Learning Disabilities: A Contemporary Journal 11(1), 53-87, 2013

Exploring Discordance Between Self-Efficacy and Writing Performance Among Low-literate Adult Students

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The paper explores accordance or discordance between efficacy beliefs of adult students and their writing performance, using a mixed methods design. The participants are 33 students with learning disabilities (LD) and 35 low-achieving (LA) students, who were attending two Second-Chance Schools (SCSs), a specific type of adult education. Quantitative analysis reveals that both LD and LA students raised their writing and spelling self-efficacy considerably, although they did not seem to enhance their writing and spelling performance during their school attendance. The qualitative analysis reveals that the disproportional increase in efficacy beliefs of adult LD and LA students could be attributed to the writing practices followed in the SCSs. Implications for practice are considered.

Keywords: writing self-efficacy, writing performance, discordance, learning disabilities, adult learners

Introduction

The acquisition of writing skills is a long-term learning process requiring personal practice, considerable effort, and the involvement of solitary and training activities (Graham & Harris, 1997a; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1999). Text production, versus reproductive writing tasks such as copying texts like those practiced by secretaries or sometimes by school-children, includes language skills such as syntax and word choice, as well as specific writing skills such as mastering sentence structure as a distinctive feature of written language form, orthographic system and conventions (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, margins, paragraphs etc.), and writing mechanics (letter-formation, handwriting) related to writing fluency (Kress, 1994). Putting language into writing effectively involves not only the language system, but also the cognitive systems for memory and thinking (Kellogg, 2008).

Learning to write poses a difficult challenge to the novice or/and struggling writer, especially in composition tasks and expressive writing, that is writing for the purpose of displaying knowledge, or supporting self-expression, as students need to coordinate higher-level skills such as formulating goals, planning, organizing, evaluating audience needs and perspectives, revising, self-regulation and attention control, as well as lower-level skills such as spelling, capitalization, punctuation and other

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conventions (Baker, Gersten, & Graham, 2003; Gersten & Baker, 2001; Graham & Harris, 1989a; Graham, 1999; Harris, Graham, Mason, 2003). According to the latest results of the *National Assessment of Educational Progress,* the 13% of the 8th-grade students, constituting a considerable proportion of American students, scored below basic levels in writing, having very poor writing skills (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2008). Students with learning disabilities (LD) have more serious difficulties in writing than typically achieving peers. Their compositions include fewer ideas, are poorly organized, less expansive, and of lower quality compared to compositions produced by students without LD (Engert, Raphael, Anderson, Gregg & Antony, 1989; Graham & Harris, 2002; Haris, Graham & Mason, 2003).

What makes text production a difficult and demanding task is the complexity and simultaneous coordination of multiple components of writing, such a task requires multiple mental representations and cognitive processes constrained by the limited capacity of the working memory and executive attention (McCutchen, 1996; Kellogg, 2008). Even in highly literate societies, some people may never learn to write at least at a rudimentary level (Kellogg, 2008). It is not a coincidence that writing is a cultural achievement invented relatively late in cultural history, rather than a universal social property. Writing constitutes an extraordinary invention which happened, for all we know, only two or three times in the history of humankind, while it has been absent from many oral non-literate societies (Coulmas, 1989).

Considering the multiple cognitive demands of writing, it is not accidental that the cognitive processing models of writing (Hayes & Flower, 1980; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) or the "social-cognitive model of writing" (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997), as well as much research (see Graham & Haris 2000 for a review) have focused on the self-regulated aspects of writing. Surely, "a high level of self-regulation is a necessary but not sufficient condition to become an expert writer, but the development of a moderate to high degree of self-regulation may be enough to become a competent writer" (Graham & Harris, 1997b, p. 102). Graham and Harris (2000) proposed that the development of writing competence depends not only on high levels of self-regulation, but also on the mastery of lower-level transcription skills, such as handwriting and spelling.

In the "social-cognitive model" proposed by Zimmerman and Risemberg (1997), writing is more than a simple product of cognitive skills requiring social, motivational, and behavioural processes, as well as cognitive ones. Cognitive processes interact reciprocally with environmental, behavioural, and affective processes during writing, through a multifaceted self-regulation. Environmental processes refer to writers' self-regulation of the physical or social context of writing, behavioural processes refer to writers' self-regulation of the overt motoric aspects of writing, and personal processes involve writers' self-regulation cognitive beliefs and affective states in reference to writing. This triadic system of self-regulatory processes is linked reciprocally to one's self-efficacy beliefs for writing (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997).

Writing self-efficacy and writing performance

Writing self-efficacy has been considered as a key factor of writing performance, motivating writers to sustain their efforts when confronting multiple writing challenges (Klassen, 2002a; Pajares, 2003; Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). Empirical

evidence indicates that writing self-efficacy predicts significantly writing outcomes, and acts as an important mediating factor between first and second assessments of writing in regression models (see Pajares, 2003, for a review).

In general, the construct of self-efficacy refers to perceptions of one's capabilities to perform at designated levels on specific tasks (Bandura, 1997, 2006). Therefore, self-efficacy measures are worded in terms of *can* (I *can* do something). The efficacy belief system is not a general trait, but a differentiated set of beliefs linked to distinct domains of functioning. Self-efficacy beliefs differ from related constructs such as self-esteem and self-concept. For example, self-esteem is concerned with emotional reactions of self-worth to their actual accomplishments, whereas perceived self-efficacy is a judgment of personal capability (Bandura, 1997, 2006; Linnenbrink & Pintrich). Besides, self-efficacy is more task-specific and context-specific (I *can* do this task in this situation), dependent on a mastery criterion of performance, rather than on normative ability comparisons with others (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Zimmerman, 1995; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). In an achievement context, self-efficacy "includes students' confidence in their cognitive skills to learn or perform the academic course work" (Pintrich, 1999, p. 465).

Writers' self-efficacy beliefs interact with their self-regulation of writing in a reciprocal way, as efficient self-regulatory processes of writing enhance, perceived self-efficacy, and vice versa (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). In addition, one's writing self-efficacy is closely linked to their intrinsic motivation to write and their eventual writing outcomes (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). Thus, lack of confidence to carry out writing tasks can inhibit students' academic progress (Klassen, 2002; Pajares, 2003).

Sources of self-efficacy

According to Bandura (1995), self-efficacy beliefs can be developed by four main sources. The first and stronger source of efficacy beliefs is through *mastery experiences,* that is, previous experiences in performing similar tasks. The second source of creating or strengthening self-efficacy is through *vicarious experiences*, that is, the observation of others' experiences in performing comparable activities. *Social persuasion*, that is the verbal persuasion from significant others, is a third way of raising efficacy beliefs. The fourth source of self-efficacy is related to *physiological and emotional state* (i.e., by reducing stress or negative proclivities towards writing tasks).

Accordance between self-efficacy and writing performance

Generally speaking, students may overestimate or underestimate their capability to perform a task and such faulty self-judgments may have consequences for their ultimate achievements (Dunning, Heath, & Suls, 2004). The accuracy of correspondence (calibration) between perceived self-efficacy and actual task performance appears to be an important issue in the domain of writing.

Bandura (1986, 1997) suggested that a number of conditions can lead to discordance between self-efficacy and achievement due to of faulty assessments of self-efficacy or performance, mismatch between self-efficacy and the performance, and elapsed time between assessments of efficacy beliefs and performance. Apart from assessment problems, Bandura (1997) did not exclude the possibility that dis-

cordance between self-efficacy and performance might reflect a genuine discordance, such as performance ambiguity, indefinite aims, faulty information for the demands of a task, and problems in performance feedback. For example, efficacy beliefs are dependent on knowledge of task demands. As Bandura (1997) pointed out "If one does not know what demands must be fulfilled in a given endeavour, one cannot accurately judge whether one has the requisite abilities to perform the task" (p. 64).

Previous research

Klassen (2002a, b) conducted two literature reviews of the self-efficacy beliefs of students with learning disabilities. These reviews revealed that, in all six studies referring to writing (Graham & Haris, 1989a, b; Graham, MacArthur, Schwartz, & Page-Voth, 1992; Graham, Schwartz, & MacArthur, 1993; Sawyer, Graham & Harris, 1992; Shell, Colvin, & Bruning, 1995), elementary and secondary students with learning disabilities significantly overestimated their writing capabilities. Specifically, Graham and Harris (1989a) found remarkably high levels of self-efficacy among students with learning disabilities (LD) in the 5th and 6th grades, who consistently overestimated their composition abilities. Graham and Harris (1989a) discussed that, beyond Bandura's explanations, the "unrealistically high pre-task expectancies may also be due to comprehension deficiencies, use of a self-protective coping strategy, or a developmental delay in the ability to match task demands to ability level" (p. 360).

In addition to the studies aforementioned, Klassen (2007), in a more recent quantitative study exploring the spelling and writing self-efficacy of early adolescents with LD, found that they overestimated their spelling and writing performance, whereas students without LD generally made more accurate estimates of their performance. Thus, the literature focusing on accordance between self-efficacy and writing performance suggests that students with LD tend to have over-optimistic beliefs about their writing performance.

Current study

Although research has focused on exploring the writing efficacy beliefs of children and adolescents with LD, no research has been done so far on examining writing self-efficacy among adult students with LD. Besides, spelling is a relatively neglected area in self-efficacy research, despite the evidence that spelling difficulties can constraint writing development and lead students to frustration in writing tasks (Graham, Harris, & Chorzempa, 2002).

In the light of the previous literature review, the present work aims at comparing the influence of literacy practices in Second–Chance Schools on both writing self-efficacy and writing performance of adult LD and low-achieving (LA) students. We use the term *literacy practices* to refer to the ways in which people are exposed to reading, writing, and print material, such as books, newspapers, magazines, and other documents, for socially situated purposes and intents (Perry, 2009; Purcell-Gates, Degener, Jakobson, & Soler, 2002).

Based on Klassen's (2007) findings, we hypothesized that literacy practices would boost the writing self-efficacy of SCS students, especially those with LD. Nevertheless, we had to examine whether writing performance would also be enhanced accordingly, and if this was the case, what would be the conditions and sources of

possible discordance between self-efficacy beliefs and writing performance? Two studies were conducted to accomplish the above research questions.

Research design

We used a mixed-methods design combining a quantitative approach and qualitative data retrieved through school ethnographic research in a series of two studies that investigate different aspects of the same phenomenon (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009), that is, the relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance across the two phases of research.

Mixed methods studies have been the new trend in educational psychology, providing multiple perspectives and more depth to what is most commonly seen in mere quantitative studies (Klassen & Lynch, 2007). The approach of examining self-efficacy beliefs with mixed methodology can provide a contextualized understanding of the motivation beliefs held by students in the SCSs.

The motive for this project arose during the period in which the second author of the present paper was working as a teacher of the Social Literacy course in one of the SCSs. More specifically, the two-year long experience (2005-06 and 2006-07) at the school included teaching 16 hours per week, observation of consulting sessions and teachers' meetings, and participation at the schools' social activities. The second author is a qualified social anthropologist with previous experience in school ethnographic research among minority and migrant students. The context of a SCS was new and provided challenges for carrying out a systematic study in relation to students' self-assessment and actual academic achievement. The two authors discussed the particularities of this school extensively before they decided to look at the issue of self-efficacy among adult students. More specifically, they decided to pose the question of whether increases in writing or spelling self-efficacy were accompanied by increases in writing or spelling performance.

Study I: Changes in Self-Efficacy and Writing Performance

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of literacy programs and practices followed in SCSs on the writing efficacy beliefs and writing performance of LD and LA adult students. For this reason, the same pre-tests and post-tests were administered to both groups with an eight-month period interval, in which all adult students followed the literacy program of their schools. In this study we specifically addressed the following questions:

(1) What are the effects of the literacy practices applied in SCSs on writing and spelling performance of LD and LA students?

(2) What are the effects of the literacy practices applied in SCSs on LD and LA students' self-efficacy in writing and spelling?

(3) Are levels of self-efficacy in writing and spelling related to actual writing and spelling performance for students with LD and LA?

Method

Research Setting

Our research was conducted in two Second–Chance Schools (SCSs) and their branches, which are situated in four towns (Florina, Amynteo, Kastoria and Messopotamia) in the region of Western Macedonia, Greece. SCSs in Europe are a specific type of adult basic education for individuals who have not completed their basic education (Grades 7-9) launched in 1995 by a White Paper of the European Commission entitled *Teaching and learning: Towards the learning society*. In Greece, SCSs were institutionalized with the Law 2525 of 1997. By the end of school year 2008-09, 57 SCSs were operating in Greece, covering the majority of the 54 prefectural districts of the country. Secondary lower education courses are offered at SCSs and the graduates are awarded the basic education certificate (General Secretary for Life Long Learning, 2009). The course lasts for two school years with 25 hours of class per week (20 hours teaching and 5 hours counselling or workshops) held in the evening (Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, 2008). The Greek SCSs are generally recruiting a diverse student population in terms of age and literacy level (Michail & Anastasiou, 2010).

General description of literacy program and practices

Second-Chance schooling provides the context for several literacy practices and literacy events. Greek literacy instruction was primary text-based (literature, newspapers, magazines etc) and guided by a multiliteracies pedagogical framework (Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, 2008). The concept of multiliteracies, coined by the New London Group (1996), emphasizes the multiple forms of literacy associated with information and communication technologies, as well as the plurality of cultural forms of literacy associated with complex multicultural societies. According to multiliteracies pedagogy, classroom teaching, among others, should focus on *situated practices* in the learning process engaging with students' own experiences (New London Group, 1996; Kalatzis & Cope, 2000). In theory, the Greek SCS has adopted the multiliteracies pedagogical framework (Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, 2003, 2008). In practice, the implementation of a literacy program for these schools does not include a prescriptive curriculum based on a general syllabus which would specify what aims should be fulfilled and to what level must be reached in order to achieve a particular grade. The absence of a prescriptive curriculum does not give space to any curriculum-based assessment.

In SCSs, there is a school timetable consisting of Greek literacy (3 hours per week), "numeral literacy" (3 hours per week), "information technology literacy" (3 hours per week), "social literacy" (3 hours per week), "environmental literacy" (2 hours per week), "sciences literacy" (2 hours per week), English language (3 hours per week), and culture and arts education (1 hour per week) (General Secretary for Life Long Learning, 2009; Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, 2008). The purpose of the Greek literacy course is to help SCS students to achieve language competence at a higher level than ninth-grade students by the end of their studies. Specifically, among the aims of the course are: a) fluency in reading, b) production of short written texts, c) critical reading, d) oral presentation of arguments before

audience, and e) metalinguistic awareness (terminology, spelling, sentence structure) (Chatzisavidis, 2004, p. 12-13).

The schools are provided with educational material for each "literacy", which contains several suggested topics on what each literacy could possibly include (e.g., others and me, daily and social life, nature, city and countryside, nutrition and health, past and human history, future and technology, mass media, travelling, art, and gender roles) (Chatzisavidis, 2004; Chatzisavidis & Vasilaros, 2004). Nevertheless, the teachers are not obligated to use the suggested material. Instead, they can use any other according to their judgment and choice. Tests and other forms of in-class oral or written examination are not recommended. The SCS students are not given marks, but a descriptive evaluation that reflects their commitment and responsiveness/achievement. The graduates can be provided with a certificate, recording the corresponding mark to their descriptive evaluation, at their request (Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, 2008).

Participants

Participants were 68 adult students (33 LD [18 males and 15 females] and 35 LA [6 males and 29 females]). Our participants were all ethnic Greek and formed three cohorts: a) the students of the first class of school year 2007/08, b) the students of the second class of school year 2007/08, and c) the students of the first class of school year 2008/09. Thus, the initial sample included all 76 students of two SCSs. Eight of them were excluded from the final sample for the following reasons: one because she was reported as having been identified with moderate mental retardation, two because of a non-verbal IQ score below 70, one repatriated student because he had not been taught Greek during his initial education, and four because of missing data due to dropping out. All participants in the study had a non-verbal IQ > 70 and had completed their formal elementary education (Grade 1-6) but not the lower secondary education, which currently constitutes part of the compulsory education in Greece.

The Greek language teachers' evaluation of the students' writing skills was used to classify the students according to grade level. It should be noted that, at the time of conducting the research, there was no standardized screening writing measure for adult learners in Greece.

According to the teachers' evaluations, we divided the students in two groups: those whose writing skills were evaluated not exceeding the 3rd grade-level of elementary school and those whose writing skills ranged between the 4th and 6th grade-level of elementary school. The writing skills of the first group were estimated to be substantially below the level expected for adults of their formal education (having completed the 6th grade) and their IQ (IQ > 70). For these reasons, they were conventionally nominated as students with LD. Specifically, 33 adult students were assigned to the LD group. The students of the second group were nominated as low-achieving, since they did not reach the 7th grade-level. Most of them corresponded to the writing level of average students in the 4th -5th grade of elementary school. Thirty five (35) adult students were assigned to the LA group. A reduction in the writing skills of both LD and LA students may be justified by their lack of contact with school assignments and writing activities for some years.

It is worth noting that, in Greece, the typical procedure for identifying students with LD is heavily depending on the criterion of a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and academic achievement (usually by conducting tests that are non-standardized), and secondarily on exclusionary criteria such as excluding the possibility of intellectual disabilities. Further, the degree of the discrepancy is based on clinical judgments, particularly with respect to the individual's academic performance (Anastasiou & Polychronopoulou, 2009). Thus, the identification of students with LD in this study followed a similar procedure. Beyond the discrepancy criterion, the classification of students into LD and LA serves as a classification into two groups of different capacity levels. By definition, in this study, the writing difficulties in the LD group were much more severe than those in the LA group. Hypothetically, the gap between the demands of a writing task and actual performance might be a factor which can affect the self-efficacy beliefs about writing. Bandura (1986, 1997) suggested that faulty assessments of performance can lead to discordance between self-efficacy and achievement. In our hypothesis such discordance may vary across writing capacity levels.

Students with LD had a mean IQ of 83.00 (SD = 10.56) ranged from 71 to 115, while students with LA had a mean IQ of 89.06 (SD = 9.96) ranged from 71 to 110. The age of students with LD varied from 27 to 64 years (M=39.42, SD=8.73), while the age of students with LA varied from 30 to 60 years (M=43.03, SD=7.29). Students with LD dropped out before 25.9 years on average (12-50 years), while students with LA dropped out before 30.2 years on average (15-48 years).

Procedure

All participants were assessed on measures of writing performance and self-efficacy at the beginning (October 2007 and 2008) and at the end of the school year (June 2008 and 2009). The writing performance measure, self-efficacy measure and non-verbal IQ test were administered individually to small groups of 4-6 participants. Directions were read aloud. Both pre- and post-test writing measures were administered by the writing instructors. Participants were not provided with help for or feedback on their performance. To control sequencing effects, the writing performance and self-efficacy measures were administered in two counterbalanced conditions. The non-verbal IQ test was administered straight after the writing performance and self-efficacy post-tests. We used a non-verbal IQ test, as verbal tests for adults were not available in Greece at the time of conducting the research. The GAMA test was administered and interpreted by the first author, a trained school psychologist. Between the pre-test and post-test 8 month period, all students followed the regular classroom literacy activities. The class size ranged from 10-15 students.

Measures

Non-Verbal IQ Test. The *General Ability Measure for Adults* (GAMA; Naglieri & Bardos, 1997) is a measure of intellectual ability using a non-verbal format, and comprised of four subtests: matching, analogies, sequences, and construction. The GAMA is a timed test, in which each participant is allotted 25 minutes to answer as many of the 66 questions as possible. IQ scores were based on the U. S. standardiza-

tion. In an American sample of 86 individuals, test-retest stability coefficient was .67. In a sample of 2,360 individuals, average internal consistency coefficients across 11 age groups were .66, .81, .79, and .65 for the matching, analogies, sequences, and construction subtests, respectively (Naglieri & Bardos, 1997, p. 39-40). The correlations between GAMA and other general ability tests like WAIS-R Performance IQ, WAIS-R Full Scale, and Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test has been found to be .74, .75 and .70, respectively (Naglieri & Bardos, 1997, p. 45-46).

Writing Performance. Participants were given 25 minutes to answer two questions on topics determined by the researchers. The topics were selected on the basis of student's interests and similarity of content. The pre-test questions were: (a) what are your impressions about the Second-Chance School? (b) what do you expect the SCS to offer you? The post-test questions were: (a) how do you feel about graduating the SCS?/ how do you feel about your first year of attendance at the SCS? (for the second and first year SCS-students respectively), (b) what do you suggest that should change in the SCSs?

All participants individually completed their writing tasks, sitting independently and responding to the writing prompts. The amount of time given allowed students to produce texts of about 8-180 words in length and varied considerably in structure and other writing dimensions (see Appendix A).

Texts were scored independently by the first author after all identifying information had been removed and an experienced teacher of Greek language, unaware of the research purposes and the scores of the first ratter. Scoring was based on holistic methods and modified procedures described by Cooper (1985), Shell, Murphy and Bruning (1989), and Crawford, Helwig and Tindal (2004). Scoring categories included: (a) *organization* (cohesiveness, elaborated introduction, and conclusion), (b) *content* (quantity/density: number of distinct ideas, clarity/quality: rich vocabulary, logic exemplary, persuasiveness), (c) *spelling*, (d) *conventions* (punctuation, capitalization, stress assignment). An abbreviated scoring rubric is provided in Appendix A. Each scoring category was assigned a score of 1 to 10. The mean score of the two raters for each essay and scoring category was used in the analyses. The correlations between the writing pre-test scores ($N = 68$) of the two raters for all essays were .87, .85, .87, .87 for the categories of organization, content, spelling, and conventions respectively. Correspondingly, the correlations between the writing post-test scores of the two raters ($N = 68$) for the categories of organization, content, spelling, and conventions, were .90, .86, .88, .87 respectively.

Writing and Spelling Self-efficacy. The measures were developed by the researchers on the basis of procedures outlined by Bandura (1997, 2005), and a previous measure by Rankin, Bruning, Timme and Katkanant (1993), which was adapted for the purposes of this research. The writing self-efficacy measure included 10 efficacy statements and the spelling self-efficacy measure included 11 statements (see Appendix B). The strength of students' efficacy beliefs was measured on a scale ranged from 0 to 100 in 10-unit intervals. Each statement was read aloud and students were asked to rate their degree of confidence in a variety of writing and spelling tasks appropriate to their academic level by recording a number from 0 ("cannot do at all"), through 50 ("moderately can do"), to "highly certain can do" (100).

Reliability for the writing self-efficacy and spelling self-efficacy was assessed with Cronbach's alpha, and was .89, and .93, respectively, at the first time of assessing. At the second time of assessing, Cronbach's alpha reliabilities were .86 and .95 for writing and spelling self-efficacy, respectively, indicating high internal consistency for each scale. None of the participants' efficacy judgments was over 96 for writing and 97 for spelling, and the inspection of frequencies distribution gave no indication of ceiling effects.

Results

In the analyses, we focused on both the writing and spelling performance and writing and spelling self-efficacy beliefs to detect changes across group and gender from pre- to post-tests. Possible positive changes in the two combined post-test writing scores (writing organization and content, spelling, and conventions) and two domains of self-efficacy (writing skills, spelling, and conventions) would indicate the impact of literacy practices on students' writing and spelling skills and on their beliefs about them within an eight-month school period.

Writing and spelling performance

The means and standard deviations for the two combined writing and spelling scores (writing organization and content, spelling and conventions) as a function of the group (LD and LA students) and the time of testing (pre-test vs. post-test score) are presented in Table 1.

Before investigating the changes in the two domains of writing performance, preliminary analyses with two between-subjects factors (group and gender) addressed the issue of whether mean pre-test scores in writing and spelling performance were significantly different across group and gender. These analyses indicated significant group differences. The LA students had higher pre-test scores than LD students in writing organization and content, $F(1, 64) = 57.22$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .47$. Also, the female students had higher pre-test scores than male students, $F(1, 64) = 10.93$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .15$. No statistically significant interaction between group and gender was found, $F(1, 64) = 1.29$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Moreover, the LA students had higher pre-test scores than LD students in spelling and conventions, $F(1, 64) = 79.00$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .55$, and the female students had higher pre-test scores than male students, $F(1, 64) = 15.18$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .19$. No statistically significant interaction between group and gender was found, $F(1, 64) = 3.05$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$.

Table 1. ***Means and standard deviations for writing performance by time of testing by group***

Performance	LD (n = 33)				LA (n = 35)			
	Pre-test		Post-test		Pre-test		Post-test	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
1. Writing organization and content	4.48	1.59	4.43	1.72	7.41	1.03	7.49	1.18
2. Spelling and conventions	3.93	1.38	4.10	1.58	7.01	1.13	7.30	1.28

Repeated measures analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were run (a) to determine whether there were significant within subjects' changes between pre-test and post-test writing and spelling measures, and (b) to examine the reliability of any differential effects on writing and spelling performance.

A 2 (LD and LA group) X 2 (gender) X 2 (time) ANOVA on composite writing scores with time of testing factor as repeated measure (pre-test vs. post-test writing scores) yielded no within-subjects time effect, $F(1, 64) = .70$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .01$, indicating that the literacy practices had no improvement in writing scores of the students of SCSs as a whole over an eight-month school period. Inspection of the pre-test scores showed that only one participant in the LA group obtained the maximum score in pre-test measure and other 3 participants a high score > 8.50; thus, the distribution of scores excluded the possibility of ceiling effects that were likely to affect the no changes in post-test scores. Also, the two-way interaction of time X group was not significant, $F(1, 64) = .28$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .00$, indicating no significant effect of group; neither the three-way interaction of time X group X gender interaction was statistically significant, $F(1, 64) = .61$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .00$. Only the time by gender interaction effect was statistically significant, $F(1, 64) = 8.69$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .12$. Thus, the two groups (LD and LA) did not differ from each other in their improvement in writing performance over the eight-month period time. However, the writing organization and content scores improved more in women than in men, indicating that the writing measure was sensitive to detect changes in writing performance, if they have actually occurred.

Similarly, a 2 (LD and LA group) X 2 (gender) X 2 (time) ANOVA on composite spelling scores with time factor as repeated measure (pre-test vs. post-test spelling scores) yielded no within-subjects time effect, $F(1, 64) = .74$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .01$, indicating that the literacy practices did not improve the spelling scores of SCS-students as a whole. Inspection of the pre-test spelling and conventions scores suggests that no ceiling effects were likely to affect the lack of changes in post-test scores, as only one participant in the LA group obtained the maximum score in pre-test measure and other 4 participants a high score > 8.50. Also, the two-way interaction of time X group was not significant, $F(1, 64) = .62$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .01$, indicating no significant effect of group; neither the three-way interaction of time X group X gender interaction was statistically significant, $F(1, 64) = 3.15$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$. Only the time by gender interaction effect was statistically significant, $F(1, 64) = 6.03$,

$p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .09$. Thus, the two groups (LD and LA) did not differ from each other in their improvement in spelling performance over the eight-month period of time. However, the spelling and conventions scores improved more in women than in men, indicating that the spelling measure was sensitive to detect changes in performance, if they have really occurred.

Writing Self-Efficacy

The means for the writing and spelling self-efficacy by time and group are presented in Table 2. The means for the self-efficacy scores were submitted to repeated measures ANOVAs, with group (LD and LA students) and gender as the between-subjects factors and time of assessing as the within-subjects factor.

Table 2. ***Means and standard deviations for writing and spelling self-efficacy by time of assessing by group***

Variable	group							
	LD (n = 33)				LA (n = 35)			
	Pre-test		Post-test		Pre-test		Post-test	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
1. Writing self-efficacy	54.18	19.87	65.36	15.20	62.97	17.79	76.65	12.15
2. Spelling and conventions self-efficacy	55.56	20.35	67.24	18.10	69.66	16.84	81.01	14.28

Before investigating the changes in writing and spelling self-efficacy, we examined their pre-test scores for LD and LA groups, males and females. No significant differences were found for writing self-efficacy; however LA students had significantly higher spelling self-efficacy scores than students with LD $F(1, 64) = 5.49$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .08$.

A 2 (LD and LA group) X 2 (gender) X 2 (time) ANOVA on writing self-efficacy scores with time of assessing factor as repeated measure (pre-test vs. post-test scores) yielded a significant within-subjects time effect, $F(1, 64) = 27.82$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .30$, indicating that the literacy practices had a significant improvement in writing self-efficacy of the students of SCSs as a whole over an eight-month school period. Neither the two-way interaction of time X group, $F(1, 64) = .04$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .00$, nor the three-way interaction of time X group X gender, $F(1, 64) = .02$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .00$, were statistically significant. The two-way interaction of time X gender, $F(1, 64) = 4.03$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2 = .06$, was significant. Thus, the two groups (LD and LA) did not differ from each other in their improvement in writing self-efficacy over eight-month period of time, however women reported higher improvement in writing self-efficacy than men.

Similarly, a 2 (LD and LA group) X 2 (gender) X 2 (time) ANOVA on spelling self-efficacy scores with time of assessing factor as repeated measure (pre-test vs.

post-test scores) yielded a significant within-subjects time effect, $F(1, 64) = 30.59$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .32$, indicating that the literacy practices had a significant improvement in spelling self-efficacy of the students of SCSs as a whole over an eight-month school period. Neither the two-way interaction of time X group, $F(1, 64) = .55$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .01$, nor the three-way interaction of time X group X gender, $F(1, 64) = .01$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .00$, were statistically significant. However, the two-way interaction of time X gender, $F(1, 64) = 4.16$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .06$, was significant.

Table 3 presents the bivariate correlations between the writing/spelling variables and self-efficacy in writing/spelling variables separately for the adult students with LD and LA. Correlations are similar for LD and LA groups with the exception of those between self-efficacy in writing (pre-test and post-test) and the measures of writing and spelling (pre-test and post-test). For the students with LD, self-efficacy in writing is only weakly and not significantly correlated with the measures of writing and spelling (r varies between .002 and .235), while these correlations are medium at pre-test time (r varies between .366 and .427) and small or medium at post-test time (r varies between .220 and .313) in LA group. Spelling (and conventions) self-efficacy is moderately related to the two writing measures for both groups (r varies between .288 and .455); these relationships are fairly higher compared with those between writing self-efficacy and writing/spelling measures.

Brief Discussion of Study I

The results of Study I indicate that both LD and LA students do not seem to improve their writing and spelling performance over an 8-month instructional period. This finding is not likely to be due to test insensitivity, because neither floor effects nor ceiling effects were observed in the writing and spelling pre-tests. Moreover, the scores in the variables of writing (organization, and content) and spelling (spelling and conventions) improved more in women than in men, indicating that our writing measures were sensitive to detect changes in performance.

Consequently, these findings provide evidence that increases in writing and spelling efficacy beliefs of SCS-students, as a whole, do not necessarily lead to increases in their writing and spelling performance.

In addition, there are significant increases in self-efficacy in writing skills and self-efficacy in spelling/conventions over eight-month period, irrelevant of the group membership (LD and LA), whereas the women tend to report higher improvement in both writing self-efficacy and spelling self-efficacy than men. The greater increase in self-efficacy beliefs of women is consistent with the greater increases in the actual writing and spelling performance of women compared to those of men. It seems that the SCS's climate and the writing practices they follow are more effective in helping the writing of women than men, irrelevant of their entry writing capacity level (LD or LA). A detailed discussion is out of the scope of the present study. However, this unexpected finding indicates that increases in writing/spelling self-efficacy can be matched or calibrated to corresponding increases in writing and spelling, and the miscalibration is not the rule.

Table 3. ***Correlations for writing and self-efficacy in writing for the adult students with LD and LA***

1. Writing organization and content (pretest)	-	.857**	.837**	.710**	.366*	.288	.220	.301
2. Spelling and conventions (pretest)	.874**	-	774**	.816**	.427*	.324	.313	.415*
3. Writing organization and content (posttest)	.932**	.849**	-	.863**	.399*	.371*	.277	.362*
4. Spelling and conventions (posttest)	.835**	.890**	.891**	-	.424*	.402*	.305	.464**
5. Self-efficacy in writing (pretest)	.235	.059	.229	.082	-	.810**	.696**	.626**
6. Self-efficacy in spelling and conventions (pretest)	.452**	.339	.417*	.391*	.821**	-	.598**	.804**
7. Self-efficacy in writing (posttest)	.171	.034	.092	.002	.548**	.496**	-	.754**
8. Self-efficacy in spelling and conventions (posttest)	.421*	.458**	.396*	.403*	.435*	.613**	.766**	-

Note: Correlations for the LD group (n = 33) are below the diagonal. Correlations for the LA group (n = 35) are above the diagonal.
** $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

The pattern of bivariate correlations between self-efficacy variables and writing performance variables indicates that the perceived efficacy beliefs are closer to the actual level of spelling (and conventions skills) than that of writing (organization and content) among students with low-literacy skills (both LD and LA students), providing a clue that the concrete lower-level skills such as spelling and conventions are estimated more accurately than higher-level writing skills such as writing organization and content.

Furthermore, self-assessments of writing (organization and content) are considerably dissociated from actual writing performance among low-literate adults; a finding that is consistent with previous research (Graham & Haris, 1989a, b; Graham, MacArthur, Schwartz, & Page-Voth, 1992; Graham, Schwartz, & MacArthur, 1993; Sawyer, Graham & Harris, 1992; Shell, Colvin, & Bruning, 1995). This dissociation seems to be stronger among adult students with LD, having very weak writing skills. It seems that students with severe writing needs tend to be more optimistic about their actual writing performance than LA students who have acquired a basic writing level.

Study II: Literacy Practices and Self-Efficacy

It has been stated that "literacy practices may be associated with different contexts of use, and may thus play divergent roles in the lives of members of a society." (Street and Besnier 1994, p. 541). School literacies provide education that serves the respective economic systems and/or religious ideologies. Literacy practices could either be conflicting or complementary in the sense that they could either serve conflicting traditions and practices in society or complement varied societal needs within society. In both cases, nevertheless, literacy practices depict social and cultural processes. This social rather than cognitive process in the study of literacy practices has opened an interesting area of inquiry for social anthropology. The anthropologists that dealt with the ethnography of school (Willis, 1977; Evenhart, 1983; and Schieffelin & Gilmore, 1986) and classroom (McDermott & Varenne, 1882; Taylor, 1985) analysed literacy practices and education-related behaviours (i.e. homework) as social and cultural processes and not only as educational objectives.

In this paper we have approached the literacy practices applied in SCSs in relation to actual writing efficacy and self- efficacy of the students by examining both cognitive and social aspects. Study one has revealed that students of both groups (LD and LA) have improved writing and spelling efficacy beliefs without having improved their writing and spelling performance. The second qualitative study will look for the social and cultural processes and correlates within the literacy practices and education-related activities applied at SCSs that could provide an explanation for such a discordance between self-efficacy and achievement. For this purpose the study will investigate (a) the experiences of SCS-students related to writing and literacy practices, (b) the students' efficacy beliefs and (c) the reasons for the discordance between increase in writing/spelling performance and increase in writing/spelling self-efficacy.

In order to identify and understand the specific characteristics of literacy practices within the context of SCSs, it was necessary to take the literacy program into consideration, as this generates certain kinds of practices and particular literacy tasks,

and also to consider the views and experiences of teachers and students in relation to writing practices. Barton and Hamilton (1998) noted that not all literacy practices are observable units of behaviour, since, in part, they involve values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships, as well as awareness, constructions, and discourses of literacy. For this reason semi-structured interviews among students and teachers were considered as vital for the study of literacy practices.

Method

In this qualitative study, data was collected in two phases. Students' writings were collected at the beginning and at the end of the school year. Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with the 68 adult students at both phases, as well as with their three teachers of Greek literacy, and the two school directors of the same SCSs at the end of the school year. Qualitative analysis distinguishes between LD and LA students wherever this was needed.

Participants

Two different groups took part in the study. The first group was consisted of the 68 adult students of Study I. The second group was consisted of the three female teachers of the "Greek literacy" course and the two male school directors of the SCSs. The teachers' number of years of teaching experience ranged from 4 to 12 years in general education and from 2 to 5 years in SCSs. Both school directors have been running the schools for 5 years, since the first day of their settlement. All teachers and directors were ethnic Greek.

Data Sources

Data was collected through the students' writings and the semi-structured interviews with students, teachers and directors.

Writings of the Students. The writings of study I were transcribed and their content was used for the qualitative analysis.

Individual Semi-Structured Interviews. Individual interviews with the SCS-students and their teachers were used to explore their experiences in writing practices. The students were also asked about their writing self-efficacy and self-efficacy sources. The interviews focused on (a) the students' opinion about the school environment/climate, (b) the students' opinion about teaching and evaluating methods, (c) whether the interviewees used to write as well as how often and under what circumstances they used to write, (d) how confident they felt of carrying out written tasks, (e) what difficulties they faced at writing, (f) to what they were attributing their difficulties in writing, (g) what they believed they should improve in their writing, (h) whether they noticed any progress in writing during their attendance of the SCS, (i) whether the SCS helped them to improve writing performance, (j) how much they believed they enhanced writing competence, and (k) how much confident they felt about writing at the beginning and at the end of the school year. Interviews with students in each phase averaged 20 minutes.

The questions addressed to the three teachers of Greek language were set to extract information related to *writing practices* (writing teaching methods, student participation, teachers' feedback, and students' progress evaluation) for the subject

of the Greek literacy, and the *literacy practices* applied at these schools in general. The questions mainly focused on writing and looked for those practices that affected self-efficacy in writing. Specifically, we asked (a) which were the literacy practices applied at school, (b) what kind of written activities the students were doing, (c) how often they were asked to produce written work, (d) whether students were responding to written tasks and which were the main reasons for not responding, (e) how were the students encouraged to write, (f) whether their written work was corrected and evaluated by their language teachers, (g) whether the students were aware of their weaknesses in writing (spelling, grammar, syntax, vocabulary), (h) whether the language teaching hours were sufficient, (i) what were the peculiarities of teaching language literacy to adult students, and (j) whether the teaching material provided by the Greek Institute of Life-long Education for Adult Students (IDEKE) had been proved useful.

The questions addressed to the two school directors were set to generate information on structural and functional issues such as school organization and teaching program, teaching personnel, students-teachers relationships, and the responsiveness of students to literacy program and practices. The average duration of each interview with teachers and school directors was approximately one hour.

Coding Processes

The students' interviews were transcribed verbatim, while the teachers and school directors' interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The authors cross-checked the transcripts to make sure that they did not contain obvious mistakes. Both the students' writings and the transcribed texts from the interviews were read many times by the authors to acquire a general sense of data and identify a coding schedule to analyse them (Creswell, 2009). The data were organized into codes, then grouped into coding categories, and finally into themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For the first twenty transcripts, the two authors worked separately in forming the codes. They reached an inter-coder agreement of 85% on the first 20 transcripts and then coded the remaining transcripts jointly resolving disagreements on coding differences during the flow of the process.

Data Analysis Procedure

In the first step of analysis, data were identified within each transcript among 21 a-priori codes or categories (see Klassen & Lynch, 2007; Trainor, 2005) based on the main research questions of the study (e.g., writing activities, literacy program evaluation, school climate, teaching methods, self-confidence in writing/spelling, changes in self-confidence in writing/spelling, sources of self-efficacy, sources of possible discordance). These initial "start list" of codes was altered as new codes and categories emerged (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As a result of the inductive procedure, 24 new codes or categories appeared. In the second step of analysis, we created 68 tables, one for each participant, with 45 rows for the 45 codes and categories, and the data was distributed vertically. In the third step of analysis, we merged the tables into one table, redistributed the data across 43 rows, collapsing 2 weak categories ("discourse on teaching spelling", "school directors' behaviour"), and shifting data into other relevant ones (Denhart, 2008). Thus, the analysis resulted into forty three (43) codes

that were grouped into fourteen (14) categories classified into six basic themes: a) writing practices, b) perspectives on school setting and social context, c) self-efficacy in writing and spelling, d) sources of self-efficacy, e) sources of discordance between writing self-efficacy and writing performance, and f) self-concept, self-esteem or self worth (see Appendix C).

During the analysis process, the authors worked first separately, then together, and revisited the data several times to achieve maximum possible consistency and reliability (Creswell, 2009; Klassen & Lynch, 2007).

Finally, an initial report of interpreted data was presented at the two schools by the authors of this paper and discussed with 51 SCS-students, the teachers of the schools and the two school directors through two 1-hour presentations. Neither the SCS-students nor the school directors and the teachers disputed our findings and interpretations. On the contrary, our findings were validated by many of the students. According to Creswell (2009), this member-checking is used to determine the trustworthiness and validity of the qualitative findings. Additionally, data sources of information were triangulated by examining evidence from three different sources (students, teachers and school directors).

Results

Six themes emerged from the qualitative analysis. Each one of these six themes is presented separately in this section.

a. Writing practices

During interviews, 9 students with LD and 12 LA students stated that they did not write very often (21 comments). They pointed out that Greek literacy was taught for only 3 hours per week according to the school timetable (9 LD+15 LA=24 comments) and writing assignments were usually done in-class as group activities. The involvement in these writing activities was voluntary for the students and the school climate was particularly permissive without causing testing anxiety to the students (17 LD+19 LA=36 comments). Writing and spelling skills seem to be taught occasionally rather than systematically.

"With the language teacher we write one-paragraph-long texts but not very often. The other day we wrote an exercise about what is there inside the earth. Some other time we wrote the analysis of a poem." (Interview, LD/M30)

> "We don't write very often. We write on photocopies, we copy from the board and keep notes. I have a special copybook for that. The exercises are done in class in groups…we don't have much time at home. In the groups we take turns in writing." (Interview, LA/W38)

Nevertheless, many students exhibited strong interest in improving in writing (23 LD+20 LA=43 comments), emphasized the importance of writing in professional, personal and social life (14 LD+15 LA=29 comments), and expressed concerns about their writing difficulties (12 LD+10 LA=22 comments).

> "I feel badly about the spelling mistakes I make. When I was working at a furniture shop, I had to write down orders and I felt much stress." (Interview, LD/W36)

> "I find it difficult to write… I can't write whatever I think about." (Interview, LD/W43)
>
> "I feel much stress with writing. Now, I start writing in my mind." (Interview, LD/M27)

Students also noted that the teachers avoid teaching much grammar and correcting their mistakes (8LD+11LA=19 comments).

> "We do not do much grammar and spelling. The mistakes are not corrected by the teachers." (Interview, LA/W38)

The teachers of Greek literacy confirmed the students' words. Tests and other forms of in-class oral or written examination were excluded. Participation was encouraged but not imposed, and homework was not required. Teachers stressed that school does not demand challenging writing tasks, because that would stress the students and could affect their self-confidence negatively. The teaching method was quite 'open' to the teachers' judgment. They claimed that this practice was instructed by the school rules since the school did not prioritize writing.

> "Well, in the Greek language literacy we follow the project method according to the instructions we were provided by IDEKE. Usually, we use texts from magazines and newspapers or texts that the students themselves bring in class. We read them together and then decide on the project that the students will undertake as a group. For example, at present, they are working on a research on gender stereotypes as they are presented in press… After the end of the students' research we draw up a list of their conclusions and discuss the subject. At the end, a final original text comes out by each one of the two groups. The students from both groups discuss and then write up their conclusions, thus practicing oral and writing skills." (Interview, teacher, W1)

"We do write exercises once a week, but we never give homework. This is my basic principle… Whenever they take some homework, 99% of them don't do it on their own. Their husband/wife, children, grandchildren will do it for them…Half of them or even less are taking part in the tasks. There are some who systematically do not write or some others who write as if against their own will, giving one-word answers." (Interview, teacher, W2)

The teachers did not report on their students' strong wish to improve writing skills. They avoided implying literacy practices that would remind the students of their negative past school experiences and project their weaknesses. One experienced SCS-teacher claimed that learning to write and spell is outside of the goals of multiliteracies pedagogy followed in SCSs. Their perceptions seem to have an impact on the literacy practices they follow in relation to developing writing skills.

> "Yes, they are very much concerned about spelling. They feel very insecure with written texts in general. They asked from us to teach them grammar and syntax. It is the first thing they ask for here. "I came here to learn how to write" he/she says. Nevertheless, this does not constitute one of the SCS's goals. One of the multiliteracies goals is to teach them multiple readings about the same topic, to be able to understand the meaning, to learn how to learn. Spell-

ing is not the main goal. Nevertheless, some students object to this." (Interview, teacher, W1)

"I did not insist on spelling… people at that age will never need to write a text, an article or take examinations…I was much more interested in structure, content and speech flow. That's why in the beginning I faced strong reactions." (Interview, teacher W2)

"I do not correct most of the written tasks. I avoid correcting them because I do not want to discourage them. They might take it as a rejection. It's not good at this age… They get the most out of correcting each other. I prefer them to correct their mistakes themselves within the groups." (Interview, teacher W1)

Two of the teachers and many students agreed that Greek literacy hours were not enough (10 LD +14 LA=24 comments) and suggested that they should be increased (5 LD+6 LA=11 comments).

"The hours I devoted in language were very few, 3 per week. They themselves ask for 4." (Interview, teacher W3)

"The language teaching hours are definitely not enough!" (Interview, teacher W1)

"I would like to learn more about the language. Three hours are not enough." (Interview LD/W50)

"There is nothing I do not like besides that the language teaching hours are only three." (Interview, LA/W50)

"I would like more hours for the Greek literacy so that I could improve in grammar and syntax" (Interview, LA/M47)

Students seem to be satisfied with the literacy program (20LD+25LA=45 positive comments vs. 2 rather negative ones) and the way of teaching (9 LD+13LA=22 positive comments vs. 2 rather negative ones).

"The way of teaching satisfies me. I wouldn't like anything to change" (Interview, LD/W36).

"The Greek language program covered us. It was flexible, the way we wanted it, with the subjects that we were interested in." (Writing, LA/W39)

b. Self-Efficacy and changes in self-efficacy

Students expressed the concern that their writing and spelling difficulties undermined their self-confidence in writing and spelling (8 LD+13 LA=21 comments).

"I do not feel confident. I find it difficult to write. I cannot write from my mind, I can only write when I see something in front of me. Nevertheless, I understand everything." (Interview, LD/M42)

"I write one sentence and make 35 spelling mistakes and this bothers me." (Interview, LD/M34)

"I like writing but sometimes I'm at a loss with writing. I wish I were more confident." (Interview, LA/W48)

"I do not feel well when I write. I get stuck; after I have finished, I realize that I missed out a lot. And then I get upset." (Interview, LA/W36)

Students generally agreed that their self-efficacy (stated as self-confidence) in writing and spelling has increased during their attendance in the SCSs (18 LD+23 LA=41 comments).

> "I have confidence now in filling in an application. Before, the desk clerks in the public services did it for me." (Interview, LD/W43)
> "I feel I get improved in writing and spelling. I remember old things and learn new ones." (Interview, LD/M34)
> "The SCS has made me more confident with reading and writing" (Writing, LD/M27).
> "We do written tasks and my self-confidence in writing and spelling has increased considerably." (Interview, LA/W34)
> "I'm much more comfortable now, my mind functions better. My hand has been released. I feel more secure with writing." (Interview, LA/M34)

c. Sources of Self-Efficacy

Although the identification of self-efficacy sources in writing and spelling was not among the main research questions, students and teachers discussed the sources influencing self-confidence. Some sources of self-efficacy, such as students' mastery experiences or previous experiences (7 LD+12 LA=19 comments), verbal and social persuasion from teachers and significant others (6 LD+6 LA=12 comments), and students' interpretations of their own emotional state (3 LA+6 LD=9 comments), were spontaneously aroused in the interviews.

> "The teachers' attitude 'persuades' you, it does not impose upon you that you should learn to write." (Interview, LD/M64)
> "By helping my children in studying I came back to writing and spelling." (Interview, LA/W40)
> "I wish my children had such teachers that would give them much courage and infuse into them confidence and more." (Writing, LA/W39)
> "I feel much stress when I write. Before I wouldn't dear stand up and write on the board. Sometimes, even now, I get nervous…first comes the negative and then the positive." (Interview, LA/W39)

Raising self-confidence has been among the priorities of SCSs, as it has been clearly stated by both teachers and school directors.

> "Low self-confidence impedes their participation in writing tasks, and this is exactly what we are trying to achieve: to change this perception." (School director, M1)

d. Discordance between writing self-efficacy and writing performance

Performance ambiguity, indefinite writing aims, and problems in writing performance feedback (11 LD+ 10 LA= 21 students' comments) emerged as possible sources of discordance between writing self-efficacy and writing performance, as it was predicted by Bandura's (1997) estimations. Specifically, students and teachers make relative statements as follows:

> "What could the teachers do? I told everyone about my spelling difficulties. They told us 'we do not care about spelling', and I felt relieved." (Interview, LD/W38)
>
> "The school helps but we haven't yet studied grammatical rules." (Interview, LD/W47)
>
> "I am not that much interested in their spelling mistakes or in teaching them more grammar, I am more interested in helping them express their thoughts and be able to read a text and understand it." (Interview, teacher W1)

School directors and teachers seem to disregard the importance of the timely and accurate feedback about one's writing performance mixing it up with what they refer to as the final students' evaluation.

> "The writings are not directly evaluated, but the students' general performance is eventually evaluated. One criterion could be the students' portfolios…Another one could be the response to the undertaken tasks." (School director, M1)

The lack of a descriptive curriculum might have contributed to the vagueness of the writing aims. The teachers stated that a considerable number of the students were not actively involved in writing.

> "Someone who is more competent in writing undertakes the secretary's role while the others are simply taking part. Some more than others…While they are writing, I go close to them, sit next to them and see the text together. I make some comments but I do not correct everything…I point to some mistakes in syntax or expressions. I do some general evaluation." (Interview, teacher W1)

e. Other self-assessment concepts: self-concept, self-esteem and self-worth.

Apart from commenting on their efficacy beliefs, students made statements on the impact of SCSs on self-concept, self-esteem or self-worth (10 LD + 18 LA=28 comments).

> "I have been generally improved in reading and writing, as well as psychologically. I feel that I do the best for myself." (Interview, LD/W51)
>
> "I feel proud of myself because I have fulfilled a dream that was left unfinished due to family obligations." (Writing, LA/W42)

Some among them put emphasis on the fact that the SCS has made it up for the damage to their self-worth and self-esteem they suffered years ago and the consequent failure in school performance, when completely different school conditions and environment led them to drop-out.

> "I still remember that teacher when I was 11 years old telling me I did not worth anything and slapping me on the face. I did not return to school next day. I felt insulted and depreciated. Now I regained my self-esteem. I wish I could see him one day and tell him how much I hated school then and how much I enjoy it now and put all the blame on him." (Interview, LA/M47).

f. Social and cultural Setting/context

Students in general expressed very positive judgments on teachers' behaviour (17 LD+22 LA=39 positive comments vs. 4 LD+3 LA=7 negative comments), on the relationships between teachers and students (13 LD+14 LA=27 positive comments vs. 1 LD negative comment), on the relationships among students (8 LD+8 LA=16 positive vs. 2 LA negative comments), as well as on school climate (20 LD +16 LA=36 positive comments). They also claimed that the SCS was much better compared to the school of their childhood (13 LD+11 LA=24 comments). Some students stated that the present school experiences were not at all stressful compared to their negative past ones (14 LD+10 LA = 24 comments). Overall, their present schooling experience was presented as very satisfactory:

> "The teachers are very friendly with us and make us feel comfortable." (Interview, LD/W38)
>
> "The relationships of teachers with students are very good and tied as if we were one group all together… They bend over the student and help him/her with every problem he/she faces." (Writing, LD/M27)
>
> "I'll miss my fellow students because all this time we have been having very good time together." (Writing, LD/W33)
>
> "At this school I feel so good like a child that was given a present." (Interview, LD/W47)
>
> "School environment is relaxing and pleasant. I come with joy." (Interview, LA/W42)
>
> "School is wonderful! The way it functions is much ahead. Beyond knowledge on literacy, it opens up new paths… like to sociability, behaviour, way of thinking and global viewing." (Writing, LA/W46)
>
> "The courses are adapted in a way that we can attend easily and be able to understand… The SCS, I think, is more than a school teaching courses; is a school that awakes us from our everyday life and makes us optimistic to keep on trying." (Writing, LA/W52)
>
> "I took much courage from the teachers who are people with understanding, respect and patience." (Writing, LA/W52)
>
> "Learning here is very good and easy to understand and the teachers are very good at getting things over to us." (Writing, LA/M37)

Even when the students were asked to make their suggestions, they didn't express critical views on SCSs (19 LD+27 LA=46 positive comments vs. 1 LD+3 LA=4 rather negative ones). Their suggestions concerned only minor aspects of schooling, such as building infrastructure (6 LD+3 LA=9 comments). They also proposed a SCS for the upper secondary education (0 LD+ 10 LA=10 comments), expressing once again their general satisfaction from the school.

> "I do not want it to stop but continue to offer knowledge and education to all adults who need it." (Writing, LD/W53)
>
> "I do not want anything to change. The teachers are very good. I would only suggest that there should be SCSs for upper secondary education." (Writing, LD/W34)

"I would like a Second-Chance Lyceum." (Writing, LA/W48)

Students from both groups (LA & LD) have emphasized the fact that the SCS, except from knowledge and skills, has given them the opportunity to socialize within an environment that shows respect to their personalities and helps them to regain self-confidence. Many female participants have stressed the fact that they have been given the opportunity to come out of their homes and be in contact with other people, make friends and giving new perspective to their lives.

> "Since the time I was married I dealt only with my family and house chores. I had never had time for myself. I was only 17 when I got married. I had to take care of my own family as well as my parents in law. I spent my whole life taking care of the others. At last now, at the age of 55, I do something for myself. I socialize with other people, I take part to social events within or outside school, I go to excursions, I go to lectures organized by the school, I work for school projects. I learn things in a nice, sociable and friendly way." (Interview, LA/W55)

> "This is more than a school for us. We don't come here only to learn, but also to see other people, talk, communicate, socialize. This school has opened a window in my life. I can't wait for the time to come here everyday. We enjoy ourselves so much and at the same time we learn so much!" (Interview, LD/W53)

Another woman also pointed out the important role that the school plays by offering an opportunity for social life to lonely individuals.

> "Since my children grew up and left home and my husband died, I felt desperate and lonely. My life had no meaning. A friend of mine, who was already a student here, suggested that I should also join the school. So I did, and I'm very happy with my decision. I made friends, learn a lot of things and enjoy myself. I could never imagine that there is a school like this one." (Interview, LA/W 62)

Many male students stated that the school provides them with an alternative socializing place other than the coffee-shop (*καφενείο*); a place to spend their time fruitfully and enjoyably. A forty five-year old male participant said:

> "There aren't many things one can do in a small provincial town like this. If I didn't come to school I would waste my time in the coffee shop. My friends ask me: "why do you go to school at this age?" I am unemployed. I come to school and I feel I do something for myself. If I didn't have the school, I would be miserable." (Interview, LA/M 45)

Another male participant emphasized that the enjoyable school environment gives to the students the motivation to do better and try harder.

"I feel comfortable here. The teachers show respect to us and we can share our worries with our fellow students. I left school once because my teacher was strict and violent. I was discouraged and school was my nightmare. This school helps me to regain self-confidence and motivation to try harder" (Interview, LD/M 42)

Brief Discussion of Study II

The qualitative analysis confirmed the increases in writing and spelling self-efficacy. It provided clues that literacy and writing practices, as well as the social and cultural setting of the school may play a role in these increases. The Second-Chance Schools have been successful in creating a student-friendly environment, substantially different from the 'traditional' school with distant teachers, strict methods of discipline, harsh climate, stressful exams and evaluation procedures. Undoubtedly, the students appreciated the SCSs, and expressed their very positive feelings about them, as well as the teaching staff, teaching methods, and school climate. These positive attitudes towards SCSs might be due to present school experiences, such as voluntary engagement in written activities, encouraging descriptive evaluation, and their participation in interesting activities, projects, and educational visits, as well as their introduction to new technologies. Second-Chance School students were motivated to engage in social and academic activities, including writing. As Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) have discussed, self-efficacy beliefs interact with behavioural, cognitive, and motivational engagement, facilitating the involvement and engagement in the classroom and schoolwork. Thus, "self-efficacy can lead to more engagement, and, subsequently, to more learning and better achievement" (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003, p. 123).

However, in our case, it seems that the curriculum, specific components of literacy and writing practices (i.e., little time available for teaching writing skills, spelling avoidance, indirect teaching of grammar and syntax) followed at SCSs, in the translation of multiliteracies pedagogy into practice, seems to have not managed to raise their students' writing and spelling performance. The educational objectives for writing and spelling were not set clearly by the literacy programme of the SCSs. Besides, it has been made clear by both teachers and school directors that the SCSs did not prioritize writing and spelling, stating that learning to write and spell has not been among the goals of multiliteracies followed in SCSs. The students' actual need to improve this task has not been taken into account, since it was believed that such a process would impede the improvement of self-confidence, a priority set by the SCS. As a result, no improvement has been observed in the students' writing efficacy. On the other hand, literacy and education-related activities were practiced as social and cultural processes adapted to the distinct character of the SCSs.

General Discussion

The quantitative analysis showed that writing and spelling self-efficacy of both groups are significantly increased between the pre-test and post-test phase. An overestimation of actual writing skill level seemed to be stronger among LD students than LA students at pre-test time, as their self-efficacy in writing and spelling were only weakly correlated with their actual writing performance. This gross overestimation tendency among LD students was maintained at post-test time after the 8-month instructional period. In addition, the pre-existing overestimated perceived efficacy seemed to be further increased, remaining dissociated from actual writing and spelling performance.

Despite the incremental tendencies to self-efficacy beliefs, no differential effects on increases in writing and spelling performance, as a function of time or

group membership (LD or LA students), were found. Thus, an increase in writing or spelling self-efficacy beliefs is not a *sine qua non* for improving the writing or spelling performance among low-literate adult learners. This finding builds on Bandura's (1986, 1997) estimation about the possibility of discordance between self-efficacy beliefs and actual performance, and is consistent with findings of previous research (Graham & Haris, 1989a, b; Graham, MacArthur, Schwartz, & Page-Voth, 1992; Graham, Schwartz, & MacArthur, 1993; Sawyer, Graham & Harris, 1992; Shell, Colvin, & Bruning, 1995).

Our findings revealed that an increase in writing/spelling self-efficacy can also be related to instructional treatment as it was predicted by Schunk (1984) and Zimmerman (1995). Increases in self-efficacy beliefs seem to be related to increases in motivation levels raised by the school climate and writing practices in the SCSs, as it was revealed in our qualitative study. But such increases do not mean an automatic increase in writing/spelling performance. Indeed, we found not only discordance between writing/spelling performance and writing/spelling self-efficacy, but also a discrepancy between the liking for the SCSs and its effectiveness in relation to writing and spelling. Literacy practices in SCSs seem to well motivate their students, but it is questionable whether SCSs contribute effectively to the betterment of the writing performance of the LD and LA students, especially to the male ones.

Qualitative analysis attempted to further explore the sources of the discordance between efficacy beliefs and writing performance. Our findings revealed that the performance ambiguity, indefinite writing goals, and problems in performance feedback seemed to contribute to this discordance, as it was predicted by Bandura (1986, 1997). As Bandura (1986) had wisely assumed "Perceived efficacy alone can affect level of motivation, but it will not produce new-fangled performances if necessary sub-skills for the exercise of personal agency are completely lacking" (p. 395). In reference to this Bandura's (1986) remark, a first major issue is the time allocation of writing and literacy program which is followed at the SCSs. Considering that almost half of the students face severe writing difficulties, having developed only a rudimentary writing level, three hours a week seemed rather a measly school time allocation to develop writing and spelling skills. Besides, some of the students have complained about the few hours of Greek literacy teaching, while they reported current needs to write in professional and everyday life.

Second, an important issue is how clear the goal of learning to write is. Teachers stated that learning to write is out of SCS's goals. Nevertheless, teachers reported that some students had complained about not receiving adequate instruction on how to spell and write.

Third, while the SCS-teachers were taking seriously into consideration the negative past school experiences of the students, regarding testing and evaluation methods, at the same time they seemed to underestimate their students' needs for improving writing and spelling skills through systematic and explicit teaching. Bandura (1997) emphasizes the importance of the timely and accurate feedback about one's performance, as self-efficacy does not operate properly in an informational vacuum. Problems in writing performance feedback may have an influence on efficacy beliefs in the sense that students look at a nice mirror image through a "distorting looking glass". Although slight or modest overconfidence, acting as a facilitator of learning, is

presumed to promote achievement (Bandura, 1997; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003), significant discordance between efficacy beliefs and performance may not be so benign, as they can create problems such as lack of awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses (Bandura, 1989; Klassen, 2002b, 2007).

Implications for practice

A more generalized question is whether we can have schools which educate adult students at a lower secondary educational level without prioritizing writing and providing ample opportunity to develop students' writing skills. Is such a situation consistent with the spirit of multiliteracies pedagogy or a wrong interpretation and an inaccurate implementation? In any case, while the multiplicity of the levels give a theoretical power in the multiliteracies pedagogy, at the same time the complexity of this approach makes it difficult to be operationalized in practical terms of teaching in the classroom. In our view, the problem here is whether teachers and schools can implement multiliteracies principles in practical ways that would best fit with the needs of their students, especially in the case of low-literate adult students.

Our findings reveal that the multiliteracies approach can have unintended consequences for developing low-literate adult students' writing skills, when theory turns into practice, as in the case of Greek SCSs. This constitutes a divorce between theoretical aims and practices and poses the question of whether such an approach can be effective for students' writing needs, given that some proponents of multiliteracies approach (e.g., Kress, 1994) set learning to write as an important teaching aim.

The available body of psychological and educational research suggests that writing and spelling development in adults follows the same principles that govern children learning to spell and write, even though there are important contextual factors, including social and emotional factors, which exert strong influence on the course of learning (Perfetti & Marron, 1995). Much research has indicated that many students who experience difficulties in writing are unlikely to discover all they need to know about writing by themselves, unless explicit and systematic instruction is provided (see Graham & Harris, 1997a, for a review). The self-regulated aspects of writing make learning to write an intentional activity that is usually self-planned, and self-sustained, requiring personal practice and effort (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997).

It is noteworthy that SCSs have given a big opportunity to their students who have made huge personal progress just by participating. It has covered many and varied personal needs, beyond writing or literacy goals, and has boosted feelings of self-esteem and self-worth. Thus, the discussion of literacy practices should not ignore other aspects of Second-Chance schooling that have positive effects on students' lives related to their learning, social, and communicative needs. Undoubtedly, this is one of the benefits of the implementation of multiliteracies pedagogy in the Greek SCSs.

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Appendix A.
Holistic Writing Scoring Criteria

		Scoring (1-10)	
	1	**5**	**10**
A. Organization	Writing lacks coherence. Only disjoined words or phrases are presented.	Organization of the written text is rather rudimentary. An effort is being made for organizing writing, but in an incoherent way.	Written text has a satisfactory structure and flow.
B. Content	Writing lacks a central idea or purpose. Text is too short.	The basic ideas are abstract and poorly developed.	The ideas are clearly expressed and focused. The content is substantial and satisfactorily presented.
C. Spelling	Writing is overwhelmed with spelling mistakes. Basic morphological patterns are violated.	The written text has many spelling mistakes. However, some morphological patterns are followed.	The basic morphological patterns are fully followed. Spelling errors are minor and related only to the lexeme.
D. Conventions	Writing does not follow rudimentary conventions (word spacing, capitalization, stress assignment, full stops).	There is limited control of standard writing conventions. Errors are frequent mainly in punctuation marks.	The written text demonstrates strong control of standard writing conventions. No or few minor errors are observed.

Appendix B.
Writing and Spelling Self-Efficacy Scales

How much self-confident I feel to:
A. Self-Efficacy in Writing
1. Write a letter to a friend or relative
2. Keep notes during class at SCS
5. Write an one-page text in the right syntax
6. Write a four-page text argumenting on a timely issue (i.e., migration, insurance, climate change)
11. Fill in a crossword with success
12. Fill in an application/statement confirming the truth about some information
16. Write an e-mail
17. Write a note at my work informing my colleagues about something
19. Write a note for the club I belong
20. Write a CV describing my work experience and professional skills
B. Self-Efficacy in Spelling and Writing Conventions
3. Remember grammatical rules and write a difficult word
4. Assign stress diacritics when writing
7. Identify the verbs
8. Identify the nouns and adjectives
9. Write without errors all the words in a usual sentence
10. Put full stops separating the sentences
13. Identify the pronouns
14. Identify the tenses (S. Present, Imperfect, S. Past, Present Perfect, Past Perfect)
15. Identify compound words
18. Use capital letters correctly when writing
21. Organize a text of mine into paragraphs

Appendix C.
Themes, categories and codes of interview data and students' writings

Themes/categories and codes	Samples
A. Writing practices	
1. Literacy and writing program	
1.1. Discourse on literacy program	We learn a lot about the environment, cultures etc.
1.1.1. Literacy program evaluation	The Greek language course helps us a lot to enrich our vocabulary and knowledge.
1.2. Discourse on teaching writing/spelling	Spelling mistakes are not corrected by the teachers.
1.3. Attitudes towards teaching writing	Whenever there is something I do not like in teaching language I do not pay much attention.
1.4. Writing activities	We write on photocopies/keep notes.
1.4.1. Writing events	Once we wrote the analysis of a poem.
1.5. Curriculum	The courses are adapted so that we can attend and understand easily.
1.6. Literacy satisfaction	Merely by having started reading and writing my mind gets rest.
2. *Discourse on writing*	
2.1. Personal meaning about writing	I do not need writing for my work much.
2.2. Writing/spelling difficulties	I find it difficult to write… I can't write whatever I think about.
2.3. Suggestions about writing practices	I wish we learned correct spelling.
2.4. Writing in other contexts	Many times I needed to write something (i.e. SMS) and asked others to do it for me.
2.5. Reading in other contexts	During the last years I have read hundreds of books.
B. Perspectives on school setting and social context	
1. Perspectives on school setting	
1.1. Teachers' behaviour	The teachers are impeccable/very gentle/very good.
1.1.1. Teachers' positive feedback	The teachers help us with writing.
1.2. Relationships between teachers and students	We have a good communication with our teachers.
1.3. Relationships among students	We are very attached with our fellow students.
1.4. School climate	The school climate is relaxed and pleasant.
1.5. Judgments about SCS	The SCS is really a second chance for us who missed the first one.
1.5.1. Feelings within school	I feel good about the beautiful things we learn at the SCS.
1.5.2. Satisfaction from school	I am pleased with the SCS/ the courses/ the teaching methods
2. Social relationships	I like the collectivity and sociability at school.
2.1. Social events within the school context	The educational excursions to museums, environmental centres, etc are important.
3. Motivation	My children instigated me/my husband was not negative.
3.1. Reasons for return	I came to the SCS to relieve my feelings.

3.2. Outcome expectancies related to SCS	The school certificate opens up a road for me to continue to the Lyceum.
3.3. Obstacles to attendance	Tiredness after work is an obstacle for studying.
3.4. Commitment	I have family obligations. I do not know if I will continue.
4. Comparison with the previous school	The SCS has nothing to do with the school as I knew it. There the teachers were strict.
4.1. Comparison with negative past school experiences	At that time they asked us to write on the blackboard and if we didn't know they beat us up on our hands with the ruler or pulled us by the whiskers.
5. Suggestions about SCS	I do not want it [the SCS] to stop offering education to the adults.
5.1. Suggestions for illiterates	I suggest the SCS to others who haven't finished school.
5.2. Suggestions about buildings	I suggest that the SCS should have its own building.
C. Self-confidence in writing/spelling	
1. Self-confidence in writing	I don't feel secure, I find writing heavy.
1.1. Changes in self-confidence in writing	At the SCS my self -confidence in writing has risen.
2. Self-confidence in spelling	My spelling is bad and this bothers me.
2.1. Changes in self-confidence in spelling	At the SCS I feel as if I get improved in spelling.
D. *Sources of writing self-efficacy*	
1. Mastery experiences	When helping my young daughter in writing I remember things and feel secure.
2. Social/ verbal persuasion	The teachers' attitudes 'persuade' you, it does not impose upon you that you should learn to write.
3. Interpretations of physiological and emotional states	Here I feel peace of mind and self-confidence when I write on the blackboard whistle at the old school I used to feel stress.
E. Sources of discordance	
1. Performance ambiguity and indefinite aims	I talked to the teachers about my spelling difficulties. They told me 'we don't care about spelling' and I felt relieved.
2. Problems in performance feedback	The writings are not directly evaluated, but the students' general performance is eventually evaluated. One criterion could be the students' portfolios… Another one could be the response to the undertaken tasks.
F. Self-concept, self-esteem and self-worth	I am very proud I am back to school.