second year

☐ Third year

☐ Fourth year

☐Other

4. *Have you ever been taught to set writing goals in an English writing course?* (Bạn có từng học cách đặt mục tiêu trong một khóa luyện viết tiếng Anh?)

☐Yes (Có)

☐No (Không)

If yes, please specify how the teacher taught you to set writing goals.

.....

5. *Have you taken the IELTS test?* (Bạn có từng thi IELTS?)

☐Yes (Có)

☐No (Không)

If yes, please answer the following questions:

5.1: *What is the most recent time you took it?* (Lần gần nhất bạn thi là khi nào?)

.....

5.2: *What is your overall IELTS score?* (Điểm IELTS của bạn là bao nhiêu?)

.....

5.3: *What is your writing score?* (Điểm viết của bạn là bao nhiêu?)

.....

6. *Have you enrolled in an IELTS course before?* (Bạn có từng đăng kí một khóa học IELTS nào trước đây không?)

☐Yes (Có)

☐No (Không)

If Yes, (Nếu có)

Was there a writing section in this course? (Có phần luyện viết trong khóa học đó không?)

☐Yes (Có)

☐No (Không)

7. *Where are you currently studying?* (Bạn đang hiện học tập ở đâu?)

☐ At a public university (Tại một trường đại học dân lập)

☐ At a private university (Tại một trường đại học tư thục)

Goal setting is the process of identifying what you want and designing action plans to achieve it. For example, if you want to improve vocabulary range, you may set a vocabulary goal that you will study 5 new words every day. Now suppose that you want to improve your English writing skills. In order to do so, you decide to set personal writing goals. Read the statements below carefully and tick the column that correctly reflects your opinion from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). The questionnaire should take about 10-12 minutes.

Việc đặt mục tiêu là quá trình khám phá điều bạn mong muốn và thiết lập một kế hoạch hành động để đạt được nó. Ví dụ như bạn muốn cải thiện vốn từ vựng của mình, bạn có thể đặt mục tiêu học 5 từ mới mỗi ngày. Bây giờ hãy tưởng tượng bạn muốn cải thiện kỹ năng viết tiếng Anh. Để làm được điều đó, bạn quyết định đặt ra những mục tiêu viết cho bản thân mình. Hãy đọc những câu bên dưới và đánh vào khung thể hiện đúng nhất quan điểm của bạn, từ 1 (hoàn toàn không đồng ý) đến 10 (hoàn toàn đồng ý). Thời gian để hoàn thành bảng câu hỏi dao động từ 10-12 phút.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Personal writing goals should be specific. (Mục tiêu viết cá nhân cần phải cụ thể.)										
2. Personal writing goals should include a detailed plan for achieving them. (Mục tiêu viết cá nhân cần thể hiện một kế hoạch chi tiết để hoàn thành các mục tiêu.)										
3. I want my writing goals to be challenging.										

(Tôi muốn mục tiêu viết của mình phải có tính thử thách.)										
4. Challenging goals push me. (Những mục tiêu có tính thử thách thúc đẩy tôi cố gắng nhiều hơn.)										
5. Teacher feedback on my essays helps me set better writing goals. (Nhận xét của giáo viên về bài viết của tôi giúp tôi thiết lập những mục tiêu viết tốt hơn.)										
6. Teacher feedback helps me improve the quality of my essays. (Nhận xét của giáo viên giúp tôi cải thiện chất lượng bài viết của mình.)										
7. I commit myself to completing my personal writing goals. (Tôi cam kết với chính mình phải hoàn thành những mục tiêu viết đã đề ra.)										
8. I take time to review my personal writing goals. (Tôi dành thời gian để xem lại những mục tiêu viết của mình.)										

<p>9. I change my learning strategies if I cannot complete my writing goals.</p> <p>(Tôi thay đổi phương pháp học tập nếu tôi không hoàn thành những mục tiêu viết do mình đề ra.)</p>										
<p>10. I know which writing goals are more important than others.</p> <p>(Khi đặt mục tiêu, tôi biết mục tiêu nào quan trọng hơn những mục tiêu còn lại.)</p>										
<p>11. I use different learning strategies to improve my writing skills.</p> <p>(Tôi sử dụng những phương pháp học tập khác nhau để cải thiện kỹ năng viết của mình.)</p>										
<p>12. If I cannot achieve my writing goals, I will work harder to achieve them next time.</p> <p>(Nếu tôi không đạt được mục tiêu viết do mình đề ra, tôi sẽ cố gắng nhiều hơn trong lần tới.)</p>										
<p>13. When I receive teacher comments on my essays, I read them carefully.</p> <p>(Tôi đọc nhận xét của giáo viên về bài viết của mình một cách cẩn thận.)</p>										

<p>14. Challenging goals speed up my writing improvement.</p> <p>(Những mục tiêu có tính thử thách thúc đẩy sự tiến bộ kỹ năng viết của tôi.)</p>										
<p>15. If I set my writing goals, I know how many goals I need to complete.</p> <p>(Nếu tôi đặt ra những mục tiêu viết, tôi biết mình cần phải hoàn thành bao nhiêu mục tiêu là đủ.)</p>										
<p>16. I want my writing goals to be increasingly challenging.</p> <p>(Tôi muốn những mục tiêu viết của mình càng ngày càng có tính thử thách hơn.)</p>										
<p>17. I devote time to completing my writing goals.</p> <p>(Tôi dành thời gian để hoàn thành những mục tiêu viết đã đề ra.)</p>										
<p>18. Difficult writing tasks help improve my writing skills.</p> <p>(Những bài tập viết khó giúp tôi cải thiện kỹ năng viết của mình.)</p>										
<p>19. Teacher feedback on my writing goals helps me set better future goals.</p>										

(Nhận xét của giáo viên giúp tôi thiết lập những mục tiêu viết tiếp theo tốt hơn.)										
20. I set a deadline to complete my writing goals. (Tôi đặt ra thời hạn nhất định để hoàn thành những mục tiêu viết của mình.)										
21. I feel delighted when I receive teacher feedback on my essays. (Tôi cảm thấy vui khi nhận được nhận xét của giáo viên về bài viết của mình.)										
22. When I set writing goals, I believe I can achieve them. (Khi tôi đề ra những mục tiêu viết, tôi tin mình có thể hoàn thành chúng.)										
23. Goal setting can help me improve my writing skills. (Việc đặt mục tiêu có thể giúp tôi cải thiện kỹ năng viết của mình.)										

Goal-setting Questionnaire Stage 2

Hello everyone,

I am Quy Pham, currently a Fulbright MA TESOL student at Michigan State University. For the MA thesis, I am conducting a questionnaire on goal setting in English writing. Your responses are extremely important for the completion of my MA thesis. I hope you can spend

about 10 minutes completing the questionnaire. Your responses will be kept completely confidential. Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Chào các bạn,

Tôi là Quý Phạm, hiện là sinh viên cao học ngành giảng dạy tiếng Anh tại đại học Michigan State, theo chương trình học bổng Fulbright. Đây là bảng câu hỏi về việc thiết lập mục tiêu trong việc học kỹ năng viết tiếng Anh cho dự luận văn thạc sĩ của tôi. Để hoàn thành luận văn này, tôi rất mong nhận được sự phản hồi quý giá từ các bạn. Tôi hi vọng các bạn có thể dành khoảng 10 phút để trả lời các câu hỏi. Câu trả lời của các bạn sẽ được giữ bí mật tuyệt đối. Quý chân thành cảm ơn các bạn đã hỗ trợ!

Before you start, please answer these questions below

(Trước khi bắt đầu, các bạn vui lòng trả lời những câu hỏi bên dưới.)

8. What is your gender? (Giới tính của bạn là gì?)

- A. Male (Nam)
- B. Female (Nữ)
- C. Other (Khác)

9. Are you an English-major student? (Bạn hiện là sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh?)

- A. Yes (Phải)
- B. No (Không)

10. Which year are you in at your university?

- A. First year
- B. Second year
- C. Third year
- D. Fourth year
- E. Other

If you choose "other", please specify

.....

11. When were you born?

.....

12. Have you ever been taught to set writing goals in an English writing course? (Bạn có từng học cách đặt mục tiêu trong một khóa luyện viết tiếng Anh?)

A. Yes (Có) B. No (Không)

If yes, please specify how the teacher taught you to set writing goals.

.....

13. Have you taken the IELTS test? (Bạn có từng thi IELTS?)

A. Yes (Có) B. (Không)

If yes, please answer the following questions:

6.1: What is the most recent time you took it? (Lần gần nhất bạn thi là khi nào?)

.....

6.2: What is your overall IELTS score? (Điểm IELTS của bạn là bao nhiêu?)

.....

6.3: What is your writing score? (Điểm viết của bạn là bao nhiêu?)

.....

14. Have you enrolled in an IELTS course before? (Bạn có từng đăng kí một khóa học IELTS nào trước đây không?)

A. Yes (Có)

B. No (Không)

If Yes, was there a writing section in this course? (Có phần luyện viết trong khóa học đó không?)

- A. Yes (Có) B. No (Không)

15. Where are you currently studying? (Bạn đang hiện học tập ở đâu?)

- A. At a public university (Tại một trường đại học dân lập)
B. At a private university (Tại một trường đại học tư thục)
C. Other (Khác)

If you choose "other", please specify.

.....

16. Why did you register for this IELTS writing course? (Tại sao bạn đăng ký tham gia khóa học này)

.....

Goal setting is the process of identifying what you want and designing action plans to achieve it. For example, if you want to improve vocabulary range, you may set a vocabulary goal that you will study 5 new words every day. Now suppose that you want to improve your English writing skills. In order to do so, you decide to set personal writing goals. Read the statements below carefully and tick the column that correctly reflects your opinion from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). The questionnaire should take about 10-12 minutes.

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	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Personal writing goals should be specific. (Mục tiêu viết cá nhân cần phải cụ thể.)										
2. Teacher feedback helps me improve the quality of my essays. (Nhận xét của giáo viên giúp tôi cải thiện chất lượng bài viết của mình.)										
3. I want my writing goals to be challenging. (Tôi muốn mục tiêu viết của mình phải có tính thử thách.)										
4. Challenging goals push me. (Những mục tiêu có tính thử thách thúc đẩy tôi cố gắng nhiều hơn.)										
5. Teacher feedback on my essays helps me set better writing goals. (Nhận xét của giáo viên về bài viết của tôi giúp tôi thiết lập những mục tiêu viết tốt hơn.)										
6. Personal writing goals should include a detailed plan for achieving them. (Mục tiêu viết cá nhân cần thể hiện một kế hoạch chi tiết để hoàn thành các mục tiêu.)										

<p>7. I commit myself to completing my personal writing goals.</p> <p>(Tôi cam kết với chính mình phải hoàn thành những mục tiêu viết đã đề ra.)</p>										
<p>8. I take time to review my personal writing goals.</p> <p>(Tôi dành thời gian để xem lại những mục tiêu viết của mình.)</p>										
<p>9. I change my learning strategies if I cannot complete my writing goals.</p> <p>(Tôi thay đổi phương pháp học tập nếu tôi không hoàn thành những mục tiêu viết do mình đề ra.)</p>										
<p>10. I know which writing goals are more important than others.</p> <p>(Khi đặt mục tiêu, tôi biết mục tiêu nào quan trọng hơn những mục tiêu còn lại.)</p>										
<p>11. I use different learning strategies to improve writing skills.</p> <p>(Tôi sử dụng những phương pháp học tập khác nhau để cải thiện kỹ năng viết của mình.)</p>										

<p>12. If I cannot achieve my writing goals, I will work harder to achieve them next time.</p> <p>(Nếu tôi không đạt được mục tiêu viết do mình đề ra, tôi sẽ cố gắng nhiều hơn trong lần tới.)</p>										
<p>13. When I receive teacher comments on my essays, I read them carefully.</p> <p>(Tôi đọc nhận xét của giáo viên về bài viết của mình một cách cẩn thận.)</p>										
<p>14. Challenging goals speed up my writing improvement.</p> <p>(Những mục tiêu có tính thử thách thúc đẩy sự tiến bộ kỹ năng viết của tôi.)</p>										
<p>15. If I set my writing goals, I know how many goals I need to complete.</p> <p>(Nếu tôi đặt ra những mục tiêu viết, tôi biết mình cần phải hoàn thành bao nhiêu mục tiêu là đủ.)</p>										
<p>16. I want my writing goals to be increasingly challenging.</p> <p>(Tôi muốn những mục tiêu viết của mình càng ngày càng có tính thử thách hơn.)</p>										

17. I devote my time to completing my writing goals. (Tôi dành thời gian để hoàn thành những mục tiêu viết đã đề ra.)									
18. Teacher feedback on my writing goals helps me set better future goals. (Nhận xét của giáo viên giúp tôi thiết lập những mục tiêu viết tiếp theo tốt hơn.)									
19. I set a deadline to complete my writing goals. (Tôi đặt ra thời hạn nhất định để hoàn thành những mục tiêu viết của mình.)									
20. I feel delighted when I receive teacher feedback on my essays. (Tôi cảm thấy vui khi nhận được nhận xét của giáo viên về bài viết của mình.)									
21. When I set writing goals, I believe I can achieve them. (Khi tôi đề ra những mục tiêu viết, tôi tin mình có thể hoàn thành chúng.)									
22. Difficult writing tasks help improve my writing skills.									

(Những bài tập viết khó giúp tôi cải thiện kỹ năng viết của mình.)										
23. Goal setting can help me improve my writing skills. (Việc đặt mục tiêu có thể giúp tôi cải thiện kỹ năng viết của mình.)										

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions: At the beginning of the study

English Version

Background information

1. Which year at university are you in now?
2. How long have you been learning English?
3. Have you taken the IELTS test before? If so, what is your overall score, and what is your writing score?
4. Have you enrolled in an IELTS writing course before?
5. Why did you participate in this writing course?

Perspectives towards writing skills

6. Why is English writing difficult to many students? Is it difficult for you to write an English essay?
7. What are the problems you usually encounter when you write an essay? (e.g problems with grammar, vocabulary, or idea development)
8. In your opinion, what are effective learning strategies to improve writing skills? Have you ever used any of them?

Goal-setting experience

9. Have you ever been taught how to set writing goals before? If so, can you briefly describe your experience? (e.g how the teacher taught you to set goals.) Do you think it improved your writing skills?

10. Have you ever set writing goals by yourself? If yes, can you briefly describe your experience? and what writing areas did you focus on? (e.g grammar, vocabulary, idea development, or cohesion and coherence of the essay.)
11. Do you think goal setting can help you improve your writing skills? in which ways?

Aspects of goal setting

12. Do you think that personal writing goals should be specific? (e.g you know how many goals to achieve, the deadline to complete them, and how to complete them)
13. Do you think that personal writing goals should be challenging?
14. Do you think that personal writing goals will help you develop new learning strategies?
15. Do you think teacher feedback on your essays will help you set better writing goals?
16. What are the reasons for failure to complete writing goals?
17. If you set writing goals, do you believe that you can achieve them?

Vietnamese Version

Tiểu sử cá nhân

1. Bạn đang là sinh viên năm mấy?
2. Bạn đã học tiếng Anh được bao lâu?
3. Bạn đã thi IELTS trước đây chưa? Nếu có, bạn đạt bao nhiêu chấm, và điểm viết của bạn là bao nhiêu?
4. Bạn có đăng ký một khóa luyện viết IELTS nào trước đây chưa?
5. Tại sao bạn đăng ký khóa học này?

Quan điểm về kỹ năng viết

6. Vì sao kỹ năng viết gây khó khăn cho nhiều bạn sinh viên? Bạn có cảm thấy khó khi viết một bài luận tiếng Anh?

7. Những khó khăn bạn thường gặp phải khi viết một bài luận là gì? (ví dụ như vấn đề về ngữ pháp, từ vựng hoặc phát triển ý tưởng)
8. Theo bạn, những phương pháp học tập nào có thể cải thiện kỹ năng viết? Bạn có sử dụng những phương pháp đó chưa?

Kinh nghiệm thiết lập mục tiêu

9. Bạn đã bao giờ được dạy cách đặt mục tiêu viết trước đây chưa? Nếu có, bạn có thể mô tả ngắn gọn kinh nghiệm của bạn? (ví dụ như cách giáo viên dạy bạn đặt mục tiêu.) Bạn có nghĩ rằng nó giúp bạn phát triển kỹ năng viết?
10. Bạn có bao giờ tự đặt mục tiêu viết cho chính mình? Nếu có, bạn có thể mô tả ngắn gọn kinh nghiệm của bạn? Và bạn đã tập trung đặt mục tiêu vào những khía cạnh nào của việc luyện viết? (ví dụ ngữ pháp, từ vựng, phát triển ý tưởng hoặc sự gắn kết và mạch lạc của bài luận.)
11. Bạn có nghĩ rằng việc thiết lập mục tiêu có thể giúp bạn cải thiện kỹ năng viết của mình không? Bằng cách nào?

Khía cạnh của việc đặt mục tiêu

12. Bạn có nghĩ rằng những mục tiêu viết cá nhân nên được cụ thể? (ví dụ như bạn biết có bao nhiêu mục tiêu cần đạt được, thời hạn hoàn thành chúng và cách hoàn thành chúng)
13. Bạn có nghĩ rằng những mục tiêu viết cá nhân càng ngày nên càng thách thức hơn/khó khăn hơn?
14. Bạn có nghĩ rằng những mục tiêu cá nhân sẽ giúp bạn phát triển những phương pháp học tập mới?
15. Bạn có nghĩ rằng phản hồi của giáo viên về bài luận của bạn sẽ giúp bạn đặt ra mục tiêu viết tốt hơn không?

16. Những lý do cho việc không hoàn thành mục tiêu viết là gì?
17. Nếu bạn thiết lập mục tiêu viết cá nhân, bạn có tin rằng mình có thể hoàn thành chúng không?

Interview Questions: At the middle and at the end of the study

English Version

Effects of goal setting

1. Did goal setting help you improve your writing skills? Do you think that you could write better essays after you had learned how to set writing goals? Why?
2. What writing areas (task achievement, coherence and cohesion, lexical resources, and grammatical range and accuracy) did you feel you improved the most? How could you know that?
3. What writing areas did you focus on when you set your goals? Why?
4. Did you feel more motivated when you set writing goals? Why do you think so?

Aspects of goal setting

5. Were your writing goals specific? Can you give an example?
6. Were your writing goals increasingly challenging over the weeks?
7. When you set goals, did you believe that you could complete your goals?
8. When you could not complete your goals, did you change your learning strategies to meet your goals? What did you change?
9. Do you think you developed new writing strategies after you had learned how to set writing goals? If so, what are they?
10. What do you think about the role of teacher feedback?
11. How did you feel when you received teacher feedback?
12. Did you use teacher feedback to improve the goal-setting process?

Participants' perceived difficulties

13. Did you complete all your writing goals?
14. What difficulties did you experience when setting writing goals?
15. How did you overcome your difficulties? Did you develop a new plan to achieve your goals?

Participants' suggestions

16. What should be done to improve the application of goal setting in the writing class?
17. During the goal-setting process, you got the chance to share your goals with your friends, do you think it is a good idea to share goals with others in groups? Why?
18. Do you think sharing writing goals on Google Drive was useful?
19. Do you think the use of Facebook was useful?
20. What did you like most about the course?
21. What should have been done to improve this writing course?

Vietnamese Translation

Ảnh hưởng của việc đặt mục tiêu

1. Việc đặt mục tiêu giúp bạn cải thiện kỹ năng viết không? Bạn có nghĩ rằng bạn có thể viết luận tốt hơn sau khi bạn học viết với phương pháp đặt mục tiêu? Tại sao?
2. Khía cạnh nào của bài luận (cách trả lời câu hỏi, sự mạch lạc và trôi chảy, từ vựng, hay ngữ pháp) bạn cảm thấy mình cải thiện nhiều nhất sau khi học với phương pháp đặt mục tiêu? Vì sao bạn biết được điều đó?
3. Khía cạnh nào của bài luận bạn tập trung vào khi đặt mục tiêu viết? Vì sao?
4. Bạn có cảm thấy có động lực hơn khi học với phương pháp đặt mục tiêu không? Vì sao bạn nghĩ vậy?

Khía cạnh của việc đặt mục tiêu

5. Mục tiêu của bạn có chi tiết không? Bạn có thể cho một ví dụ?
6. Mục tiêu của bạn có tăng độ khó qua từng tuần?
7. Khi bạn đặt mục tiêu, bạn có tin rằng mình hoàn thành chúng không?
8. Khi bạn không hoàn thành mục tiêu bạn có thay đổi chiến lược học tập? Bạn thay đổi những gì?
9. Bạn có phát triển chiến lược học tập mới khi bạn học với phương pháp đặt mục tiêu? Nếu có, thì là gì?
10. Bạn nghĩ gì về vai trò của nhận xét của giáo viên?
11. Bạn cảm thấy như thế nào khi nhận được nhận xét của giáo viên?
12. Bạn có sử dụng nhận xét đó để cải thiện quá trình đặt mục tiêu?

Khó khăn trong việc đặt mục tiêu

13. Bạn có hoàn thành hết những mục tiêu viết của mình?
14. Bạn gặp khó khăn gì khi đặt mục tiêu viết?
15. Bạn đã vượt qua khó khăn như thế nào? Bạn có lên một kế hoạch mới để đạt được mục tiêu của mình?

Đóng góp từ người tham gia

16. Điều gì cần được làm để cải thiện việc ứng dụng của phương pháp đặt mục tiêu trong lớp học viết?
17. Trong quá trình thiết lập mục tiêu, bạn có cơ hội chia sẻ mục tiêu của mình với bạn bè, bạn có nghĩ nên chia sẻ mục tiêu với những người khác trong nhóm không? Tại sao?
18. Bạn có nghĩ việc chia sẻ mục tiêu trên Google Drive hữu ích?
19. Bạn có nghĩ việc sử dụng Facebook có hiệu quả?
20. Bạn thích nhất điều gì về khóa học này?

21. Điều gì cần nên làm để cải thiện khóa học này?

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