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DELIBERATE PRACTICE, WRITING SELF-EFFICACY, AND SELF-
REGULATION AMONG INTERNET NOVELISTS IN CHINA:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

by

Shuangshuang Cai

A DISSERTATION

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DELIBERATE PRACTICE, WRITING SELF-EFFICACY, AND SELF-
REGULATION AMONG INTERNET NOVELISTS IN CHINA: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

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University of Nebraska, 2019

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The focus of this study was the role of deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy and self-regulation in the lived experiences of Chinese internet literature novelists. This qualitative, phenomenological study presented the shared perceptions of this phenomenon drawn from interviews of Chinese internet novelists. The psychological aspects of these novelists were previously unexplored and this study helps to address the gap in the literature. The phenomenological method captured the experiences of the Chinese internet novelists and added this rich detail to the existing research literature.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with fourteen Chinese internet novelists, and related documents from other Chinese internet novelists' past interviews, autobiographies, and presentation were collected. From the interviews and documents, three core themes emerged. Interviews explored the role of deliberate practice (a special type of practice that is goal-directed and persistent, and it requires focused attention, motivation, feedback, reading and awareness of readership), writing self-efficacy (the belief in their ability to succeed in internet novel writing), and self-regulation (the process of observing, evaluating and reacting to their behavior, emotions, and thoughts in the pursuit of writing goals). Each internet novelist had

his/her unique experience and stories, but they all used deliberate practice to develop their writing expertise and improve their writing performance. Some writer also described the increase in writing self-efficacy that motivated them to persist on their deliberate practice and explained how they applied self-regulation skills during their deliberate practice. These aspects of writing practice were key to the development of their writing expertise. Aspiring novelists may learn from this study about how to improve their writing performance. This study may also help educators and researchers build potential teaching models and strategies in writing.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A novel is a fictitious prose narrative of considerable length and complexity that deals imaginatively with human experience through a connected sequence of events involving groups of people in specific settings (Burgess, 2017). This form of original writing expresses ideas, feelings, thoughts, and emotions and emphasizes narrative craft, character development, and other self-expressive forms of literature (Dawson, 2005). Traditionally, a novelist works with a literary agent who submits the novel to the publisher, and the publisher edits and distributes the book. With the development of internet-technology, creating, sharing and distributing writings online has become more robust and more accessible for writers. Internet literature consists of works of novels, short stories, prose, poetry, and essays that originate within digital environments and require digital computation to be read (Hockx, 2015). The novel has become one of the major genres of internet literature.

Software programs such as Storyspace and HyperCard in the 1980s and 1990s provide context for internet literature in the English language, which was known as the hypertext literature. These software programs allow writers and readers to create, edit, and read hypertext literature, which uses hypertext links comprised of text and/or multimedia (pictures, sound, videos, etc.) for non-linearity in literature and reader interaction (Averianova, 2013). Prior to the development of the World Wide Web, hypertext literature had already been published using this software. For example, Michael Joyce (1987) published his literary works *Afternoon, a Story* on Eastgate Systems, which was called “the granddaddy of hypertext fictions” by Robert Coover (1992) in *The New York Times*. *Delirium* by Douglas Anthony Copper (1998) is the first hypertext fiction serialized on the internet, which navigated between four parallel

story strands. Hypertext literature was no longer popular since the 2000s. E-books, blog fiction, and blog poetry are also regarded as internet literature in Western countries. For example, blog fiction can be defined as a form of internet literature that is written and published through online web journals, and it has great potential for young writers (Jacobs, 2006).

Although hypertext literature in the 1980s and 1990s was not fully developed in China, Chinese internet literature has been booming rapidly in a different format during the past two decades. In *Theory and Structure of the Internet Literature*, Ouyang (2007) states that “in the information age, internet literature writers use the computer network as a carrier, originally create or re-create based on original works, and initiate their work on the internet. Their works will be spread and transmitted through a variety of channels, including online and offline channels, and will be read and appreciated by netizen readers. Internet literature also involves a formation of mature evaluation mechanism and becomes a new literary form.” According to surveys, there are 6 million internet literature writers and 11.6 million internet literature works across platforms by 2016 (cyzone.cn, 2018) and 377 million of internet literature users in December 2017 (China Internet Network Information Center, 2018). Novel writing is the most popular genre of internet literature and has the most extensive audience (Hockx, 2015). Website portals such as Qidian.com, Chuangshi.com, 17k.com, and jjwxc.net provide platforms for emerging internet literature, especially online novels.

Research on Writing

Researchers have been interested in psychological aspects of writing for a long time and have explored psychological aspects of writing from a cognitive perspective since the 1970s. Deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation are

psychological aspects that were well-explored in literature, especially in the literature of academic writing. Research findings have shown that writing expertise is acquired by deliberate practice among professional writers (DeLyser & Hawkins, 2014; Kellogg, 2006; Piirto, 2012), self-efficacy was a strong predictor of writing achievement among students across age groups (Klassen, 2002; McCarthy, Meier, & Rinderer, 1985; Pajares & Johnson, 1994; Shell, Murphy, & Bruning, 1989), and self-regulatory processes are critical to effective writing, including novel writing (Santangelo, Harris, & Graham, 2016; Zimmerman, 1998).

However, very few studies have focused on the area of novel writing, and even less research has looked at the area of internet literature. A growing number of novelists in China write and publish their novels online, and there is a research gap in this area. Past studies also have not utilized a qualitative approach that would permit an in-depth study of issues such as internet novelists' deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation. This study may be able to help fill the research gaps in this field. It may contribute to the issues of Chinese internet literature as well as studies of social cognitive theory (i.e., self-efficacy and self-regulation) and learning theories (i.e., deliberate practice). It may help researchers understand the subjects of internet literature and provide new understanding and insights about their psychological aspects.

Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenology is to explore Chinese internet novelists writing experiences with a particular focus on writing self-efficacy, self-regulation, and deliberate practice.

Research Questions

The central research question is “How do Chinese internet novelists describe

their internet novel writing experiences?” There are three sub-questions for this study:

- 1) How do Chinese internet novelists describe their deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation in novel writing?
- 2) How has writing self-efficacy, deliberate practice, and self-regulation influenced Chinese internet novelists’ writing performance and their development of writing expertise?
- 3) Are writing self-efficacy, deliberate practice and self-regulation related to each other? If so, how are they related from the perspective of Chinese internet novelists?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review introduces the history of Chinese internet literature, particularly the development of online novel writing. This literature review then explores the concepts and applications of deliberate practice, self-efficacy, and self-regulation.

History of Chinese Internet Literature

Early history of Chinese internet literature.

Hockx (2015) stated that Chinese internet literature is shaped by general technological development and by specific social conventions. Internet literature in the Chinese language first emerged outside China. The first works of Chinese internet literature were published in the electronic journal *Huaxia Wenzhai* (*China News Digest*, www.cnd.org), which established by Chinese students in the United States in 1991 and was known as the first Chinese-language electronic magazine (Hockx, 2015; Ouyang, 2008). *Huaxia Wenzhai* was distributed through various electronic channels including FTP, email, and LISTSERV. In 1994, the Chinese Academy of Sciences organized China's first web server, introduced the first set of web pages, and installed China's domain name (.cn) server (Batjargal, 2007). Internet literature in the Chinese-language flowed back to mainland China after the installation of China's web server. *Xin Yu Si* (*New Spinners of Words*, <http://www.xys.org/>) is the earliest Chinese-language electronic journal. It was launched by Zhouzi Fang in 1994 in China (Hockx, 2015; Ouyang, 2008). The Bulletin Board System (BBS), which was used on servers at universities in China (e.g., Tsinghua University), also had platforms for the distribution of some original literary work. For example, the novel *Di Yi Ci Qing Mi Jie Chu* (*First Intimate Contact*), written by a Taiwanese writer using his pseudonym

Pizi Cai, was first serialized on a BBS in 1998 and was published in print in the same year (Hockx, 2015; Ouyang, 2008). Interactive discussion forums were developed from BBS and had better web-based graphic interfaces than BBS. Discussion forums allowed members to submit their writings and discuss those of others (Hockx, 2015).

Blogs, microblogs, and smartphone apps were also Chinese internet literature carriers. For example, Han Han is one of the symbols of literary celebrities in Chinese internet literature industry. He published his novels only in print, but he chose the medium of the online blog for posting satirical essays and comments on current affairs (Buruma, 2016). In 2012, he and his group released an Apple App named the ONE, which provided a daily post with an essay, a picture, and a Q&A section (Kan, 2016).

Chinese novels on internet writing platforms.

My research interest is novel writing experience among Chinese internet novelists. Internet novels are usually long, fictional narratives which describe human experience. An Internet novel is a type of popular literature that intended for the masses and found favor with large audiences (Zhou, 2013). Internet novels are usually fictional works written with the intent to fit into a specific literary genre and to appeal to readers who already familiar with that genre (Chang, 2018). I will introduce novel writing platforms for Chinese internet novels in the following paragraphs.

Rong Shu Xia (Under the Banyan Tree, <http://www.rongshuxia.com/>) was founded by William Zhu in December 1997 and was the earliest and longest-standing literary website for novel writing in China (Hockx, 2015; Liang, 2006; X. Xu, 2015). *Under the Banyan Tree* increased the popularity of numerous authors, most notably Murong Xuecun, Anni Baobei, and Ning Caishen. *Under the Banyan Tree* provides special columns for popular writers to release their novels. Novels on this website

were usually free to read before 2007. Popular writers from *Under the Banyan Tree* usually published their novels in the traditional print format after they gained extensive audiences. In 2009, the website was bought by Shanda Interactive Entertainment, which owned the majority of literary websites in China. The influence and popularity of *Under the Banyan Tree* decreased in recent years as emerging websites gained a market for their innovative business models.

The market for online popular genre novels emerged in China in 2005. Websites such as *Qidian* (*Starting Point*, <http://www.qidian.com>), *Chuangshi* (*The Creation*, <http://chuangshi.qq.com/>), *Jinjiang* (*Jin River*, <http://www.jjwxc.net/>), *17k* (<http://www.17k.com>) are popular sites for Chinese internet literature, especially online novels in China (Hockx, 2015; Ouyang, 2008). The effective business model for Chinese internet literature started from *Qidian*. *Qidian* provided a portal for users to publish their writing online and receive comments from readers. Users would officially become contract writers and sign contracts with the website if their novels were approved by editors. The contract writers first serialized free chapters on the website to attract audiences. Then following chapters would be marked as “VIP chapters”, which require a subscription fee for reader access. A VIP writer receives income based on their shared revenue per one thousand words (approximately 3 cents per thousand words for the writer and 7 cents per thousand words for the website, and the sharing rate differed among writers) multiplied by the number of subscribers. Readers can also give rewards to their favorite writers by purchasing virtual gifts. The shared revenues for virtual gifts were usually 50% for the writer and 50% for the website. This business model introduced an interaction pattern of fans reading daily updates of online novels, which has not been replicated on a similar scale in other countries (Qin, 2016). This business model attracted a large number of readers as well

as aspiring writers. Other websites followed the business model, while some of them made subtle changes.

New trends in Chinese internet novels.

Chinese internet novels have received much attention in the past five years. There are four major traits of current Chinese internet novel writing. First, Tencent Literature Branch of Tencent Holdings Limited merged into a new group with Shanda Literature Branch of Shanda Interactive Entertainment Group and became the largest Chinese internet literature Group, renamed Yuewen Group in 2015. Seven out of the top ten internet literature websites are owned by Yuewen Group. The benefits of a larger group are better management and resources allocation for the development of internet literature. However, the monopoly of the gigantic internet literature group may also cause a lack of competition, and some small internet literature companies may fail to survive.

Second, top Chinese internet novelists have been known as a high-income group in recent years. According to the annual survey from *Hua Xi Ri Bao* (*Western China City Newspaper*, www.wccdaily.com.cn/) in 2017, the Chinese internet novelist Tang Jia San Shao received an annual income of 120 million RMB (approximately 17.78 million US dollars based on the currency rate on January 26, 2019. The same rate will be applied for the whole text) from his copyrighted novels, and he ranked the first on the revenue list (Xun, 2017). Survey data by the *Beijing Times* categorized internet literature novelists into five levels based on their income and number of readers/fans (“Internet Literature Group Headhunting Internet Literature Novel Writers and Creating ‘Gods,’” 2015). The lowest rank of writers was called Pu-Jie (“Drop-dead on the street”) writers. They have few fans/readers, and they earn less than 1,000 RMB (approximately 148 US dollars) annually. There is a countless

number of Pu-Jie writers, and most of them quit the field of internet literature. The second rank of writers was called Xiao-Shen (“Tiny God”) writers. They have more than 100,000 readers/fans, and they earn more than 100,000 RMB (approximately 14,817 US dollars) annually. There are a large number of Xiao-Shen writers and they are the foundation of sites. The Zhong-Shen (“Middle God”) writers, which rank third, have more than 500,000 fans/readers and earn more than 500,000 RMB (approximately 74,088 US dollars) annually. There are several hundreds of Zhong-Shen writers. The Da-Shen (“Great God”) writers, as the second highest level, have above 1 million readers/fans and earn an annual income of above 1 million RMB (approximately 148,177 US dollars). There are hundreds of Da-Shen writers in the Chinese internet literature industry. The Zhi-Gao-Shen (“Supreme God”) writers, as the highest level, have multiple millions of readers/fans and earn more than 10 million RMB (approximately 1.48 million US dollars). There are 20 to 30 Zhi-Gao-Shen writers in the industry (Ma, 2016). Reports from various media sources about the high income of online novelists lured more young people to the field of internet literature with hopes of a career trajectory. However, most of them desired to be Da-Shen writers and failed.

Third, more companies were buying the copyrights from Chinese internet novelists and adapting their stories into movies, television shows and games (Qin, 2016). An “IP”, referring to intellectual properties or original content that could be adapted into movies, television shows, and video games, was booming in China during the past few years. Tang Jia San Shao stated that “much of my fortune was made from selling my so-called IPs...(selling IPs) is a strategy that in recent years has become a major source of revenue for China’s online literature websites and writers (Qin, 2016).”

Fourth, readers could access Chinese internet novels through a broad range of digital devices such as desktop PCs, laptops, tablets, and smartphones. In recent years, readers migrate from desktop PCs and laptop to mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones. According to the survey from China Internet Network Information Center (China Internet Network Information Center, 2018), netizens who used smartphones to read internet literature increased by a number of 39,750,000 from December 2016 (43.7% of all internet literature users) to December 2017 (45.6% of all internet literature users). The change of reading habit (readers enjoy entertainment content on hand-held devices during their fragmented time) for internet literature readers led to industry consolidation. For most internet novelists, their major income sources were not subscription fee from their original website, as in previous years, but the so-called Qu-Dao (channels) income, which is an income from multiple mobile apps that reproduced their novels from original websites.

Deliberate Practice, Writing Self-Efficacy, and Self-Regulation: Key Aspects of the Psychology of Writing

Writing is regarded as an ill-structured task because the types of writing generated by people were so varied (Simon, 1973). An early study by Hayes and Flower (1980) demonstrated three processes of writing: planning ideas, translating ideas into text, and reviewing ideas and text. These processes repeatedly occur throughout all phases of writing. Scardamalia and Bereiter (1987) developed the Compare, Diagnose and Operate (CDO) model for writing, and they believed that advanced planning might help students with their reflective thinking in the writing processes. There are many other models for writing in literature, and all these models view writing as a cognitively and emotionally demanding task. Variables such as environment, attention, working memory, long-term memory, motivation, and self-

regulation are components of writing that researchers frequently discuss (Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, & Rosen, 1975; Hayes & Flower, 1980; Kaufer, Hayes, & Flower, 1986; Kellogg, 1987).

The present study focuses on deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation instead of other variables because of two reasons. First, deliberate practice theory is a well-established theory in the area of learning theory and expertise development. Writing self-efficacy and self-regulation are components of the social cognitive theory that were well-explored theoretically and empirically. Although there were only a few studies on deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy and self-regulation among internet novelists, the abundance of previous studies focusing on other formats helps researchers understand the issues related to internet novelists. Second, self-efficacy, self-regulation and deliberate practice were often mentioned explicitly or implicitly in novelists' interviews, presentations, and biographies. For example, Gabriel Garcia Marquez talked about his writing habit in an interview, saying that he was required to write at least three reports a week, two to three comments a day, and sometimes film reviews. He worked from nine a.m. to three p.m. during a regular weekday, and he would discard what he wrote the next day if he was not satisfied (Cowley, 1977). He mentioned his deliberate practice and self-regulation implicitly in his statements.

Geling Yan, a famous female Chinese-American writer, talked about her novel writing experiences in a presentation for Yixi conference in Beijing (Yan, 2014). Before she immigrated to the United States, she wrote stories with instincts and believed that 90% of her writing expertise was from innate ability. After she got the writing training at the Columbia College Chicago and found that the training was so effective. She changed her mind and believed that 50% of her writing expertise

depended on innate ability and the other half depended on professional training. She also mentioned how she built up her confidence through writing practice. Her words explicitly express the ideas of self-efficacy and deliberate practice. The frequent appearance for these three variables indicated that they were significant factors for novel writing among writers. Therefore, choosing deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation for studies of internet novelists is reasonable.

Deliberate practice.

Ericsson and his colleagues introduced the concept of the deliberate practice theory (K. Anders Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993). In the article, “The Role of Deliberate Practice in the Acquisition of Expert Performance,” Ericsson et al. characterize deliberate practice as “those activities that have been found most effective in improving performance (1993, p. 367).” He differentiated deliberate practice from work (activities directly motivated by external rewards) and play (activities that have no explicit goal and that are enjoyable), and he claimed that deliberate practice is the continuous investment in activities designed to improve current performance (K. Anders Ericsson et al., 1993). Three assumptions were presented for deliberate practice that could be tested empirically. First, deliberate practice requires time, energy, teachers, training material, and training facilities, which is referred to as resource constraint. Second, deliberate practice is not intrinsically motivating, which is referred to as motivational constraint. Third, deliberate practice is effortful and needs to avoid exhaustion, which is referred to as effort constraint. Ericsson (2006) described five general characteristics of deliberate practice: 1) deliberate practice is goal-directed; 2) it requires concentration that can be sustained only for a limited period of time; 3) it requires motivation to maintain a high level of practice for days, months and years; 4) it requires feedback from others; and

5) it requires self-control, self-surveillance, and a self-evaluation of their performance. Ericsson's deliberate practice theory was applied in domains such as sports (Starkes, Deakin, Allard, Hodges, & Hayes, 1996), design (Cross, 2004), music, games, education, and professions (Macnamara, Hambrick, & Oswald, 2014). Deliberate practice theory was also applied in various writing research.

Researchers paid attention to aspects of deliberate practice in writing for a long time. For example, Cowley (1977) and Plimpton (1989) both mentioned that numerous well-known writers spend four to five hours each day practicing their writing for many years. Kellogg and his colleagues were researchers who systematically investigated deliberate practice in writing.

Kellogg (1999) first borrowed the concept of deliberate practice from Ericsson et al. (1993) in chapter three of his book *Psychology of Writing*. When he talked about the productivity of writing, Kellogg (1999) claimed that deliberate practice plays a critical role in the quality, fluency, and the productivity of writing, because cognitive skills (e.g., retrieve and apply prior knowledge) depend on devoting extensive practice, time, and effort to writing. Kellogg (2006) integrated deliberate practice into his model of developing professional writing expertise. Then he and his colleagues applied their theory among college students (Kellogg & Raulerson, 2007; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009). Kellogg (2006) investigated how writing skills were acquired by professional writers. He first tried to define professional writing expertise but found it difficult. He decided to focus on common elements of professional writing expertise, as journalists, novelists, screenwriters, poets, technical writers, scientific writers were all included in his list of professional writers. He proposed that writing expertise is domain specific; it involves problem-solving skills, language use, management of the cognitive load, management of the emotional challenge. It also requires rapid access

to long-term memory and awareness of readership. Then he integrated Ericsson et al.'s (1993) deliberate practice in the acquisition of writing expertise. He illustrated signs of deliberate practice in writing from multiple empirical studies. For example, professional writers' high levels of practice in their daily work schedules (Cowley, 1977; G. Plimpton, 1989) can be explained by Ericsson and colleagues' characteristic of high levels of repetition and effortful practice in deliberate practice theory. Apprenticeships in creative writing programs and writer's workshops (Adams, 1993) can be explained by Ericsson and colleagues' description of feedback in deliberate practice theory. Studies of successful writers who complete weekly and monthly tasks before deadlines (Root Jr, 1983) can be explained by Ericsson and colleagues' description of goal-directions and motivation in deliberate practice theory. Kellogg (2006) demonstrated that extensive reading is a strong predictor of a writer's knowledge, and professional writers reported extensive reading in research findings and professional writers' narratives. Kellogg (2006) also found that the ten-year rule (10 years of focused endeavor is required before a great breakthrough will be made) in deliberate practice theory may be applied in professional writing. For example, Wishbow (1988) examined 66 famous poets' biographies and found that 83% of the sample had more than ten years' experience writing poetry. Although Kellogg did not provide a systematic model of deliberate practice in professional writing in his articles, he did describe how deliberate practice may be applied in professional writing.

Kellogg and Raulerson (2007) found that American college students rarely attained advanced writing skills (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003), and claimed that to achieve high levels of writing performance, college students should have cognitive control in writing and greater

deliberate practice. They incorporated the main characteristics of deliberate practice (K. Anders Ericsson et al., 1993) in writing and demonstrated that writing skills of college students could be improved by 1) effortful exertion to improve the performance of writing; 2) intrinsic motivation to engage in the writing task; 3) appropriate writing tasks within reach of college students' ability; 4) feedback from teachers, instructors, and peers that inform college students of their immediate results; 5) high levels of repetition of writing through a long period of time, usually over several years. Kellogg and Raulerson (2007) provided several empirical findings to support their theory of deliberate practice in writing. For example, Johnstone, Ashbaugh, and Warfield (2002) found that a high level of writing skills correlated with the degree of repeated practice among college students. Astin (1993) found that writing skill improvements among college students correlated strongly with the number of writing classes taken and the amount of feedback given by instructors. Kellogg and Raulerson (2007) pointed out two major problems that were found with deliberate practice in writing education. The first problem was spaced practice, and they suggested that deliberate practice should be appropriately distributed with appropriate difficulties. The second problem was timely feedback, and they suggested that automatic scoring software could help instructors alleviate their grading demands and increase the amount of feedback students receive.

Kellogg and Whiteford (2009) illustrated three main challenges in writing expertise development. First, writing requires heavy attention. Second, working memory constraints writing development. Third, even professional writers at the knowledge-crafting stage must self-regulate their cognitive and emotional resources to sustain their writing process over a long period. They found that time and effort involved in teachers' grading and feedback prevented them from assigning enough

writing tasks for deliberate practice among college students. Therefore, they suggested that an Automated Essay Scoring called SWoRD could help with grading and providing feedback so that more writing tasks could be assigned. This article is a supplement of Kellogg (2008). However, the role of deliberate practice in academic writing among college students was not well defined in this article.

Deliberate practice in writing was investigated by numerous scholars. Kellogg and his colleagues made great contributions to the theory of deliberate practice in writing. Future research could improve Kellogg's (2008) three-stage model of training writing skill through deliberate practice, and offer more empirical evidence for the theory. Researchers who are interested in developing deliberate practice program in writing for students should shift their attention from computer-based programs to instructor-based programs, because instructors play the key role in designing the practice, monitoring the progress of students, and giving informative feedback.

There has been much less research on deliberate practice in novel writing than that in academic writing. Reasons for the lack of recognizable research in novel writing may include 1) subjects for novel writing studies—novelists—were difficult to approach; 2) students do more elaborative writing than creative writing in academic settings; 3) novel writing expertise requires decades of deliberate practice, and longitudinal studies need more resources and dedication from researchers; and 4) novel writing considered less scholarly and therefore there is less of a focus on scholarly research.

Deliberate practice among novelists. Although there has been little research on deliberate practice in novel writing, the critical role of deliberate practice in novel writing was recognized by researchers (DeLyser & Hawkins, 2014; Kaufman & Gentile, 2002; Kellogg, 2006; Piirto, 2012). Kellogg (2006) investigated how writing

expertise was acquired through deliberate practice among professional writers, a group that included novelists. In this chapter, Kellogg reviewed the literature and gave several examples of creative writing expertise development. For example, Cowley (1977) and Plimpton (1989) found that successful creative writers have scheduled four to five hours of daily writing practice over several years. Wishbow (1988) examined sixty-six famous poets' biographies and found that 83% of the sample has more than ten years' of poetry writing experience. Kaufman and Gentile (2002) examined 986 creative writers from the twentieth century and found a significant relationship between an early debut and an increase in productivity in poetry writing. This study also indicated that both poets and novelists developed their techniques, mechanics, and cognitive skills for fifteen to twenty years before their first publication. Plimpton (1989) found that well-known creative writers valued their practice techniques. Piirto (2012) collected survey data from 160 contemporary creative writers (80 females and 80 males) and discovered seventeen themes focusing on their expertise development. Results indicated that writing expertise is acquired by deliberate practice, and the results indicated that creative writers downplayed the role of talent and creative ability in their expertise development.

In addition, some researchers broadened the perspectives of expertise in novel writing by using neuroimaging technology (Erhard, Kessler, Neumann, Ortheil, & Lotze, 2014; Lotze, Erhard, Neumann, Eickhoff, & Langner, 2014), which indirectly indicated the importance of deliberate practice in the brain development of novelists. Future research should focus on developing a model for deliberate practice in novel writing. More details of deliberate practice in creative writing should be investigated. For example, research could address how much time and effort should be invested in novel writing expertise development, how teachers could design a goal-directed and

adaptive difficulty method of training for novelists, how to sustain motivation and avoid exhaustion during deliberate practice in novel writing, how teachers could provide feedback to novelists, and how to maintain high levels of repetition of novel writing over the course of years.

Deliberate practice among Chinese internet novelists. My research interest will focus on deliberate practice specifically among Chinese internet novelists. According to Kellogg's (2008) three-stage model, these novelists are at the knowledge-crafting stage, while these writers are able to keep in mind their ideas, the representation of text itself, and reader's interpretation of the text. Chinese internet novelists could maintain and manipulate their working memory, and managing planning, translating and reviewing. In the current study, I assume that professional internet novelists improve their writing skill from knowledge-transforming stage to knowledge-crafting stage by deliberate practice. Deliberate practice theory could thus be applied to the online novel writing expertise development of Chinese writers. Writers, according to Ericsson, should make efforts to improve their writing performance. They were intrinsically motivated to engage in online novel writing practice. The high income, admiration from readers, encouragement from friends and families, and the sense of accomplishment are all potential motivators for Chinese internet novelists.

Chinese internet novelists also tend to be very goal-directed because the online novel publishers (internet literature websites) require them to write a specified amount (e.g., 4,000 words every day), and writers may receive writing tasks every day based on their specific schedule with the website. Chinese internet novelists receive immediate feedback from readers and frequent feedback from editors, which may inform them about their writing performance and help motivate them to revise. Some

Chinese internet novelists have mentors and teachers who can provide strategies, informative comments, critiques, and encouragement. A Chinese online novel is usually finished in one to two years. The writer should maintain a high level of writing repetitions through a long-period of time because they are typically required to write three to four hours every day. Taking these factors into account, several potential research questions emerge, such as 1) how many hours of deliberate practice should they spend developing writing expertise? 2) What kind of goals do online novelists have? 3) What kind of training should be provided for developing online novel writing expertise? 4) How do novelists sustain motivation and avoid exhaustion during their deliberate practice? and 5) what strategies can be used in deliberate practice for internet novelists? These questions can also be asked in the qualitative interviews for this study.

Additional questions will be added in this study (see Appendix X for the full set). Examples include: does deliberate practice influence the quality, fluency, and the productivity of internet novelists from the perspective of these writers? What kind of feedback do internet novelists receive and how does feedback influence their writing practice? What is the role of a mentor for internet novelists?

Self-efficacy theory and writing self-efficacy.

In 1977, Bandura introduced self-efficacy as a key component in his social cognitive theory. Bandura hypothesized that there are four sources of information that affect self-efficacy development in general: 1) performance accomplishments, for example, prior success that is similar to the new behavior, 2) vicarious experience, 3) social persuasions like encouragements by friends and families, and 4) emotional arousal, for example, the emotional states caused by thinking about undertaking the new behavior. Bandura formally defined self-efficacy as "people's judgments of their

capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). In his social cognitive theory, self-efficacy influences people's choice of activities and behavior settings, how much effort they make, and the level of persistence when they confront challenges (Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Schunk, 1981). Therefore, he presented four major psychological processes through which self-efficacy affects human functioning: 1) cognitive processes (e.g., the stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the higher the challenges people set for themselves and the more resolution their commitment to them), 2) motivational process (e.g., self-efficacy is related to causal attributions, which affect motivation, and outcome expectancies which regulate motivation), 3) affective processes (e.g., self-efficacy affects how much stress and depression they experience in threatening or difficult situations), and 4) selection processes (e.g., self-efficacy influences what types of activities and environments people choose.) (Bandura, 1993, 1997). According to the theory, the beliefs people hold about their ability (self-efficacy) determine their feelings, motivation, and behaviors rather than what their actual capabilities (Bandura, 1997). The relationship between self-efficacy and other motivational variables such as self-regulation of motivation, outcome expectancies, and goal settings were also investigated (Bandura, 1993, 1994).

Bandura's theoretical ideas about self-efficacy have been applied and tested in diverse fields including education, psychology, political science, business, health, and athletics. Researchers believe that self-efficacy is domain specific (Pajares, 1997). In other words, people can have high self-efficacy in one area and low self-efficacy in others, which influences their achievement in multiple areas. Writing, for example, is a cognitively challenging task, and writers must believe in their ability to succeed. Self-efficacy has received a great deal of attention and has become one of the major

focuses in writing motivation research, especially in academic writing (Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2005; Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Valiante, 2006; Schunk & Swartz, 1993; Shell, Colvin, & Bruning, 1995; Wachholz & Etheridge, 1996). Self-efficacy theory has been developed for decades (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997) and self-efficacy was found to be consistently related to writing performance in various studies (Pajares & Valiante, 2006; Pajares, Valiante, & Cheong, 2006; Shell et al., 1995, 1989).

Early writing self-efficacy studies from McCarthy, Meier, & Rinderer (1985) were conducted among college undergraduates and indicated that writing self-efficacy was related to their actual writing performance. Shell, Murphy, & Bruning (1989) found that self-efficacy was a stronger predictor of writing achievement than outcome expectancy among undergraduate students. Later research from Shell, Colvin, and Bruning (1995) demonstrated that self-efficacy and writing achievement were linked among fourth, seventh and tenth-grade students. Pajares & Johnson (1994) indicated that writing self-efficacy was a significant predictor of writing performance among undergraduate students. Klassen (2002) reviewed sixteen research studies examining the writing self-efficacy of sixth-grade to tenth-grade students and concluded that self-efficacy played a primary role in predicting writing performance. Pajares (2003) also reviewed the literature, and the results indicated that writing self-efficacy and writing performances were related. Self-efficacy was found to be a significant predictor of writing performance, since writers with high writing self-efficacy were more likely to persist longer, work harder, set appropriate goals, commit themselves to meet those goals, and experience fewer negative emotions (Bruning & Horn, 2000; Hidi, Berndorff, & Ainley, 2002).

Other aspects of writing self-efficacy were also examined. Some researchers found that girls reported higher writing self-efficacy than boys (Pajares, Miller, &

Johnson, 1999; Pajares et al., 2006; Wigfield, Eccles, & Pintrich, 1996). Gender differences in writing self-efficacy were rendered insignificant when gender orientation was controlled, which means that feminine orientation was more strongly related to writing self-efficacy beliefs (Pajares, Hartley, & Valiante, 2001; Pajares et al., 2006). Other researchers found no gender differences in writing self-efficacy across academic grades (Shell et al., 1995). Some researchers hypothesized that older students who had better composition skills might have higher writing self-efficacy. However, research findings indicated that there is neither difference (Shell et al., 1995) nor a diminishment of writing self-efficacy throughout grades (Pajares et al., 1999, 2006; Wigfield, Eccles, Mac Iver, Reuman, & Midgley, 1991).

Research in recent decades has also demonstrated the connection between writing self-efficacy and writing performance for students across different ages and gender groups and researchers have developed scales measuring self-efficacy in academic writing. These studies may be used for reference in the study of gender and age differences among internet novelists. Most research findings indicated that writing self-efficacy is a significant predictor of writing performance (Bruning & Horn, 2000; Hidi et al., 2002; McCarthy et al., 1985; Pajares & Johnson, 1994). Some research found gender differences (Pajares et al., 1999, 2006; Wigfield et al., 1996), and some did not (Pajares & Johnson, 1996; Shell et al., 1995), so potential gender differences were explored further in the current study. Research findings indicated that there was no difference or diminishment in writing self-efficacy throughout academic grades and age level (Pajares & Valiante, 1999; Pajares et al., 2006; Shell et al., 1995; Wigfield et al., 1991).

From what I have presented above, we can see that empirical studies have often focused on self-efficacy in academic writing, that is, writing for expressing

ideas by students in academic settings. Very few researchers have, however, looked at the area of novel writing – writing that emphasizes on narrative craft, character development, and other original and self-expressive forms of literature. Unfortunately, even creative writing (including novels, short stories, and poeries) among students has been relatively ignored in the literature. Reasons for the lack of recognizable research in novel writing may include: 1) subjects for novel writing studies—novelists—were difficult to approach; 2) students do more elaborative writing than creative writing at school; and 3) researchers may think self-efficacy can be embodied in academic writing research and these findings generalized to creative writing research.

Some studies shed light on the self-efficacy construct in creative writing. For example, Graham and Harris (1989a) used a self-efficacy scale to assess the judgment of students' abilities for creative writing and demonstrated that these students tended to overestimate their abilities in creative writing. Chandler (1999) developed a creative writing program to enhance writing self-efficacy in adolescents. Although the sample size was small (N=11), this intervention study followed Bandura's (1997) source of information for self-efficacy, and the results indicated that students improved their writing self-efficacy after the program. A study among university students in South Korea tested writing self-efficacy before and after a digital storytelling process intervention and compared it between a virtual learning environment and an offline environment (Y. Xu, Park, & Baek, 2011). This experiment showed that writing self-efficacy in digital storytelling was more effective in a virtual learning environment than an offline environment. This study suggested that teachers should encourage students to write creative stories in a virtual learning environment because it can stimulate students' imaginations and encourage more

creative writing. Another example is that of an English tutor who narrated her experience working in a writing center and claimed that self-efficacy could foster creative writing development across curriculums, and she also shifted the writing center focus more toward perceived self-efficacy (King, 2015). There was still much to explore in this field. To help fill this gap, this study will apply the self-efficacy construct to online novel writing research in the future.

Writing, including academic writing and novel writing, is a complicated, long-term problem-solving task in which motivation plays a critical role (Bruning & Horn, 2000). As self-efficacy has been consistently reported as a predictor of writing performance in academic writing (Klassen, 2002; Pajares, 2003), self-efficacy may be a predictor of performance in novel writing as well. Future studies can also examine whether gender differences exist in novelists' self-efficacy and whether novelists' self-efficacy develops or changes throughout age levels and academic grades. Scales measuring self-efficacy in novel writing can also be developed and adapted from scales of self-efficacy in academic writing. Scales of self-efficacy for novel writing may have more dimensions because novel writing not only involves knowledge elaboration, but it also involves creative thinking processes. Scales measuring self-efficacy in writing can also help investigators develop protocols for qualitative interviews. For example, Bruning, Dempsey, Kauffman, McKim, & Zumbrunn (2013) examined the dimensions of the Self-Efficacy for Writing Scale (SEWS) and identified three dimensions: ideation, conventions, and self-regulation. The scale presented many questions: do you think you can come up with a lot of original ideas? Do you think you can write grammatically correct sentences? Qualitative studies exploring novelists' self-efficacy can expand the understanding dimensions of writing self-efficacy. The self-efficacy scale of Chinese internet novelists could be developed

based on the results of the qualitative studies.

Self-efficacy in Chinese internet novelists. Self-efficacy theory and its related research findings in academic writing may be applied to online novelists' self-efficacy in other ways as well. Based on Bandura's theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1993, 1994, 1997), internet novelists in the present study may have the following characteristics:

- 1) internet novelists with high self-efficacy exert more effort when facing challenges;
- 2) internet novelists with high self-efficacy consider obstacles as goals to be achieved rather than threats to be avoided;
- 3) internet novelists with high self-efficacy may experience more positive emotions during their writing process;
- 4) internet novelists with high self-efficacy are more likely to recover from depression and are less likely to give up writing;
- 5) internet novelists with high self-efficacy may regard failure as a result of an insufficient endeavor.

On the other hand, internet novelists in the present study with low self-efficacy may doubt their capabilities of writing, give up easily when they meet failures, and get depressed because they view themselves as not capable of finishing writing tasks. To form and enhance internet novelists' self-efficacy, Bandura's (1977) four sources of information affect self-efficacy development could be applied. Internet novelists in the present study may also have the following characteristics:

- 1) internet novelists who experienced prior *performance accomplishments* such as success in academic writing would improve their self-efficacy in novel writing;
- 2) internet novelists could learn from *vicarious experience* by observing other writers who have writing achievements and could thus improve their own self-efficacy;
- 3) mentors, friends, and families could provide sufficient encouragement because *social persuasion* affects internet novelists' self-efficacy development;
- 4) positive and negative *emotional arousal*, such as excitement of accomplishing writing tasks and fear of disappointing audiences, may also influence

the development of internet novelists' self-efficacy.

In conclusion, although there are few studies in this area, self-efficacy in online novel writing could be studied using a solid theoretical foundation and finds support from numerous, parallel studies in academic writing. In the present study, interview questions about self-efficacy will be based on the self-efficacy theories and research findings. The current interviews will include questions that focus on 1) how internet novelists perceive their writing ability (e.g., grammar, structure, story, creativities, etc.); 2) what will internet novelists do when facing challenges; 3) do internet novelists consider obstacles as goals to be achieved or threats to be avoided; 4) whether internet novelists experience positive emotions or negative emotions during their writing process; 5) how internet novelists deal with anxiety and depression and whether they have considered giving up writing when they experience negative emotions; 6) how internet novelists attribute their success and failures and whether they attribute their failures to insufficient endeavor on writing practice or their innate ability; 7) whether internet novelists' self-efficacy changes over time; 8) how their prior performance accomplishments in other domains influence their self-efficacy in online novel writing; 9) whether they experience a change in self-efficacy when they observe other internet novelists' success; and 10) whether they receive encouragement or criticism from friends, families, editors, and mentors, and how this encouragement or criticism influences their self-efficacy.

Self-regulation theory and self-regulated strategy development.

Self-regulation is another key aspect of the social cognitive theory. Bandura is also one of the most significant and earliest contributors to the research in self-regulation theory. In *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*, Bandura (1986) wrote several chapters on self-regulation. Bandura

demonstrated the self-regulation process in three steps. The first step is self-observation (also known as introspection), which is a process of deliberate attention to one's behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. The second step is the use of internal standards to judge oneself when comparing current performance with one's goal. The third step is self-response as participants reward or punish themselves for success or failure. These three processes interact with one another. As people observe their behaviors, they may judge themselves with standards and react positively or negatively. People's reactions and evaluations then invoke additional observations of their behaviors. Bandura summarized that "humans are able to control their behavior through a process known as self-regulation (Bandura, 1991, p. 261)."

Zimmerman and Schunk were also significant contributors to self-regulation theory. Zimmerman (1989) supported and supplemented Bandura's three steps of the self-regulation process as he pointed out that these three processes interact with the environment. Zimmerman (1986, 1989) stated that there are three essential components of self-regulation theory: personal (cognitive and emotional), behavioral, and contextual components. Schunk and Zimmerman (1998) provided the cyclical self-regulatory phases of learning, which involve forethought, performance or volitional control, and self-reflection. Each self-regulatory phase consists of several sub-processes of self-regulation. A few years later, Zimmerman (2000) provided a more advanced definition; self-regulation is "self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions that are planned and cyclically adapted to the attainment of personal goals (p. 14)." He also identified self-regulation as the self-directive process through which people transform their mental abilities into task-related skills (Zimmerman, 2001). Beside developing self-regulation theory, Zimmerman and his collaborators did many empirical studies on the self-regulation of learning, academic achievements, and

writing (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1998, 2007; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2007; Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). Their recent research interests are the review and summary of the history of self-regulation theory, self-regulated learning, and suggestions of future directions (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012; Zimmerman, 2008; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011). Zimmerman and Schunk's studies have implications for the study of internet novelists' self-regulation. For example, internet novelists' self-regulation could be described as their self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions that are planned and cyclically adapted to the attainment of their writing goals.

Self-regulation theory was also impacted by Baumeister. He described four components of self-regulation theory as: 1) standards of objective behavior, 2) motivations to meet such standards, 3) evaluation of the situations and thoughts that were likely to break standards, and 4) the strength to control urges (Baumeister, Schmeichel, & Vohs, 2003). He was interested in how and why people fail in self-regulation, and suggested that self-regulation failure was due to the loss of attention control, failure of transcendence, and lapse-activated causes, which were defined as minor initial breakdowns in self-control produce that produce a snowballing effect and that cause catastrophic breakdowns (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996; Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1994).

Self-regulation theory has already been applied to a diverse range of disciplines including education, psychology, marketing, music, public health, athletic and so forth (Bandura, 2005; Graham et al., 2005; Leon-Guerrero, 2008; Williams, Donovan, & Dodge, 2000). Writing, especially elaborative writing in academic settings, has also been the focus of such research (Hammann, 2005; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994).

Writing is a difficult and demanding task that requires extensive self-

regulation and attention control (Graham & Harris, 2000; Hayes & Flower, 1986; Kellogg, 1999; Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). Graham and Harris (2000) reviewed the literature and concluded that writing difficulties were found in many articles because of the lack of self-regulatory skills. Graham and Harris (2003) view self-regulation skill as a basic skill that is required in academic writing, and it is as important in planning, generating content, organizing the composition, translating content into written language, and revising. Schunk and Zimmerman (2007) applied a four-phase model of developing self-regulatory competence: observation, emulation, self-control and self-regulation, and students benefited from the model. This research also found that modeling, the process in which a writer patterns their thoughts and behaviors, is an effective way to build writers' self-efficacy, and motivate them to engage in the self-regulation of writing. Researchers found that students who follow the processes of goal setting, planning, self-motivation, attention control, using flexible strategies, self-monitoring, seeking help appropriately, and self-evaluation in writing will become self-regulated writers (Zumbrunn, Tadlock, & Roberts, 2011). They also pointed out four strategies that could encourage self-regulation in writing: a direct instruction model of self-regulation process, scaffolding in practice and independent practice, social support and feedbacks, and deliberate practice (Zumbrunn et al., 2011). A longitudinal qualitative study of seventeen students conducted by Negretti (2012) indicated that metacognitive awareness (the ability to reflect on, monitor, and control one's thought and knowledge) was another key factor related to self-regulation in students' writing development. Metacognition helps students know how to adapt their self-regulated strategies to specific requirements of writing tasks. Santangelo, Harris, and Graham (2016) have done a meta-analysis of the self-regulation process, using Zimmerman and Risemberg's (1997) model. Their

study indicated that self-regulatory processes are critical to effective writing. These theories may also be applied to online novelists' self-regulation. Based on this evidence, questions about how novelists observe and emulate others, how they enact self-control and self-regulation, how they set up goals, how they plan for their writing, and how they motivate themselves, control attention, monitor themselves, seek help, and evaluate themselves will be part of the focus in the present study.

Research by Harris and Graham (1992) and Hayes and Flower (1986) have suggested that skilled writers are more active and more cognitively involved in the writing process. Skilled writers spend more time on planning, drafting, revising their written text than non-skilled writers. Skilled writers are more active at monitoring their writing (Beal, 1996) than non-skilled writers. In novel writing, writers also need a well-developed set of advanced skills. Writing is time-consuming and monitoring the writing process requires self-regulation for novelists. Thus, self-regulation theory should be applied in online novel writing as well as academic writing. For example, Zimmerman's (1998) cyclical self-regulatory phases could be applied in online novel writing research. In the forethought phase, internet novelists should set goals for their writing, analyze the writing task, and plan strategies for their writing. In the performance phase, internet novelists should focus on their writing, manage their time in writing appropriately, use mental imagery in their writing, create a good environment for everyday writing, and seek help from mentors and peers when needed. In the self-reflection phase, internet novelist should have good self-judgment of their writing performance, self-evaluation when comparing writing outcome with their goals, and causal attribution about results of writing. As empirical evidence shows that self-regulation is a predictor of effective academic writing, we may hypothesize that good self-regulation may help improve internet novelists' writing

performance.

Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) was a model developed by Harris and Graham, and it aimed to help writers master the processes of writing, develop effective writing strategies, and shape positive attitudes about writing (Graham, Harris, & Troia, 1998; Graham & Harris, 1994; Harris, 1996; Harris & Graham, 1992, 1992). SRSD was defined as the instructional approach that helps students deal with difficulties of self-regulation, generation of content, and organization of ideas in writing (Harris & Graham, 1992).

Graham and Harris (2003) believed that students need to learn the mechanics of writing, as well as to develop effective and efficient writing skills. As mentioned earlier, writing involves skills such as planning, generating content, organizing the composition, translating content into written language, and revising. It also requires self-regulation to complete the writing process (Graham & Harris, 2000, 2003). SRSD encourages students to monitor, evaluate, and revise their writing, which in turn enhances their self-regulation and independent learning. SRSD also encourages students to develop autonomous, reflective, self-regulated writing skills, increase the understanding of good writing, and form positive attitudes about writing (Harris, Graham, Mason, & Saddler, 2002). Graham and Harris (Graham & Harris, 1989b) also reported an enhancement of students' self-efficacy beliefs with the SRSD approach.

Graham, Harris, and Troia (1998) demonstrated a six-stage process for SRSD instructions. The first stage is *developing background knowledge* necessary for writing. The second stage is *discussing* when and how to use strategies to achieve writing goals. The third stage is *modeling* the strategies using thinking-aloud, self-talk, and self-instruction. The fourth stage is *memorizing* them and making them your

own. The fifth stage is to use strategies as often as possible and getting *supports* from instructors and peers. The final stage is to use the strategies *independently* across a variety of writing tasks. In this chapter, they also illustrated four characteristics of SRSD (Graham et al., 1998). They are *interactive learning* between instructor and students, *individualization* of instructions so that strategies meet the capabilities and need of students, *criterion-based* instructions which allow students to move on at their own pace, and *developmental process* in which new strategies could be introduced and old strategies could be upgraded. Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2007) also have impacts on SRSD research. Their studies demonstrated that SRSD contributes to improving student's writing performance, attitude toward writing, and self-efficacy.

There are many SRSD approaches such as POW+TREE (Graham & Harris, 1989b), STOP + DARE (De La Paz & Graham, 1997), POW + WWW, What = 2, How = 2 (Santangelo, Harris, & Graham, 2008), PLAN + WRITE (De La Paz & Graham, 2002), PLANS (Mason, Hickey Snyder, Sukhram, & Kedem, 2006), C-SPACE (Harris, 1996) and SCAN (Stoddard & MacArthur, 1993) that were tested among students. I will briefly introduce four models: 1) POW + TREE, which was used in opinion writing; 2) STOP + DARE, which was used in opinion writing; 3) POW + WWW, which was used in story writing. 4) C-SPACE, which was used in story writing.

In the past thirty years, over one-hundred empirical studies have validated the theory that SRSD worked for student writers. The effects of SRSD approach are recognized among scholars in writing research and educators of writing instructions. Approximately 70% of studies were independent replications done by researchers who were not associated with Harris and Graham, the developers of SRSD. Researchers developed different approaches of SRSD for students across age levels

and academic grades (MacArthur, Philippakos, & Ianetta, 2015). SRSD studies were conducted among normal students, students with disabilities or learning difficulties (Mason et al., 2006), and gifted students (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2006; Kaplan, Lichtinger, & Margulis, 2011; MacArthur & Philippakos, 2013; Reid, Hagaman, & Graham, 2014; Sreckovic, Common, Knowles, & Lane, 2014; Vostal & Ward, 2015). Almost all of these studies indicated improvements in writing after applying self-regulated strategies.

To assess whether a strategy is effective for students, researchers should evaluate whether or not students began to spend more time on the writing process and evaluate if motivation and perception among students toward the writing process have changed. Findings indicate that strategy instruction during the planning and drafting phase of writing persuasive essays (e.g., STOP+DARE) is extremely effective (Graham, McKeown, Kiuvara, & Harris, 2012; Kiuvara, O'Neill, Hawken, & Graham, 2012; Santangelo et al., 2008). Among all of these strategies, C-SPACE is the most suitable strategy for online novel writing in literature. C-SPACE instruction may improve internet novelists' goal setting, charting, and monitoring of the amount of time spent on planning (Albertson & Billingsley, 2000). POW + TREE and STOP + DARE, as strategies used in opinion writing, could be applied to brainstorming ideas in novel writing. POW + WWW, as a strategy used in story writing, is also very useful in novel writing. However, this strategy is too simple and only covers the basic elements of creative writing. Compared with POW + WWW, C-SPACE consists of more story elements and more advanced strategies.

The present study was framed generally within a social cognitive perspective in which where person, environment, and behavior are intersecting and interacting (Bandura, 1997). From the self-regulation lens, the present study will focus on four

components of self-regulation of internet novelists: their standard daily writing routines, their motivations for writing, their monitoring of situations of self-regulation failure, and their strength to control urges of distractions. The present study will also ask related questions about what kind of self-regulated strategies internet novelists used in their writing process, and if the use of self-regulation strategies improves internet novelist' writing performance from their perspectives. For example, the current interviews will include questions such as: do you apply any self-regulated strategies? Do you set up specific writing goals? How do you plan your writing time? And how do you control your attention?

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This section describes the research approach utilized in this qualitative study as well as the rationale for the design selection. The intent of this study is to explore the online writing experiences of the Chinese internet novelists and gain an understanding of the phenomena they experienced as they transitioned from novice novel writers to expert novelists.

Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Study

Three research approaches are recognized in the field of social and human sciences: 1) qualitative, 2) quantitative, and 3) mixed methods. The selection of a research design should be based on the nature of the research problem, the researchers' prior experiences, and the audiences for this study (Creswell, 2014). To select an appropriate approach for this study, researchers should identify a worldview with which they are most comfortable when they select a research approach (Creswell, 2014). A study of Chinese internet novelists' deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation has not been conducted, and thus researchers need to establish the meanings of these phenomena observed among Chinese internet novelists. A constructivist worldview will shape this aspect of the study. Second, researchers should consider the research design and research methods when they select a research approach. For an emerging issue like internet novel writing, it is more important to investigate the issue in depth and detail. Thus, a qualitative approach best answers the research question.

Creswell and Poth (2018), in their definition of qualitative research, states:

“Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems

addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change (2018, p. 8).”

This qualitative study begins with assumptions which are based on the theoretical frameworks of deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation. Exploring the issue of what Chinese internet novelists experience as they transit from novice writers to expert novelists makes it a candidate for a qualitative study.

Assumptions and Rationale for a Phenomenological Study

Creswell and Poth (2018) discussed five approaches of qualitative study: narrative study, phenomenological study, grounded theory study, ethnographic study, and case study. A brief description of each approach is in Table 1.

To select from these five approaches, we need to first consider the nature of the research problem. There are solid theoretical backgrounds of deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation. Also, the role of the three factors in academic writing has been frequently explored in literature. However, there is little research on deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation among Chinese internet novelists. Phenomenology is a design that best fits unstructured research problems. It is a design appropriate for topics of which there is little research and few empirical findings in the literature (Groenewald, 2004).

Table 1

Descriptions of Five Qualitative Approaches

Types of Qualitative Approach	Major Attributes
Narrative	It explores individual experiences and tells an individual's story by collecting interviews, observations, pictures, documents, and other forms of qualitative data. A chronology of one or more individuals was shaped by the researcher. Stories were analyzed in varied ways and related to themes.
Phenomenology	It describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. Phenomenological data collection involves interviewing individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. The coding of phenomenological data analysis attempts to find common themes within the recounted experiences of several individuals
Grounded theory	It explores a process, action or interaction that includes several individuals. The data is collected mainly through interviews in which researchers constantly compare data gathered from participants with ideas of the emerging theory.
Ethnography	It focuses on the entire culture-sharing group. An ethnography study usually uses interviews, symbols, artifacts, and observations as part of the data collection to discover any patterns of mental activities, rituals, regularities, and customs of a group. The analytical results of an ethnography study are usually themed documents that give an understanding of how the cultural-sharing group works.
Case study	It provides an in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases. A case study needs to identify a specific case at the beginning. A case study usually examines an event, an activity, or a program of one or more individuals, small groups, or organizations. A case study collects various forms of data such as observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual material. The outcome of a case study is the overall meanings derived from the case(s), which are called assertions, patterns, or explanations.

Note. Adapted from "Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, Choosing Among Five Approaches" by John Creswell and Cheryl Poth (2018).

The role of phenomenology is to reveal meanings that are “hidden” in lived experiences of individuals rather than making inferences. Phenomenology aims to provide a rich description that helps with understanding subjects’ experiences rather than offering causal explanations of those experiences. For this study, the purpose is to gain sufficient knowledge of Chinese internet novelists’ writing experiences. When compared with other approaches, the phenomenological approach seems to be the most appropriate design for this study. This study is not supposed to tell the story of a single internet novelist, and thus the investigator did not choose a narrative approach. This study is not supposed to form a ground theory for internet novelists’ writing practice, and thus the investigator did not choose a grounded theory approach. This study will also not interpret the shared patterns of mental activities, rituals, regularities, or customs for all internet novelists, and thus the investigator did not choose an ethnography approach. This study is likewise not intended to gain an understanding of a case or cases for online novel writing workshops and online novel writing programs, and thus the investigator did not use the case study approach. This study aims to describe the essence of a lived phenomenon of deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation among Chinese internet novelists. It will study ten to fifteen internet novelists who have shared experiences of writing and publishing novels and short stories online. I will describe the essence of their writing experience from analyzing data of interviews, observations, and documents of their works.

The procedures for conducting phenomenological research was introduced by Moustakas (1994) and was adapted by Creswell and Poth (2018). The specific theoretical framework of phenomenological research for this study (see Table 2) will be mainly based on Creswell and Poth (2018) and Moustakas (1994).

Table 2

Compare the Procedures of Phenomenology Introduced by Creswell and Moustakas

Procedures introduced by Creswell	Procedures introduced by Moustakas (a transcendental attitude)
Step 1: Determine if the research problem is best examined using a phenomenological approach.	Step 1 (Epoche): Eliminate suppositions and the raising of knowledge about every doubt.
Step 2: Identify a phenomenon of interest to study.	Step 2 (Phenomenological Reduction): Describe what one sees in text not only externally but internally, the experience between the phenomena and the self.
Step 3: Recognize and specify the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology.	Step 3 (Imaginative Variation): Describing the essential structures of a phenomenon.
Step 4: Data collection.	Step 4 (Synthesis): Integrates the textual and structural descriptions into a statement of the essence of the experience as a whole.
Step 5: Ask participants two broad, general questions (1. What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? and 2. What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?) and other open-ended questions.	

Note. Adapted from “Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, Choosing Among Five Approaches” by John Creswell and Cheryl Poth (2018), and “Phenomenological research methods” by Clark Moustakas (1994).

This study mainly follows Creswell’s processes and applies some parts of Moustakas’ processes. By following Creswell & Poth’s (2018) procedure, I will first determine if the research problem is best examined using a phenomenological approach. Creswell & Poth (2018) claims that phenomenological study “describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (p. 74).” Phenomenology is designed to gather the lived experiences of

individuals. If their experiences are unique and unstudied, then a phenomenological study can generate descriptions and provide an understanding of the research problem that has not been studied in-depth. If the issue has already been well studied, either qualitatively or quantitatively, there is no need to conduct a phenomenological study of the same problem. Due to the novel aspect of the goals here, the phenomenology approach fits well with the nature of the research problem of this study.

I will then identify a phenomenon of interest to study. The purpose of the study is to examine the phenomenon of common meanings and experiences across specific aspects of Chinese internet novelists' online writing experiences. I will address the following research questions:

- 1) How do Chinese internet novelists describe their deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation in their online novel writing?
- 2) How has writing self-efficacy, deliberate practice, and self-regulation influenced writing performance and the development of writing expertise for these novelists?
- 3) Are writing self-efficacy, deliberate practice and self-regulation related to each other? If so, how are they related from the perspective of novelists?

According to Creswell & Poth (2018), a phenomenological study such as this one should focus on describing what novelists have in common as they experience the phenomenon of deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation. I recognized and specified the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology. A detailed literature review about the history of Chinese internet literature and the theory and empirical findings for three major psychological aspects was fully explored. I also wrote about the combination of objective reality and individual experiences.

I collected the phenomenological data. Creswell & Poth (2018) defined features of phenomenology that this study uses to structure the current research and the analyses: 1) the study emphasizes phenomena, phrased in terms of concepts or ideas (e.g., deliberate practice, self-efficacy, and self-regulation); 2) the group of individuals may vary in size from three to four participants to ten to fifteen, and this study recruited fourteen participants; 3) This phenomenology study begins with a philosophical discussion about the basic ideas of deliberate practice, self-efficacy, and self-regulation; 4) the investigator brackets herself out of the study by discussing novelists' experiences within the phenomenon; 5) the data collection procedure includes interviews and other sources of data collected from novelists who have online writing experiences.

The final step, according to Creswell & Poth (2018), is to ask participants two broad, general questions and other open-ended questions. In this study, I will ask broad and general questions as “what you have experienced in terms of deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation?” and “what contexts or situation have typically influenced or affected your deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy and self-regulation for your online writing experiences?” Other open-ended probing questions will be used as needed to gather more detail and keep the interview on track.

According to literature, there are several types of phenomenology (Padilla-Díaz, 2015; Sloan & Bove, 2014; Staiti, 2014). Creswell identified two types of phenomenology: hermeneutic phenomenology and transcendental phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Hermeneutic phenomenology was introduced by Manen (1990). Hermeneutic phenomenology believes that interpretations are the most important thing and the description itself is an interpretive process (Cohen, Kahn, &

Steeves, 2000). It emphasizes the role of the researcher who makes interpretations of meanings of the lived experiences. Transcendental phenomenology was first founded by Edmund Husserl (1970) and elaborated by Moustakas (1994). It places more emphasis on the description of experience of participants and less on interpretations of the researcher. This study has focused on novelists' experience rather than the role of the investigator. "How" and "what," as experienced by internet novelists, will provide the concrete framework as presented by their interview responses. Therefore, this study used the transcendental phenomenology approach. In this approach, the investigator set aside prejudgments in relation to the phenomenon being investigated. The transcendental phenomenology approach used here relied on Chinese internet novelists' experiences, and their stories were told from their own voices and not those of the researchers or investigators reporting the study.

As it shows in Table 2, Moustakas (1994) introduced the transcendental attitude towards the procedures of a phenomenological study. By following these procedures, this study first used the "Epoche" steps while I "set aside" various assumptions and beliefs about the phenomenon so as to examine how the phenomenon presents itself in the world of participants (Moustakas, 1994). Although I mentioned some assumptions in the literature review, I designed open-ended questions and avoided leading or misleading questions during the development of the interview protocol. Second, I used the phenomenological reduction technique to describe just what I see from these Chinese internet novelists, external and internal, and the relationship between phenomenon and self. The purpose of this study was to reduce individual experiences to a description of the universal essence such as the nature of deliberate practice, self-efficacy, and self-regulation among Chinese internet novelists. This description, according to Moustakas (1994), would include "what"

novelist experienced and “how” they experienced it. Third, I viewed the phenomenon under investigation from varying perspectives, varying frames of references, and different roles and functions, which was called imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). Thus, I was able to describe the essential structures of Chinese internet novelists’ online writing experience. Finally, I intuitively integrated the textual and structural descriptions into a statement of the essence of Chinese internet novelists’ online writing experience as a whole using the process of synthesis (Moustakas, 1994).

Sampling and Research Participants

This study used purposive and snowball sampling to actively select the most productive sample to answer the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Creswell & Poth (2018) believed that researchers used a much more narrow range of sampling strategies for phenomenological studies because it is essential that all participants in a phenomenological study should have experience of the phenomenon being studied. Criterion should be set appropriately for phenomenological studies. This sample targeted experienced Chinese novelists who have published several books online or have five to ten years of novel writing experience. The number of participants has a wide range in phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018), Polkinghorne (1989) recommends that researchers interview from 5 to 25 individuals, and Dukes (1984) recommends studying 3 to 10 subjects. This study included fourteen participants as the final group. Subjects from a prior pilot study and from initial data collection were able to recommend potential candidates for the study. I also contacted editors from the online novel websites to approach internet novelists who meet the selection criteria. A diverse group of male and female participants were gathered. The criteria of who be possible participants were approved through the

doctoral committee and the Institutional Review Board (Appendix A). Both committee and IRB granted permission to do the study.

Data Collection Procedures

According to Creswell (2012), a phenomenological data collection involves in-depth interviews from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. Besides interviews and self-reflections, Polkinghorne (1989) suggests researchers gather information from depictions of the experience outside the context of the project to provide diverse forms of data collection.

Moustakas tradition of phenomenology is also used in preparing the data collection in this study. First, to formulate the question, three pilot interviews were done to test the interview questions. I chose the purposive sampling and developed participant criteria. I developed instructions and guiding questions for the interviews. Second, I engaged in the Epoche process by reviewing the interview protocols to create a relaxed atmosphere and to develop rapport for the interview. I also prepared a few social questions and discussion to get the participant to feel comfortable and more willing to open up freely (Moustakas, 1994). I bracket the questions by not to provide personal comments during the interviews.

There are two forms of data that were collected in this study. I first collected documents such as reports, blogs, and presentations from several novelists. Information related to my research interests was presented and analyzed. Compared to interviews, document data may be easier to access, less expensive, and requires minimal cooperation from persons within the setting being studied (Fetterman, 2010). Document data from internet novelists can help the investigator understand internet novelists' value, interest, and position. It may also provide an opportunity to study trends overtime among novelists. The document data can be used both as a sole focus

for data analysis, and as a tool to prompt participants to engage in conversation during interview sessions.

The second form of data that I conducted for this study were face-to-face and synchronous (i.e., Skype) individual interviews. Each interviewing method has its benefits and drawbacks. Skype interview may overcome place limit, and the time flexibility may help the researcher reach more participation (Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour, 2014). In this study, six interviews were conducted on-line. I conducted these interviews in a study room at home without interference. Participants were in study rooms at home, in offices, or at quiet reserved rooms in coffee houses. Face-to-face interviews may provide more social cues, such as voice, intonation, and body language of interviewees, and this can give the interviewer extra information that may be added to the verbal answer of questions (Opdenakker, 2006). Thus, face-to-face interviews is preferred, and eight interviews were conducted face-to-face. I conducted these face-to-face interviews in school offices, at reserved conference room in school libraries, and at quiet reserved room in coffee houses. These face-to-face interviews were conducted in five different cities (Wuhan, Dalian, Shenyang, Beijing, and Shanghai) in China. Each interview lasted for thirty minutes to one hour.

The data collection process is designed to protect participants including the privacy and confidentiality of all participants. The interview protocols, recruitment materials, and informed consent documents (see Appendix B) have been reviewed and approved by the IRB. The interviewees were informed that their information and responses will only be used for research purposes, and information that could reveal their identity will not be used. Interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed by the investigator. Notes related to the content of discussions, observations, and new area of inquiry were also taken during interviews. These notes allowed me to recorded

participants' emotions and values. The transcriptions and related documents were translated into English by the investigator and be rechecked by another researcher who is professional in both Chinese and English language (see a sample transcription in Appendix G).

This study used semi-structured interviews. The investigator developed open-ended questions. The questions were asked based on the interview protocol (see Appendix C). In addition, questions may be changed or added based on the real-life situation. To better understand the perspectives of internet novelists, participants were allowed to ask questions and to some extent guide the direction of the discussion.

Data Analysis Procedures

The coding of phenomenological data analysis attempts to find common themes within the recounted lived experiences of several individuals (Creswell, 2012). Data was reviewed for clarity and validation, and clarification was sought from the respondent by email. Participant names were removed from the data and replaced with pseudonyms. I transcribed all audiotaped interviews. I translated the transcribed interviews from Chinese to English. Another researcher who is fluent in both Chinese and English reviewed my translations. All transcriptions were imported into MAXQDA 2018 for data storage and analysis. MAXQDA is a qualitative data analysis software, which codes similar responses and organized them into relevant themes.

I followed the guidelines for qualitative study summarized by Creswell (2012). First, I obtained a sense of the whole data by reviewing it several times. I extracted significant statements, which are participants' descriptions of their experience of relatedness in writing online novels. Second, a code was given to a cluster of statements that reflects the same or similar experience. This study uses open

coding as the basic coding strategy. Open coding allows the researcher to label concepts, define and develop categories based on their properties and dimensions. Finally, codes were grouped into themes, which are also known as “meaning units”. I also followed the guideline for phenomenology by Moustakas (1994).

I started with significant statements, coded them and grouped them into themes. Each theme has several quotes to support participants’ experience so that I can develop individualized textural and structural descriptions. I integrated the textual and structural descriptions into the essence of the experience as a whole. The specific steps of data analysis shown in Figure 1.

Describe personal experiences with the phenomenon. This step is to help the researcher get personal experiences set aside and then focus on the participants’ stories (Creswell, 2012). I used to write internet novels for two years from 2012 to 2013. I was a master’s student then, so I was writing internet novels part-time. I did not complete my novels. I did not make a living from internet novels and I could be categorized as a Pu-Jie (“Drop-dead on the street”) writer, which was described in Chapter 2. The interviewees were experienced internet novelists who had at least 5 years of online writing experiences or those who had completed several internet novels. Most of the interviewees could be categorized as the Zhong-Shen (“Middle god”) writers, the Da-Shen (“Great god”) writers, and the Zhi-Gao-Shen (“Supreme god”) writers. I realized that my brief on-line writing experience was different from the interviewees, and I should relinquish biases and looked at online writing experience with a fresh eye. Therefore, I need to ensure that I set aside my on-line writing experience and focus on the participants’ stories from the perspective of a researcher.

Horizontalizing. To horizontalize the data, the researcher should first look at

all data as every statement has equal value, and then pick out some irrelevant, repetitive or overlapping statements. For example, I ignored the greetings and farewell between the interviewer and the interviewees. After this, the remaining parts of the data are called horizons. Moustakas (1994) said that horizons are unlimited and horizontalization is a never-ending process. This step was done by both paper and pencil and the MAXQDA. I printed all transcripts, read through them twice, and get a feeling for what has been said about the phenomenon being studied. Then I began the first round of coding. Saldaña (2015, p. 3) introduces the definitions and functions of a code as “(it) is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data.” I coded in-vivo by circling, highlighting and underlining the terms and phrases used by the participants themselves. Descriptive coding, process coding, pattern coding, value coding, and simultaneous coding were also used. For example, I used pattern coding as I assigned a word or short phrase to significant participant quotes or passages for similarities, differences, frequencies, sequences, correspondences, and causations related to the phenomenon being studied. In the second round of coding, I used the MAXQDA and focus on long passages of text and a reconfiguration of the codes to make sure the codes represent and capture primary content and essence of the data.

Reduction of experiences to the invariant constituents. Researchers should cluster horizons into themes and split the data into meaning units so that each theme has only one meaning (Moustakas, 1994). In this step, I arranged the codes in a systematic order and generate categories based on the relationship between codes, code frequencies, and the underlying meaning across codes. For example, I gathered the initial codes such as “happy,” “exciting,” “pleasures,” and “enjoyment” into a

category of “positive emotions”. I used MAXQDA to generate categories because it is easier to organize codes, run code frequencies, explore the relationship between codes, and do memoing in MAXQDA than by handwriting.

Thematic clustering to create core themes. The researcher should cluster and organize the invariant constituents, which are defined as the “core themes of the experience” of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). I gather categories into broader and overarching themes. For example, I combined the categories such as “monitoring”, “daily writing routine”, and “control of distractions” into the core theme of “self-regulation”.

Comparison of multiple data sources to validate the invariant constituents. I compared the themes derived from interviewees’ experiences with other sources of information such as observations, the biographies, presentations, reports, and the literature, to verify accuracy across the data sources.

Write a textural description. The textural description is a narrative that explains participants’ perceptions of a phenomenon, especially what they experienced (Moustakas, 1994). I explained the themes in a narrative format to facilitate the understanding of interviewees’ experiences.

Construction of individual structural descriptions and composite structural descriptions. I used imaginative variation to arrive at a description of how experience occurred for each participant, and then created the individual structure (Moustakas, 1994). I integrated all the individual structural descriptions into a group or universal structural description of the experience explaining how the experience occurred from a broader perspective (Moustakas, 1994).

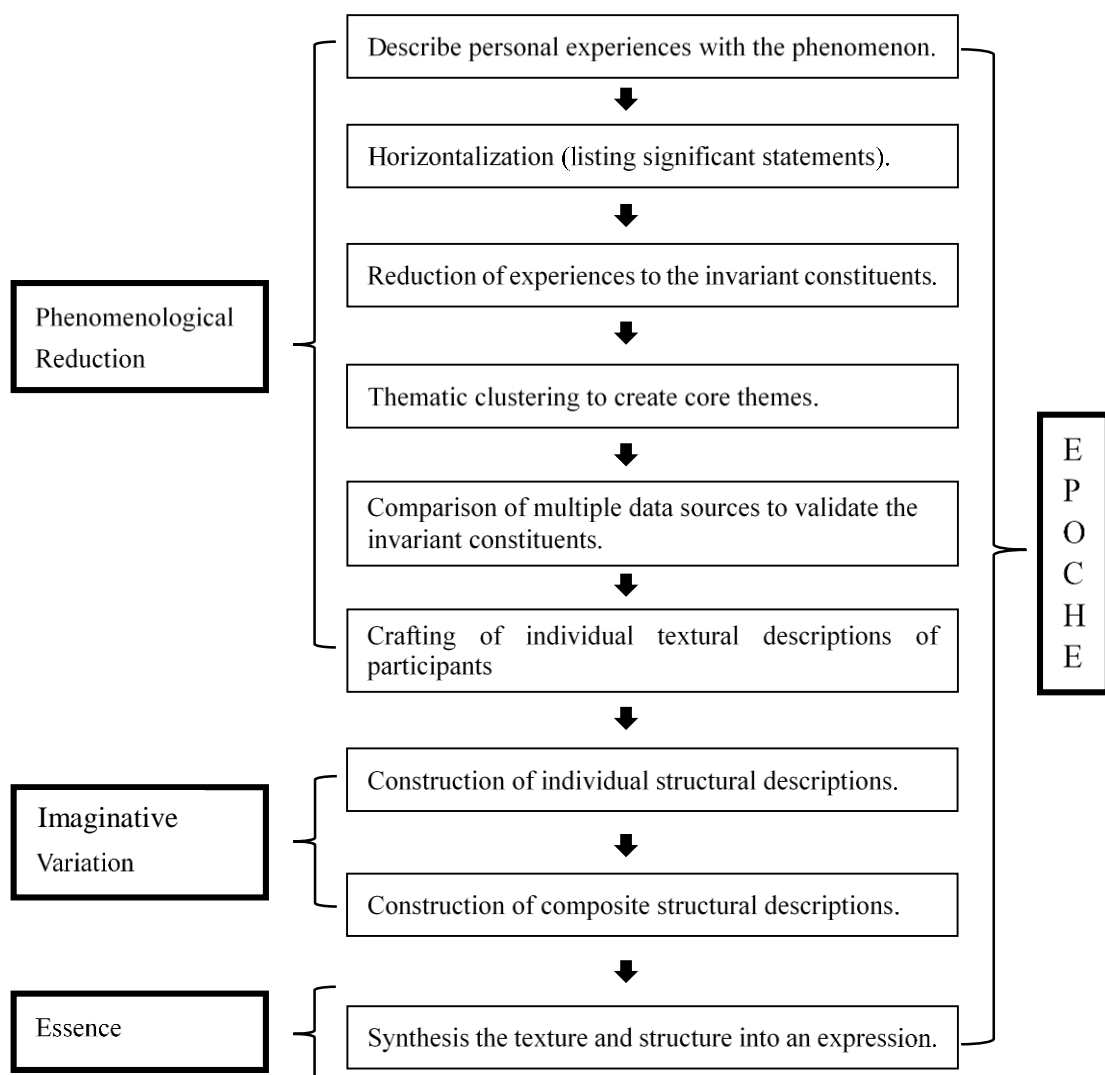
Synthesizing the texture and structure into an expression. The researcher should eliminate individual meaning units to create the essence of the phenomena. I

synthesized all narratives for the group as a whole to reach the essence of the experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

The textural description, individual structural descriptions, composite structural descriptions, and synthesis of composite textural and composite structural descriptions are presented in Chapter 4.

Figure 1

Steps of Data Analysis by Moustakas



Note. Adapted from “Phenomenological research methods” by Clark Moustakas (1994) and “Theoretical Frameworks, Methods, and Procedures for Conducting Phenomenological Studies in Educational Settings” by Pelin Yüksel & Soner Yıldırım (2015).

Validation

Creswell and Miller (2000) introduced several validation strategies to be used in qualitative research, such as prolonged engagement and persistent observation, peer review or debriefing, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, rich and thick description, and external audits (and see Creswell & Poth, 2018). They recommended that researchers should engage in at least two validation strategies in any given study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This phenomenological study used several forms of validation strategies.

First, member checking was used. I sent the transcripts to the interviewees for the review of their accuracy and for additional information that was not covered during the interview. I also sent the three major themes to participants to get their feedback on the findings. Three participants responded. All of them suggested that they were quoted accurately and were pleased to see other participants who have had similar or different experiences. One participant provided additional information (i.e., a CV) for the investigator to refer to during data analysis. Their feedback allowed me to interpret the data appropriately.

Second, Peer review or debriefing was used. A peer provides external check of the research process including the coding process and the themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The peer asked questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations, and provided a researchers' perspective for this study. I shared the preliminary findings with faculty and graduate students from Education Psychology and English Literature in a doctoral seminar. One doctoral student reviewer was surprised about the finding that money was one of the motivations for writing internet novels and she said that "in the U.S., money is rarely the motivation for writing, or for teaching writing." Another reviewer appreciated that I used the MAXQDA to organize themes and to show

possible connections between themes. She asked, “is one genre was more popular than others, and if the genre of the writing influenced their writing self-efficacy.” I replied that some internet novelists did state that they were more confident in their familiar genres and found it challenging in other genres. A reviewer took a careful look at Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. She was confused about the “Writing Practice vs. Innate Ability” subtheme and said that “with respect to which one is more important, your points go back and forth.” I decided to entitle the original subtheme from “Writing Practice vs. Innate Ability” to “Casual Attribution”. I provided a clearer introduction of the “Casual Attribution” and I also reorder the sentences to smooth the logic.

Third, triangulation was used. I collected more data than just the interviews. The appendices include biographies, blogs, and reports that I collected for Chinese internet novelists from those writers who were involved (and some from writers not involved) in my qualitative interviews. The multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories helped provide corroborating evidence (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). These data also helped me better understand the interviews and helped develop themes and perspectives. This additional information expanded my understanding of the overall picture of the themes, and especially provided knowledge on deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation. The information was incorporated into the “Significant Quotes from Other Sources of Data” section and the Subtheme sections in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents an in-depth look at the outcome of the study for the online writing experience of the fourteen interview participants, as well as other sources of data. First, I will present the participants' general background information including demographic information and their writing achievement information. Second, I will provide a description of each of the fourteen interview participants, briefly present their views of experience regarding writing deliberate practice, self-efficacy, and self-regulation. Third, I will review the outcomes of the interviews in the form of three themes and then explain with quotes from these participants. Finally, I will conclude with the essence of their online writing experience.

Participants

A total of fourteen participants were included in this project; six females (42.9%) and eight males (57.1%), ranging from the age of 20 years old to 49 years old (mean=35.57, SD=7.5). Three of them (21.4%) graduated from a community college; nine of them (64.3%) graduated with a bachelor's degree or was currently studying in a university; one of them (7.1%) graduated with a master's degree, and one of them (7.1%) graduated with a Ph.D. degree. Five of them (35.7%) studied business; five of them (35.7%) studied science and technology; and four of them (28.6%) studied liberal arts. Demographic information of these fourteen participants is shown in Table 3.

These participants also self-reported their writing achievements. The specific self-report writing achievements are shown in Table 4. The years of writing ranged from four years to nineteen years (mean=9.43, SD=4.20). The range of words written is from 1,500,000 words to 20,000,000 words (mean=9,321,428, SD=5,957,010). The

hours spent on novel writing ranged from 4,800 hours to 15,840 hours (mean=9,686, SD=3,128). Eight of them (57.1%) indicated that they were full-time writers at present, and six of them (42.9%) reported that they were part-time writers at present. Books they serialized online ranged from three books to twenty books (mean=8.86, SD=4.015). Books they published in print ranged from zero books to twenty books (mean=3.57, SD=5.19).

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Participant # (pseudonym)	Gender	Age	Educational Background	Major
1 (Susan)	female	28	community college	Business
2 (Amy)	female	34	bachelor	business
3 (Mark)	male	34	bachelor	science and technology
4 (George)	male	37	bachelor	science and technology
5 (Sophia)	female	28	bachelor	liberal art
6 (Harry)	male	42	bachelor	science and technology
7 (Grand)	male	35	bachelor	liberal art
8 (Austin)	male	35	community college	liberal art
9 (Sam)	male	46	community college	business
10 (Tyler)	male	35	bachelor	business
11 (Julia)	female	31	master	science and technology
12 (Jessica)	female	44	bachelor	business
13 (Diana)	female	20	bachelor	liberal art
14 (Leo)	male	49	doctor	science and technology

Table 4 *Self-report Writing Achievement*

Participant	Years of Writing	Words Written	Hours Spent	Full-Time or Part-time	Books Serialized	Books Published
1 (Susan)	6	7,000,000	10,428	full-time	10	0
2 (Amy)	5	5,000,000	6,890	part-time	8	0
3 (Mark)	15	12,000,000	10,560	full-time	12	2
4 (George)	19	8,000,000	13,034	full-time	4	1
5 (Sophia)	5	1,500,000	6,000	full-time	3	0
6 (Harry)	13	20,000,000	13,800	part-time	9	1
7 (Grand)	5	5,000,000	6,750	part-time	6	0
8 (Austin)	10	3,000,000	12,000	full-time	10	9
9 (Sam)	12	20,000,000	15,840	full-time	20	20
10 (Tyler)	11	17,000,000	9,900	full-time	7	3
11 (Julia)	9	9,000,000	6,570	part-time	12	4
12 (Jessica)	10	10,000,000	10,080	full-time	8	6
13 (Diana)	4	2,000,000	4,800	part-time	9	2
14 (Leo)	8	11,000,000	8,960	part-time	6	2

Individual Structural Description

Each participant articulated and verbalized his/her experiences during the interview. In this section, I will explicate the structures of each one's experience distinctively to present the essential elements of an experience for each participant. The experience of the phenomenon will focus on participants' current writing achievements, their perspective of deliberate practice, the beliefs of their writing self-efficacy, and their views of self-regulation.

Participant 1.

The interview with Susan (Participant 1) was conducted via a video conferencing platform. Susan was a 28-years-old female writer who has written internet novels for six years and works full-time as an internet novelist. She had serialized ten books on the internet and had not published a book in print. According to the description of her achievements, she could be categorized as a Zhong-Shen ("Middle god") writer. She regarded herself as "I'm not much of a diligent writer." But when asked about her daily writing routine, she answered that "I wrote eight to ten hours a day", and "(wrote) 8,000 to 10,000 words of an update per day". She got training on writing at different institutes and she thought that "I learned writing skills there (institutes)" and the training experience "broadened my horizon." She believed the innate ability for writing and practice were equally important, and she claimed that her "talent is very good," and her "innate ability was not as good as some friends." She was motivated to be a writer because of "interest" and she could make a living from writing. She was interested in writing because she "enjoyed writing so much" and she was a person who "has a strong desire to express myself." Her goal was to make "my readers like what I wrote" and she "did not have much obsession to be the Great-God writer." She thought her confidence on writing "goes up and down, and it

depends on real-time circumstances”; basically, her confidence level decreased, and she quoted that, “the newborn calf was not afraid of tigers.” She thought readers’ feedback was very important, and the support from friends and family also helped her built confidence. She used the *Da Shen Writing App* (Note: this app has the writing competition function that provides a rank list of writing speed and words-count for writers who signed in and created writing tasks together.) to monitor her writing progress and to control the distractions. She got very regular schedule as she worked full-time and the schedule “was similar to an employee in a company.”

Participant 2.

The interview with Amy (Participant 2) was conducted via a video conferencing platform. Amy was a 34-years-old female writer who had written internet novels for five years and worked part-time as an internet novelist. She was currently a producer for short films and children’s plays. She had serialized eight books on the internet and had not published a book in print. According to the description of her achievements, she could be categorized as a Xiao-Shen (“Tiny god”) writer. She regarded herself as “... a diligent internet novelist.” She wrote two to three hours a day for the first year, spent seven to eight hours (full-time) for two years, and now she worked part-time again. She neither got any training for writing nor had a real mentor. She thought she had writing talent, but “gradually felt that the writing talent was not high enough.” She believed that “writing practice can enlarge the effect of writing talent.” She was motivated to be an internet novelist because it is a hobby for her, and she said that “it is an ideal career that I turn my hobby into a job... I love it from the bottom of my heart. I have enthusiasm...” The income is also a motivator for her and she said that “if an internet novelist is diligent, there will certainly be a harvest.” She was also motivated to write internet novels because of

peer pressure. She was the executive director of a regional writers' association, and thus she wanted to perform better than other writers. Her long-term goal was to "adapt my own internet novel into a TV play or a movie." She hoped that her book would "have a positive impact on readers." Her writing self-efficacy was high at first because "an ignorant person is not afraid of anything". Her writing self-efficacy went down as "when my novels were not sold as well as theirs, I began to think about the issue. Why their novels sell well?" She thought readers' feedback is "controversial" and she would feel annoyed when she received criticisms. Her friends and family were encouraging and supportive, and thus she was "always a confident girl". She has a healthy schedule for writing. She regulated herself and tried to avoid distractions and she stated, "I would not be distracted by (social media) if I wake up and work early."

Participant 3.

The interview with Mark (Participant 3) was conducted via a video conferencing platform. Mark was a 34-years-old male writer who had written internet novels for 15 years and worked full-time as an internet novelist. He had serialized 12 books on the internet. Two of his books were published in print, and one work has been filmed as a TV series. According to the description of his achievements, he could be categorized the Da-Shen ("Great god") writer. He believed that practice was more important than innate ability and he said that "the key is to write more.... I improved my writing skills through constant practice... Persistence is also a key to success." He did not get any training or had any mentors for real, and he said that "I am basically self-taught." He was motivated to be an internet novelist because he "...loved writing very much so that I can stick to it"; he also had "ambitions to write good stories" and had faith that "efforts will be rewarded". His career goal was to

“write novels that I am satisfied with at every stage of my life...generate various ideas which incorporate my experience and insights about life into my novels.” His writing self-efficacy is relatively high as he said “I think I am very confident in the field I am good at... I am very confident about this topic (romantic stories), but I’m not sure about other topics or genres.” He said that he was “almighty” when he wrote novels in his 20s, but nowadays, he stated that “I doubt myself and I wonder if I can write good novels after 30”. He also talked about how he dealt with the fluctuation of writing self-efficacy and said that “every time I lost my confidence, I would encourage myself that my confident would come back if my next novel is good”. The feedback from readers influenced his self-efficacy as “if I receive criticism, I will doubt myself.” He mentioned his experience of meeting some readers by coincidence in real life and his readers said, “Your novels are well written, and I love them.” He believed that readers’ words are true motivation for him. He evaluated himself as “...not very self-disciplined.” He got a flexible daily writing routine, and “if I feel not good, I will not write for the moment.” He thought that “internet novelists’ lives are monotonous”.

Participant 4.

The interview with George (Participant 4) was conducted via a video conferencing platform. George was a 37-years-old male writer who had written internet novels for 19 years and worked full-time as an internet novelist. He had serialized four books on the internet and had published one book in print, which was also adapted to a movie. According to the descriptions of his achievements, he could be categorized as a Zhong-Shen (“Middle god”) writer. He had extensive writing experience including the traditional literature, script writing, and internet literature. Writing internet literature is one of his career paths and he regarded himself as a scriptwriter and internet novelist, and “(his) script writing and internet novel writing

are overlapped.” He mentioned several mentors who helped him with his writing practice, including his Chinese teacher at high school, and the mentor in script writing and traditional literature. He believed that his “innate ability is the eloquence.” He attributed his success for writing to “spending abundant of time on writing.” He was motivated to be an internet novelist because he found that the internet is “more convenient than the traditional contribution methods.” His goal in writing was to “write something classic and influential, and to be recognized and understood by others.” His writing self-efficacy was high, and he said that “I am always confident.” His confidence came from the praises from celebrated writers and from his success in other areas (e.g. he used to work as a compere in TV shows). He talked about the experience of running away from home as “my family thought I shouldn’t resign the job at the TV station and write novels at home. They could not accept my decision.” He thought he received much encouragement and support from his readers, mentors, and editors. He thought he was not good at self-regulation, and humorously said that “you can tell from my fat figure.” He used some tools to assist his writing as he mentioned that “the *Xunfei App* transcribes my narrations to text.”

Participant 5.

The interview with Sophia (Participant 5) was conducted face-to-face in a reserved meeting room in Shanghai. Sophia was a 28-years-old female writer who had written internet novels for five years and worked full-time as an internet novelist. She had serialized three books on the internet. She had not published her internet novels in print, but she had published a collection of articles for her historical research in print. According to the descriptions of her achievements, she could be categorized as a Xiao-Shen (“Tiny god”) writer. She was the only person who studied Chinese language and literature among these fourteen writers. She received training on novel

writing in college and she mentioned the help from a professor as “he was a professor of comparative literature. I’d like to discuss writing with him”. However, she also mentioned that “my teachers could not follow my rhythm. The strategies and methods they taught were all those I had already tried... The knowledge I learned from school was limited”. She thought she had the innate ability of sensitivity when she dealt with words and sentences. She also thought that “I am not smart... Diligence is very important.” She was motivated to be an internet novelist because she loved reading, “writing is a hobby... the income is a motivator...” Another interesting motivator was her child, as she wrote a slogan on her writing program that “My love – mom promises to make every effort for you.” Her writing self-efficacy was low, and her writing self-efficacy fluctuated frequently. She thought that “readers like to flatter the writers nowadays...” and she received many positive comments from readers. She also received encouragement and positive feedback from family and friends, and she mentioned that “we may discuss the plots unconsciously during a board game, and I was suddenly enlightened.” She stated that “deadline is the god... I was lazy, and the editor would send me a reminder.” She used the *Little Black House* (this app requires a writer to set up a time period or a word count to lock the writer mandatory. If a writer could not finish the task goals they set, he/she would not be able to sign out the software) and the *Da Shen Writing App* to monitor her writing plans and schedules.

Participant 6.

The interview with Harry (Participant 6) was conducted face-to-face in a study room at the apartment in the city of Wuhan. Harry was a 42-years-old male writer who had written internet novels for 13 years and worked part-time as an internet novelist. He was a technology teacher at a high school. He had serialized nine books and had published one book in print. According to the descriptions of his

achievements, he could be categorized as a Zhong-Shen (“Middle god”) writer. He believed that talent was more important than practice. He attributed the success of his writing career to talent rather than practice, but he thought he had perseverance. He was self-taught and did not get any training in writing. He was motivated to be an internet novelist because “the love for literature... and money should be another impetus.” His goal for his writing career is to “challenge myself and write something new.” His writing self-efficacy is not high. He believed that he was a “competent writer, not an excellent writer,” and he stated that “my writing is simple and straightforward.” He said that his writing self-efficacy changed because of the “social identity.” He stated that “I thought traditional writers would say we internet novelists were stragglers and disbanded soldiers, and they are the official army... My confidence level continuously increased because of the uplift of the social identity for all internet novelists.” His writing self-efficacy would also change because of readers’ feedback. He had to work in the day time, so he wrote novels in the evening for five to six hours. He thought that he was a “nocturnal animal” and usually go to bed late after 12 am. He was trying to change his daily routine because of the health issue. He was a self-regulated writer and he mentioned the experience of “during those (busy) days, even though I was so tired when I got home, I still finished the daily writing task. When I woke up in the morning, I found myself bending over on the desk in front of the computer.” He used *Da Shen Writing App* and the *Little Black House* to monitor his writing progress and “compete with other writers for writing quantity and writing speed.”

Participant 7.

The interview with Grand (Participant 7) was conducted via a video conferencing platform. Grand was a 35-years-old male writer who had written internet

novels for five years and worked part-time as an internet novelist. He was a company employee. He had serialized six books on the internet and had not published a book in print. According to the descriptions of his achievements, he could be categorized as a Pu-Jie (“Drop-dead on the street”) writer. He believed that talent was more important than practice, and he believed that “practice helps me target my audience... Practice is a way to learn how to write, but those who have talent might already know... practice may help one experience fewer detours.” He got training at a writing training camp at an internet literature website. He was motivated to be an internet novelist because he “love literature...and really want to express myself.” His goal for writing career is to “join the China Writers Association.” He stated that he did not make much money from internet literature, and he did not write novels for money. He had relatively high writing self-efficacy and stated that “I’m confident that my writing is better than others for the same (history) genre.” But he also said that “I was not as confident as before.” He thought that feedback from editors and great-god writers influenced him a lot. He learned from their suggestions. He mentioned that “I was seldom influenced by readers... I can’t satisfy all the readers, and I will not follow all of their suggestions.” He thought he was a self-regulated writer and stated that “I persist in writing.” He had a regular daily writing schedule. He used the *Da Shen Writing App* to write novels and monitor his writing progress, and he often “observe other writers ranking list on the app.”

Participant 8.

The interview with Austin (Participant 8) was conducted face-to-face in a reserved meeting room at a coffee house in Dalian city. Austin was a 35-years-old male writer who had written internet novels for ten years and works full-time as an internet novelist at present. He had serialized ten books on the internet and had

published nine books in print. According to the descriptions of his achievement, he could be categorized as a Da-Shen (“Great god”) writer. He attributed his success of writing career to innate ability as he stated that “I did not deliberately cultivate my writing ability, which may be a gift to me.” He mentioned that his father was a writer and his father asked him to read numerous books when he was young. He described his practice as “the best way to cultivate writing ability is observation, summarization and synthetization.” He rarely got any training, and he believed that all sage writers in the history were good mentors for him. He also mentioned that he got enlightenment from a mentor who wrote traditional literature. He was motivated to be an internet novelist because of his life experience and he stated that “I need to prove my social value and prove my ability.” He was also motivated when he found that he could perform better than other internet novelists. His goal for writing career was to gain the recognition of both internet literature and traditional literature domain. His writing self-efficacy was not high, and he stated that “I was not very confident ten years ago because of the discouragement from my father.” Now success greatly increased his self-efficacy in writing. He thought that the feedback from readers was usually encouragement, although he occasionally received criticisms from his family. Both encouragement and criticisms influenced his writing self-efficacy. He was not self-regulated and mentioned that “my schedule was chaos. I don’t have a fixed time to wake up.” No software was used to monitor his writing progress and he stated that “I don’t agree with the way that turning writing into a daily task, or a daily constraint.”

Participant 9.

The interview with Sam (Participant 9) was conducted face-to-face in a reserved meeting room in Shenyang city in a group interview with two other interviewees including Tyler (Participant 10) and Julia (Participant 11). Sam was a

46-years-old male writer who had written internet novels for 12 years and worked full-time as an internet novelist. He had serialized 20 books on the internet and had published 20 books in print. His books were also translated into Thai and Vietnamese and published in foreign countries. Two of his books had already been adapted to TV series. According to the descriptions of his achievement, he could be categorized as a Zhi-Gao-Shen (“Supreme god”) writer. He believed that talent is more important than practice, and he stated that “the talent I mentioned is not about innate ability gifted by God. I think talent is the personality that nurtured from reading and learning”. He thought that “my talent is the ability to tell stories... My writing style might not be exquisite, but I can tell a good story.” He was motivated to be an internet novelist because he loved literature, and he stated that “I just want to be a storyteller...I was pleased when people were listening to my stories.” His goal for the writing career is to be more influential in Chinese literature field. His writing self-efficacy is high as he specifically listed that “I’m good at characterization and designing plots,” and he also mentioned that “I was not good at organizing structure.” His self-efficacy fluctuated because his first novel was so successful that the following ones were not as good as expected. He thought his writing self-efficacy fluctuated as a “U shape.” He paid much attention to readers’ feedback, and he felt encouraging when a reader knew his ideas and tricks in the novels. His daily writing routine changed over the years. He stated that “self-regulation impacts my writing speed and stability of my writing”. He did not use any tools to monitor his writing progress and he did not purposefully prevent himself from distractions.

Participant 10.

The interview with Tyler (Participant 10) was conducted face-to-face in a reserved meeting room in Shenyang city in a group interview with two other

interviewees including Sam (Participant 9) and Julia (Participant 11). Tyler was a 35-years-old male writer who had written internet novels for 11 years and worked full-time as an internet novelist. He had serialized seven books on the internet and had published three books in print. According to the descriptions of his achievements, he could be categorized as a Zhong-Shen (“Middle god”) writer. He believed that practice is more important than innate ability for him. He said that “I don’t have any innate ability on writing. My strength is that I can sit still for a long time...My diligent surpass my innate ability.” He was motivated to be an internet novelist because he wanted to make a living by writing internet novels and he stated that “(if I write), I can buy a house and a car, and I can feed my wife and kid.” Another motivation is that his family did not support him, and he wanted to prove that he could be successful and “do not admit being defeat.” His goal of the writing career is “to steadily transfer from internet writer to an IP seller.” He said that his writing self-efficacy “rises perpendicularly,” and his writing self-efficacy increases because he found that “my book could actually influence others.” He felt that readers’ feedback was encouraging and he believed that “readers are our best teachers.” He regarded himself as a self-regulated writer and he thought “90% of my success was due to self-regulation.” He used the *Da Shen Writing App* to monitor his writing, and he stated the “the only way to monitor our writing is to be self-regulated in mind.”

Participant 11.

The interview with Julia (Participant 11) was conducted face-to-face in a reserved meeting room in Shenyang city in a group interview with two other interviewees including Sam (Participant 9) and Tyler (Participant 10). Julia was a 31-years-old female writer who had written internet novels for nine years and currently worked part-time as an internet novelist. She had serialized 12 books on the internet

and had published four books in print. According to the descriptions of her achievements, she could be categorized as a Zhong-Shen (“Middle god”) writer. She believed that innate ability is more important than writing practice for her. She thought that she should “endure the loneliness and write consistently without a halt”. She neither got any training nor guidance from mentors. She used to have an opportunity to attend the Luxun Literature Institute, but she rejected the offer because of her job. She was motivated to write internet novels because she found that some internet novels were not good, and she “could write a better one.” She was also motivated because she had strong passion to express herself, and she “enjoyed writing.” Money was another motivator as she mentioned that “my income was higher than my professor when I was in the second year of graduate school. I was so happy and proud.” Her goal was to sell her novels as IP and to adapt them to movies. Her writing self-efficacy was moderate, and she thought that “I have a strong logic ability, and I can design a complicated plot.” She thought she should learn how to write with good rhythms. Her writing self-efficacy decreased for a while because she quit writing for a year, and now her writing self-efficacy bounced back. Feedback from readers influenced her writing self-efficacy. She stated that “the humiliations from readers hurt me deeply.” She mentioned that writers’ feedback was valuable for her. She was a self-regulated writer, and she stated that “I usually wake up at 5 am and write for an hour.” She used the *Little Black House* to monitor her writing progress and she believed that “it increased my writing speed and writing quantity, but it also sacrifices the writing quality.”

Participant 12.

The interview with Jessica (Participant 12) was conducted face-to-face in a reserved meeting room at a coffee house in Wuhan city. Jessica brought her 18-year-

old daughter with her, and she also brought out some ideas during the interview.

Jessica was a 44 years-old female writer who had written internet novels for ten years and worked full-time as an internet novelist. She had serialized eight books on the internet and had published six books in print. According to the descriptions of her achievements, she could be categorized as a Da-Shen (“Great god”) writer. At first, she thought that the innate ability and writing practice were equally important for her. She stated that “crafting a story is my talent, but how to tell a story requires me to practice more”. After the discussion, she changed her mind and said, “I think my practice accounts for 70% and my talent accounts for 30%”. In addition, her daughter talked about her talent on telling stories and stated that “the integrity and attractiveness of my mom’s narration were way better than others”. She had some training, but she felt that those training “did not achieve the desired aims, and some are counter-productive”. She was motivated to be an internet novelist because her idol was a good internet novelist and she wanted to write novels like her. Writing was only an interest at first, and she was motivated to continue writing because she gained a lot of compliments from readers. The income was another motivator. Her goal was to “extend and prolong my writing career.” Her writing self-efficacy was not high, and she stated that “I’m a responsible and capable internet novelist.” Her writing self-efficacy went down, and she quoted that “the newborn calves are not afraid of tigers.” She thought that immediate feedback was very important for her. She wanted more readers to support her and love her novel. She did not reveal her identity of an internet literature to her colleagues and she considered about quitting her job two years ago. She received positive feedback and supports from family. She regarded herself as a self-regulated writer. She mentioned that “I gave up the TV shows and movies and went to the study room and write until midnight.” She believed that she became more

self-regulated because she should be responsible for her readers, and she stated that “I never suspend my updates, and I always update daily chapters on time.” She did not use any tools to monitor her writing progress.

Participant 13.

The interview with Diana (Participant 13) was conducted via a video conferencing platform. Diana was a 20 years-old female writer who had written internet novels for four years and worked part-time as an internet novelist. She had serialized nine books on the internet and had published two books in print. According to the descriptions of her achievements, she could be categorized as a Zhong-Shen (“Middle god”) writer. She believed that she was a mediocre person in writing and she felt practice was more important than innate ability for her. She neither had a mentor nor got any training. According to her own experience, she claimed that it was unnecessary to have a mentor on writing. She was motivated to be an internet novelist so she could become independent and make money, and she mentioned that “I didn’t want to spend my parents’ money...I don’t have a literature dream and making money is the only purpose.” Another motivator for her is to sell the copyright and become famous overnight so that she can ask her favorite actors to act in her stories. Her goal was to write better novels and become famous overnight. Her writing self-efficacy was not high, and she stated that “I often felt hurt when I compared myself with other writers...sometimes I think my novel was a piece of trash.” Her writing self-efficacy went down through time as she mentioned that “I had an exaggerated expectation of my writing abilities. I thought I was great at first.” She was encouraged by the positive feedback, and “hardly insulted” by the negative feedback. She thought she had a fragile heart and suffered from stress if she was humiliated. An interesting quote from her was “another reason for my anger is that I once thought the reader’s

criticism was right, and I was really stupid.” She claimed that she was not a self-regulated writer and she said that “sometimes I tried to push myself to my limit and write 8 hours a day...but if I was lazy, I would even turn off my computer for a whole day.” She also stated that “the only judge to supervise me is my conscience.” She used to use the writing software to monitor her writing but failed. Another strategy she applied was that “I captured those negative comments as screenshots, and I used the screenshots as the desktop background. Thus, I looked at those humiliating comments every day, and I found peace in my heart eventually.”

Participant 14.

The interview with Leo (Participant 14) was conducted face-to-face in his office at a university in Beijing. Leo was a 49 years-old male writer who had written internet novels for eight years and worked part-time as an internet novelist. He was a professor at a university. He had serialized six novels on the internet and had published two books in print. According to the description of his achievement, he could be categorized as a Da-Shen (“Great god”) writer. He stated that “my writing skills comes entirely from my writing practice...I am diligent.” He thought that his talent for imagination was not as good as others. He did not get any training and did not have any mentor. He stated that “the knowledge schema that makes up my writing ability is scattered. I may have got some inspiration from others, but those people were not impressive enough for me to honor as mentors.” He was motivated to be an internet novelist because he wrote articles on a BBS (Bulletin Board System) for free for 6 years, and he realized that he could get paid from writing internet novels. Another motivator is that “(it) satisfy my desire to express myself.” His goal was to “write something satisfying,” but he was a little tired in writing and lacked creative passion. He had a high level of writing self-efficacy. His writing self-efficacy went up

through time, and he stated that “the more I write, the faster I think, and the higher my ability to express myself...and I did a good job in my subdivision.” He regarded himself as a veteran writer when he first wrote internet novels. He stated that “I was in a state of disregarding all honor and disgrace.” His mother supported him, but his wife was not very supportive at first. He stated that “the criticisms did not hurt my confidence, but some positive feedback increased my confidence.” He felt tired in writing, and lack the creative passion, and thus he was not a self-regulated writer. He stated that “my morning time was spent on these trifles such as posting *Weibo* (a Chinese microblogging website launched by Sina Corporation) and reading news, and he slept late at night and woke up late in the morning. He did not use any tools to monitor his writing progress, and he said that “I wrote novels spontaneously.”

Significant Quotes from Other Sources of Data

Documents such as reports, blogs, and presentations from several novelists were collected. The document data is a compliment for the interview data and comparing multiple data source could validate the invariant constituents for the qualitative data analysis.

A report (Geng, 2019) for the exclusive interview with Mr. Zhi, an internet novelist who wrote profession novels such as stories about the petroleum energy industry, the biology academy, and the medical profession, presents how Mr. Zhi practice his writing and improved his writing self-efficacy. Mr. Zhi described writing as “a high cost of learning.” As his latest novel was about medical expertise, he read 800 pages of anatomy and surgery textbooks and investigated numerous medical journals, in order to avoid mistakes in common sense and technical parameters. During the interview, Mr. Zhi could describe the surgical procedures for liver resection and cardiac resuscitation in detail. Mr. Zhi also did the field trip for one

month, and he observed and took notes in several surgeries at a hospital. Mr. Zhi has written internet novels for 13 years, and he wrote six novels with a total of 13,000,000 words. He said that “I update 3000 words a day and never took a break during these years.” He enjoyed writing which was not regarded as a burden for him. He had high self-efficacy as he said, “my book was recognized and approved by doctors and medical student.” This report data shows that observation and field trip are critical components of writing practice, and some writers (e.g. Mark and Austin) among the 14 participants also mentioned the role of observation and field trips during their interviews.

In another news report (Du, 2017), Mr. Tang, one of the wealthiest internet novelists in China, said that “if you consistently write, you will be rewarded...I’ve written internet novels every day in 13 years...Only when readers notice the updates, they will subscribe to my novels and follow my stories.” Mrs. Ye said, “once, my friend invited me to participate in a cherry harvest, I woke up at 5 am and finished my update for that day. When I finished my writing at 7 am, my friend just woke up.” She also mentioned that “when I was having celebration dinner with my family on Chinese New Year’s Eve, I was thinking about my writing and my updates.” The report emphasizes that internet novelists’ writing practice usually involves explicit goals and tasks. It also indicated that writing practice requires time, energy, and high levels of repetition though many years.

There was a question “How to be systematically trained to be an internet novelist?” (Fu, Liu, Shi, & Pi, 2017) posted on zhihu.com, which is a questions-and-answers website similar to Quora. Nineteen internet novelists answered this question. The top voted answer described how the writer had trained himself to write concisely and comprehensively. A female Great-God novelist answered this question and said,

“Some training in the market only taught writers how to imitate others. Writers who got that training would only produce ‘assembly line products’.” An internet novelist mentioned that he taught writing in colleges and companies last year. He said that “writing could be systematically trained by learning and practice...The level a writer can reach depends on the determination of squeezing the talent out...Beside training for the use of language, the training for self-regulation, how to sustain daily writing progress, how to write the outline, how to deal with obstacles during writing process, how to manage the health issue such as pain from cervical spine problems and tenosynovitis, how to increase typing speed and accuracy, and how to utilize fragmented time, etc.” These answers indicated that these internet novelists realized that systematic training is crucial in their writing practice. However, most of these internet novelists were oppose to the existing training in the market. Similar viewpoints could be found in the interviews among 14 participants. For example, Jessica said, “some young writers could not get the point, so they sometimes lost themselves in the training and don’t know how to write. Therefore, I think some of the training did not achieve the desired aims, and they are counter-productive.”

Core Themes

In Chapter 3, I introduced my data analysis procedure and showed the three-step coding process from codes to categories to themes. In this study, the data analysis involves multi-stage coding into highly analytical levels from codes (e.g., happy, interest, passions, reading, mentoring) to categories (e.g., training and mentoring, motivation, emotional arousal) and ultimately into three core themes (i.e., deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation). The initial coding procedure involved a hand-coding that I developed substantial codes describing, naming or classifying the phenomenon under consideration. I repeated the open coding several

times to get a closer look at the data and to gain new insights. A sample of hand-coding is presented in Appendix H. I used the MAXQDA for the initial coding as well. The MAXQDA provides multiple tools to assist with the open coding. For example, the Word Cloud feature allows me to visualize the words frequency and find out the keywords (e.g., emotions, encouragement, income, reading, and confidence) that could be coded (see Appendix I). I also used the MAXQDA to focus on long passages of text and began to foreshadow what will ultimately become categories.

Guetterman, Babchuk, Howell-Smith, and Stevens (2017, p. 5) defined category as “a type or grouping of similar or closely related codes or concepts generated through inductive data analysis”. I generated categories based on the relationship between codes, underlying meaning across codes, and code frequencies. For example, when describing their experiences, participants expressed their emotions in different ways. Susan said, “I suffered a lot when I wrote that novel...I’m very happy when I chat with her...if I could read books, I would be so pleased...I wrote a very enjoyable book that year...I felt so bad that I need to update 10,000 words before 12 am that day...Reader’s feedback affects my mood...” The initial coding for her was “suffer,” “happy,” “pleased,” “enjoyable,” “felt so bad,” and “affects my mood.” Then I gathered “happy,” “pleased,” and “enjoyable” into a subcategory of positive emotions; I gathered “felt so bad” and “suffer” into a subcategory of negative emotion; according to her description, “affect my mood” involves both positive emotion and negative emotion, and thus I assigned “affect my mood” into the category of emotional arousal; subcategory positive emotions and subcategory negative emotions could be gathered into the category of emotional arousal.

The final step is generating themes from categories. In this process, I compared categories and looked for the overarching themes that encompass a broad

array of categories that fall under it. For example, I identified the deliberate practice theme by main characteristics of deliberate practice introduced by Ericsson et al. (1993). Thus, effortful exertion, motivation, goals, timely feedback, and repetition and tasks are the major five categories (subthemes) for the deliberate practice theme. In addition, almost all participants mentioned the influence of reading. According to their description, reading was a type of practice for them. Training and mentoring, concentration, and awareness of readership were also introduced by these participants. These three categories could also fall under the deliberate practice theme because the underlying meanings were related to deliberate practice. Therefore, deliberate practice encompasses nine categories, such as Effortful Exertion, Motivation, Goals, Timely Feedback, Repetition and Tasks, Reading, Training and Mentoring, Concentration, and Awareness of Readership. As some categories might overlap through different themes, I assigned the controversial categories into the theme that fits the theory. For example, the “Casual Attribution” category could fit in both the Deliberate Practice theme and the Writing Self-efficacy theme. As self-efficacy is one's belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task (Bandura, 1994), participants' descriptions of where they think their writing skill comes from (i.e., innate ability and practice) might fit the writing self-efficacy theme better. The overall process of coding is shown in Table 5. The charts for category frequencies in each theme were shown in Figure 2, 3 and 4. The category frequencies for all subthemes was displayed by a code cloud in Figure 5, whose format was that the more frequently coded themes larger and centered. The summary grid for three themes and their categories displayed by times of occurrence among 14 participants is shown in Appendix J.

The specific findings are organized by each theme. For each theme, categories

and subcategories will be outlined, presented through narratives and visuals, and together with supporting a rich description of participants' experiences and quotes.

Participants are identified with pseudonyms.

Table 5

Coding Process from Initial Codes to Themes

Sample Initial Codes	Sub-categories (Tallied Responses)	Categories (Tallied Responses)	Themes
7-8 hours, long-length novels, six million words, I am diligent, practice a lot, etc.		Effortful Exertion (106)	
interest, passions, couldn't stop writing, inner will, attracted, have fun, etc.	intrinsic motivation (75)		
money, income, social status, poor, felt respected, responsible for the readers, etc.	extrinsic motivation (56)	motivation (134)	
wrote every day, tight schedule, keep writing, need to keep an update, never stop writing, etc.		Repetition and tasks (44)	deliberate practice
teacher, studied at the institute, learned from eminent writers, training, mentor, etc.		training and mentoring (52)	
concentrate, sit still, focus, quit the job and work full-time, sit in front of the computer for six hours, order take-outs, etc.		Concentration (23)	

8,000-words update task, to win awards, to be an influential novelist, become a writer like Geling Yan, start a new novel, sell IPs, etc.

goals (38)

feedback, communicate with friends, criticize, direct feedback, comment section, support, scold me to death, left a message, etc.

timely feedback (93)

read more books, reading, books, read modern Chinese literature, read the *First Intimate Contact*, admired the masterpieces, borrowed from libraries, three bookshelves in the study room, etc.

Reading (66)

too difficult for readers to read, follow readers' suggestions, popular among readers, readers are my customers, etc.

awareness of readership (37)

sad, felt so bad, suffer, etc.	negative emotions (54)	Emotional Arousal (130)	
enjoyment, happy, exciting, pleased, satisfied, fulfilling, etc.	positive emotions (63)		
confidence, confident, proud of myself, I'm so talented, easy to write novel of a familiar genre, rate 9 out of ten points, etc.	high writing self-efficacy (68)	Perceived Writing Self-Efficacy (115)	Writing Self-efficacy
not confident, not as good as my friend, writing is so difficult, I'm not a good novelist, rate the self-efficacy 4 out of ten points, may never be good at writing, etc.	low writing self-efficacy (33)		
Talent is most important, excellent typing speed, eat the bowl of rice, I am gifted in writing, I have talent in story-telling, my logic was born to be good, etc.	innate ability (25)	Casual Attribution (57)	
practice can enlarge the effect of writing talent, practice is more important, practice is the most effective way to improve writing, practice help one experience fewer detours, etc.	writing practice (15)		

key “IP” project for Chinese Writer Association, income is considerable, I found boxes of manuscripts, Great-God internet novelist, two of my book were adapted to TV and movies, etc.

Prior Accomplishment
(108)

having such a encouraging friend promote me, parents are supportive, they love my books, encouragement, met a reader at the high-speed train/bookstore coincidentally, etc.

Verbal Persuasion (37)

executive director of Sichuan internet novelists association, their success inspired me, I admired him, etc.

Vicarious Experience
(43)

push myself to write 10,000 words a day, suffered from insomnia, readers humiliated me, depression, I thought about suicided, poor, social pressures, passion faded out, etc.

Facing Challenges (62)

found it easier to try a new genre, I belong to be a writer, true motivator for me, I can do it, etc.

Motivational Process
(13)

Get up at 8 am and write until 12 am, begin to write at 7 am, write until midnight, write until 3 am in the morning, and then I go to bed, nocturnal animal, etc.

daily writing routine
(32)

the Da Shen Writing Software, the Little Black House, the writer would send red packets to friends in the group who would supervise his/her writing plans, deadline is the King, etc.

monitoring (27)

addicted to trifles, I have a few social activities, gave up shopping and movies, locked myself in the Little Black House, seldom use the mobile phone, distracted by QQ group chat and Weibo, etc.

control of distraction
(27)

Self-regulation

improved my emotional descriptive skills over years, felt that my life is a stream of stagnant water without ups and downs, I live a healthy and regulated life, I needed to make a plan, etc.

self-evaluation (26)

I follow the schedule every day, writing became a part-time job, I changed my writing habit all the time, I'm not very strict to myself, etc.

self-observation (20)

Now I changed my daily routines, I
tried those apps, I forced myself to
write, I will definitely complete my task
before noon, etc.

self-response (28)

Figure 2

Category Frequency in the Deliberate Practice Theme



Figure 3

Category Frequency in the Writing Self-Efficacy Theme



Figure 4

Category Frequency in the Self-Regulation Theme

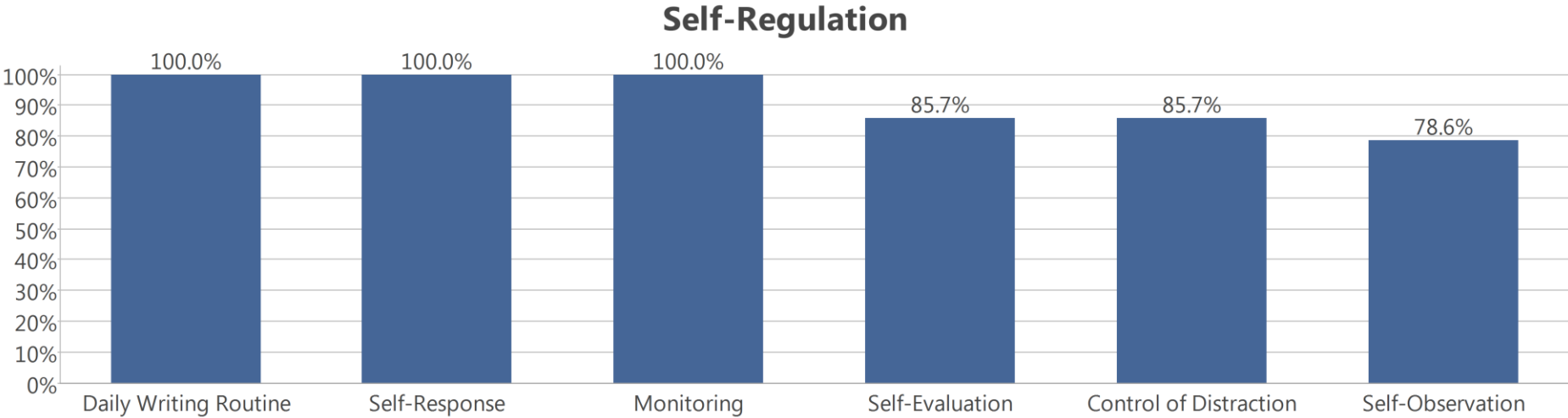


Figure 5

Code Cloud for All Subthemes (More Frequent Larger and Centered)



Deliberate Practice Theme

Participants were asked to describe their experience of developing their writing skills. Participants introduced the time they spend on writing, the training they took, any types of practice they considered crucial to develop their writing skills, their motivations, their goals, etc. Categories such as effortful exertion, motivation, goals, timely feedback, repetition and tasks, reading, training and mentoring were all emerged among these participants. Some participants did not mention awareness of readership and concentration (see Figure 2).

Effortful Exertion. Deliberate practice is the continuous investment in activities designed to improve current performance. It is effortful and requires time and energy. Effortful exertion is one of the main characteristics of deliberate practice. All these participants had years of writing experience. The youngest participant, who was 20-years-old, had spent four years on writing, which was the least among these 14 participants. The longest one spent 19 years on online writing. The average time span that participants spent on writing were 9.43 years. These participants also reported hours they spent on writing, ranged from 4800 hours to 15840 hours. The average hours they spent on novel writing was 9686, which was close to the “ten-thousand-hour rule” (Gladwell, 2008). Although the “ten-thousand-hour rule” was a misinterpreted concept by a best-selling author Malcolm Gladwell (Ericsson & Pool, 2016), the time spent by these novelists was considerable. Full-time novelists usually spent more hours than part-time writers. All these participants described their efforts on writing practice. For example, Susan said, “writing requires practice for a long time”; Austin said, “writing practice takes up my time”; and Mark said, “The key is to write more. I improved my writing skills through constant practice”. These participants also believed that there were different types of writing practice. For

example, Jessica said, “when I was not writing, I would think about how to write a good plot or how to create a better role. My mind for writing was haunting all the time”; Mark said, “another way to practice writing is to read more books”; George said, “If I never experience the writing practice for short stories, novellas, and novels, I couldn’t write a long-length novel smoothly”; and Sophia said, “even when I was pregnant, I still wrote some notes and some inspirations down”.

Reports, presentations, and biographies also demonstrated internet novelists’ effortful exertion. For example, 25 internet novelists answered the question “how to become a good internet novelist?” posted on zhihu.com (Liu et al., 2017). Among these 25 internet novelists, 19 mentioned that efforts were significant for novice writers. Ms. Fang said that “to become a good internet novelist, one should first learn to endure loneliness because writing requires long-time practice without other’s attention. Mr. Chen said that “I began to write internet novels when I was in high school. However, I failed to become a good novelist because I gave up when I was in college. Some of my friends who consisted in writing became good internet novelists.”

Training and Mentoring. Ericsson (1993) pointed out that deliberate practice requires teachers, training material and training facilities. However, these internet novelists usually did not take training or have formal mentors. Sophia was the only person who received writing training in college. She said that “when I took classes at the University, I found out that my teachers could not follow my rhythm. The strategies and methods they taught were all the strategies and methods I had already tried”, and she also expressed that the mentoring was crucial – “when I was in college, one of my teachers helped me a lot. He was a professor of comparative literature. I’d like to discuss writing with him. He wrote slowly and delicately”. Susan

mentioned that she was enrolled in the 32nd session of the Lu Xun Institute of Literature for four months. However, she thought that the institute did not teach her writing skills but broadened her horizons. She systematically learned how to write scripts in the Chinese Film Academy, but she did not learn how to write novels there. She “adjusted the script writing skills to novel writing” after the training. George mentioned the benefits of training and mentoring as he stated that “I’m so grateful to my high school Chinese teacher, Mr. Yu. He reviewed and edited all my essays with great concern. Another debt of gratitude was expressed to Mr. Wang Meng (one of China's most eminent writers, served as China's Minister of Culture from 1986 to 1989, and he currently serves as the Honorary Chairman of China Writers’ Association). He usually assigned some writing tasks to me and then asked me to have lunch with him at home. While I was eating delicious food, he was editing my essays with his glasses on”. Austin also said that his mentor gave him enlightenment. Other writers showed that they didn’t have mentors in real life and they didn’t take any training. For example, Diana said, “I don’t think I need anyone to guide me...I gain new knowledge on writing by self-taught”; Leo said, “There is really no teacher. The knowledge structure that makes up my writing ability is scattered. I got inspiration from others, but those people were not impressive enough to be honored as mentors”. Three participants mentioned that the existing training in the market were not effective. For example, Jessica said that “I think some of the training did not achieve the desired aims, and they are counter-productive”; and Sam said that “for us, we don’t usually get educated for writing theory or writing knowledge. We don’t usually have mentors and take training on writing. We were from different disciplines such as business and engineering, which made our internet novels diversified. Training would restrict our imaginations”. Additionally, in the question “how to

become a good internet novelist?” posted on zhihu.com, Mr. Ao (a Great-god novelist) mentioned that “according to my observation, more and more internet novelists were taught rather than self-taught.” However, Mr. Ao did not expand his discussion on this topic.

Repetition and Tasks. High levels of repetition over a long period of time is one of the main characteristics of deliberate practice introduced by Ericsson (2006). Ericsson (2006) also emphasized that simply repeating a task will not by itself improve performance, and appropriate writing tasks within reach of one’s ability is necessary (Kellogg & Raulerson, 2007). All participants described their repetition and tasks in their writing experience. For example, Harry said that “we internet novelists need to update around 10,000 words or even more every day”; Grand mentioned that he needed to keep a “continuous update”, and he wrote four hours a day during those years; Tyler also said that he needed to “write as much as 10,000 words a day”. Internet novelists have daily writing tasks because they need to attract readers by releasing more chapters. They also need to keep update every day because there was a “perfect attendance” bonus from websites. The business model is one of the major reasons for these writers to keep a high level of repetition of their writing practice. Some novelists mentioned that they kept high levels of repetition because of their passion. For example, Amy said that “I was addicted to writing. It was a great passion. Sometimes I wrote 30,000 words a day, and I spent seven to eight hours a day.” Some novelists mentioned that they lost passion and couldn’t keep high levels of repetition. For example, Leo said that “I became a veteran writer, and my updates became very unstable. I occasionally write and occasionally not write.”

Motivation. Deliberate practice requires motivation to maintain a high level of practice (Ericsson, 2006). Ericsson et al. (1993) believe that deliberate practice is

the activity directly motivated by external rewards and is not intrinsically motivating. Kellogg and Raulerson (2007) found out that writing skills could be improved by intrinsic motivation to engage in the writing task. When describing their motivation to write internet novels, these participants mentioned both intrinsic motivation (the motivation arises from within the individual because it is naturally satisfying), and extrinsic motivation (the motivation driven by external rewards such as money, fame, grades, and praise).

Susan, Amy, Mark, Sophia, Harry, Grand, Austin, Julia, Jessica, and Leo mentioned that they were interested in writing. Susan, Austin, Sam, Julia, and Leo mentioned that they have a strong desire or passion to express themselves. Mark and Grand said that they had literature dreams from the bottom of their hearts. Grand said that “in the process of creating a character, I will be very excited and inspire myself to keep on writing.” George said that “I feel comfortable to be a writer and I can make progress in writing.” All of them express their intrinsic motivation for writing in different ways. Only Tyler and Diana did not mention their intrinsic motivation.

Diana was the only person who admitted that she was motivated only by extrinsic motivation as she said that “I don’t have literature dreams, not at all...the temptation for the internet literature industry was too strong for me. I have seen so many media reports about how rich internet novelists are. They can earn millions in a month. As a teenager, I was lured by the news...the only motivator is the money.” Tyler did not talk about his intrinsic motivation either, and he was motivated to write novels because “the income I earned from writing is more than the income from my previous job.” Other internet novelists also talked about their extrinsic motivation. Most of them mentioned that money and income was an important motivator (e.g., Susan, Mark, Sophia, Harry, Austin, Sam, Tyler, Julia, Jessica, Diana, and Leo).

Some of them mentioned peer pressure, recognition from others, rewards, and the increase of social status (e.g., Susan, Amy, George, Harry, Sam, Jessica, and Leo).

Some of them mentioned that support from family, friends and readers were motivators (e.g., Susan, Mark, Sophia, Sam, Tyler, and Leo). For example, Sam said that “I was very satisfied when there were five readers who liked my novel, then 10 readers, then a hundred readers, and then thousands of readers. I was pleased when people were listening to my stories”. The detractors could also be a motivator. For example, George, Austin, and Tyler mentioned that they were not supported by their family. George even ran away from the family for a while. All of them “did not admit being defeated” and wanted to prove themselves by being successful internet novelists.

Goals. One of the main characteristics of deliberate practice is that it is goal-directed (Ericsson, 2006). Studies showed that successful writers usually complete weekly and monthly tasks before deadlines (Root Jr, 1983). Chinese internet novelists were goal-directed because the online novel publishers (internet literature websites) require them to write a specified amount of words or chapters. For example, Susan stated that “I must keep a ten-thousand-word update per day. To be exact, 8,000 to 10,000 words of an update per day”. Their short-term goals and long-term goals might also be motivators for their writing practice. For example, Tyler stated that “my goal is to write good novels in the future”; Julia stated that “my short-term goal is to insist on writing one hour a day”; and Leo stated that “my short-term goal is to complete my present book”. Some participants mentioned that they would like to challenge themselves (e.g., Mark, George, Harry, and Austin) For example, Austin stated that “I’m looking for a way to make a breakthrough, find a new way to write, and to challenge myself”; and Harry stated that “I want to challenge myself and write

something new”. Many of them mentioned that they hope their novel could be adapted to TV serials or movies (e.g., Susan, Amy, Austin, Tyler, Julia, Diana, and Leo). For example, Diana said that “I hope I can sell the copyright and become famous overnight so that I can ask my favorite actors to act in my stories”; and Tyler said that “my short-term goal is to steadily transfer from internet writer to an IP seller”. Elder participants would express their worries and expectations about their writing career. For example, Jessica stated that “my long-term goal is to extend and prolong my writing career. You see, so many famous popular literature writers wrote until they were 70 and 80 years old. They have childlike innocence and curiosity. Their lives are full of love and enthusiasm. I hope I could be a long-lived writer like them”; and Sam stated that “my long-term goal is to be more influential in the Chinese literature field”.

Timely Feedback. Deliberate practice requires feedback from others (Ericsson, 2006). Research indicated that students’ writing skill could be improved by given the amount of feedback from instructors. These internet novelists usually do not have instructors in writing. Their feedback could be from teachers, peers, readers, family, friends, and editors.

Most of them paid much attention to readers’ feedback (e.g., Susan, Mark, Sophia, Harry, Grand, Austin, Sam, Tyler, Julia, Jessica, Diana, and Leo). For example, Susan said that “many readers like to leave messages. One example is that there will be no direct feedback for the text itself if my chapter is tedious and boring. Readers will offend me at the comment section”; Mark believed that readers’ encouragement was important, and he stated that “I have always thought that my internet novel is not only a work I created, but also a form of Internet literature that I co-wrote with readers”; and Harry stated that “if I can feel the excitement of readers, I

would say that my writing is good”.

Some of these writers mentioned that they received criticisms and humiliations from readers (e.g., Susan, Amy, Mark, Sam, Tyler, and Diana). For example, Sam stated that “most of my negative emotions come from readers’ abuses”; and Diana stated that “I was really sad that the readers call me brain-impairment. I think readers can blame me that the plot was not entertaining, but they can’t humiliate me like that. You know what! Another reason for my anger is that I once thought he was right, and I was really stupid”.

Some of the participants talked about the impact of friends’ feedback (e.g., Susan, Amy, George, Sophia, Harry, Austin, Sam, Julia, and Jessica). For example, Amy mentioned that she became an internet novelist because she received positive feedback from a friend as she stated that “one of my colleagues read my articles and stories I posted on *Qzone* (a social networking website developed by Tencent and it allows users to write blogs, keep diaries, send photos), and he asked, ‘why don’t you serialize them on an internet novel website? I think you write well.’ ” Sam provided contrast to these statements when he said that, “I think I was not influenced by the feedback from friends”.

Some of the participants mentioned the encouragement and feedback from family (e.g., Susan, Sophia, Grand, Sam, Tyler, Julia, and Jessica). For example, Susan stated that “my parents are very supportive and often say I’m really good”; and Tyler said that “my husband supported me a lot and make breakfast for me every day for a whole year. He also supported me when our internet novelists got together. I’m so happy that he is by my side and provide positive feedback”. Some internet novelists did not receive feedback or received negative feedback from family (e.g., Amy, Mark, George, Harry, Austin, Diana, and Leo). For example, Mark stated that,

“I did not receive encouragement from my family. My family didn’t know I was writing until I published my first book.”

Some of the participants believed that feedback from peers and editors was important (e.g., Susan, Amy, George, Sophia, Harry, Grand, Tyler, and Julia). Susan stated that “editor’s suggestions work. When I write the outline at the early stage of my writing, there will be a lot of communication between me and the editor”; George talked about the suggestions given by editors as “another negative emotion is from editors’ feedback. They complained that I’ve got too many typos and wrongly written characters. I knew it was my fault. I got those typos and incorrect characters because I usually use transcribed narrative text”; and Grand said that “their comments influence me a lot, especially editors and Great-God writers. They have extensive writing experience and understand the market. Learning from them, I know which genre and writing style could be popular.”

Reading. Reading is a subtheme (category) that emerged spontaneously during the interviews. All these participants talked about their reading experience and its relations with writing, even if no question was asked about reading. Research has supported the high correlation between reading and writing (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000; Shanahan, MacArthur, Graham, & Fitzgerald, 2006). Evidence indicated that reading intervention has positive impacts on the quality and quantity of adolescence’s and college students’ written products (Graham & Perin, 2007; Graham & Sandmel, 2011; Rogers & Graham, 2008). In this study, all participants illustrated the positive impact of reading on their novel writing. For example, Mark said that “I read a lot of novels, essays and literary works, which are helpful to my writing”; Sophia mentioned that she won a reward from the school library because she was the person who borrowed the highest quantity of books, and she believed reading is a way to learn

writing. Reading is also one of the motivators for being an internet novelist among these participants (e.g., Susan, Amy, Sophia, Harry, Sam, Tyler, Julia, Jessica, and Leo). For example, Harry said that “After I read lots of internet novels for a long time, I started thinking about writing internet novels by myself”; Julia became an internet novelist because she read a lot of internet novels, and found that “some of them are not good and I could write a better one”; Jessica became an internet novelist because her idol was an internet novelist, and she said that “I was so attracted to her book that I decided to write an internet novel at the website where her book was posted...I was very lucky that I finally met my idol after I became famous on the websites as her.”

Awareness of Readership. Kellogg (2006) found that professional writing expertise requires awareness of readership. All internet novelists in this study were aware of the importance of readers. Some believed that they would write according to readers’ preference (e.g., Susan, Mark, George, Sophia, Grand, Diana, and Leo). For example, Mark stated that “my novel was not only a work I created, but also a form of literature that I co-wrote with readers”; George stated that “readers would prefer to read entertaining content, and they were not willing to be educated all the time”; Tyler stated that “I think the novels I write are probably not the one I like the most, but the novels readers mostly like to read”; and Diana stated that “I don’t want to write something that readers found them tired of reading”. Some internet novelists even changed their plots according to readers’ suggestions (e.g., Mark, Sophia, Tyler, and Leo). For example, Leo stated that “I abandoned a major female role and made her a supporting role because of readers’ oppositions.” Some of the writers, however, believed that they would not follow readers’ suggestions (e.g., Susan, Austin, Sam, Julia). For example, Sam stated that “readers’ suggestions were references within limits. If you follow readers’ suggestion consistently, you might lose your own

feature. Readers might also be confused because some suggestions were contradicted. Eventually, we should write in our own styles.” Some internet novelists realized that they were responsible for the readers and need to write better works for them (e.g., Amy, George, Austin, Sam, Jessica, and Leo). For example, Amy stated that “if a book has a positive impact on readers, I believe it is a good book. There are too many young readers of internet literature, children and adolescents are easy to be affected by internet novels”; and Jessica stated that “young readers sometimes learned from books and modeled the roles from my books. Thus, writing is not only a fun thing to do for myself, and I can’t write self-willed. I need to write something that would direct the young reader to a right path”.

Concentration. Concentration is one of the five general characteristics of deliberate practice introduced by Ericsson (2006). Deliberate practice requires concentration that can be sustained for a limited period of time (Ericsson, 2006). This subtheme overlaps with the subtheme “control of distraction” in the core theme “self-regulation”. There were subtle differences between these two subthemes. The Concentration category emphasizes more on the state of activity that internet novelists experienced, and control of distraction emphasized more on the strategies they used to control their attention. Internet novelists described their state of concentration during their interviews. For example, Jessica stated that “when I wrote novels, I would be concentrated on my stories, I would smile, laugh and cry when I wrote the plots”; Grand expressed his feeling that “I think I need to concentrate on writing to write efficiently”; George stated that “I usually concentrate my writing without a hitch”; Harry stated that “I may devote myself to the plots in my novel. For example, when I wrote about the death of a role, I felt so sad and painful. Some writers would even shed tears or laugh out loud because they were moved by their novels”.

Table 6

Categories and Sample Quotes for the Deliberate Practice Theme

Categories	Sample Quotes
Effortful Exertion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wrote 8 to 10 hours a day. • I'm a diligent internet novelist. • Sometimes I wrote 30,000 words a day, and I spent 7 to 8 hours a day. • The key is to write more. I improved my writing skills through constant practice. • I don't have any innate ability on writing. My strength is that I can sit still for a long time. Some internet novelists might need to have a rest after an hour writing practice, but I don't need to have a rest. I can sit still and write in front of the computer for a long time. • The more I write, the faster I think, and the higher my ability to express myself. Especially after I wrote online novels, I am gradually familiar with a lot of words which used to be rarely seem.
Training and Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last year, I was enrolled in the 32nd session of the Lu Xun Institute of literature for four months. • There was no real teacher, but I have a friend who could be regarded as my teacher for writing. • I am basically self-taught. My major is engineering, not literature. Because of the love for writing, I began to write about 90,000 words for my first novel when I was at college. • My mentor is Geling Yan. She mainly taught me how to write the script. Her writing habit also influences me a lot. It is because of her I adapt to a healthier daily routine. • My mentor in writing are sages in the history. First one is Hemingway.

Subcategory-Intrinsic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think first of all I have interests in writing.
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing makes me feel comfortable, and I love to share my novels with readers. • Writing is my pure hobby. • I love literature when I was young. I love to read books, and I had a dream to become a writer when I was in college. • I am a person with rich imaginations, and I like to read books. That's how I go on the non-mainstream career path to be an internet novelist. • I am a person who likes to express myself.
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have a literature dream from the bottom of my heart. • In the process of creating a character, I will be very excited and inspire myself to keep on writing.
Subcategory-Extrinsic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another motivator is the recognition from other people. The so-called awards, the money earned, or the recognition from others will all affect my writing.
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another reason is because I was poor. • The income is a motivator. Professional writer writes for a salary. • Another interesting way to motivate myself is that I wrote a banner on the <i>Da Shen Writing App</i>. The slogan is “my love, mom promise to make efforts for you.” As long as I was tired, I would take a look at the banner. • I was excited to receive all kinds of feedback in the comment section of my novel. That was a great impulse for me. • I remember that my income was higher than my professor when I was in the second year of graduate school. I was so happy and proud. • My family realized that writing internet novel is also a decent job that could make a living.

Goals

- My short-term goal is to insist on writing one hour a day. My long-term goal is to sell my novel and adapted it to a movie.
- I hope I can write better works in the future. I hope I can sell the copyright and become famous overnight.
- The long-term goal is to join the China Writers Association. Join the China Writers Association means I'm a real novelist.
- I'm looking for a way to make a breakthrough, find a new way to write, and to challenge myself.
- I think there should be three to five years for me to become a writer like Mrs. Yan (Geling Yan), and I hope to write good novels.

Timely Feedback

- The editors used to criticize my books and said it has nothing worthy of praise.
- Every day a reader read my chapters, s/he left a message for me and then gave his/her opinion, as if our thoughts could resonate. I'm so pleased to be known by others. They gave me strong passions.
- Internet novelists face great challenges because they may receive all kinds of feedback from readers.
- My family did not support me at first.
- When I started writing novels online ten years ago, I was not very confident. I talked about it just now, my dad poured cold water on me, and he thought I couldn't make a living by writing novels online.
- Different readers would have different perspectives upon the same subject.

Repetition and Tasks

- I remember days in 2009. I have a 10,000-words-update task every day.
- I usually wrote from 6 pm to 11 pm every day. Then, I resigned and began to write full-time at home. I may write in front of the computer when I wake up in the morning and write until I go to bed.
- In the first stage for the first four years of internet novels writing career, I wrote about 6,000 words a day, which should take about four hours.
- I usually spent four hours a day on writing. Sometimes I need to update more chapters, I will push myself to my limit, and write eight hours a day.
- I wrote from 5 am to 6 am in the morning.
- I woke up at 6 am and went to bed at 10 pm. I was writing except eating and sleeping. I worked hard because I feel insecure for this job.

Reading

- I just love to read. When I was a child, I loved to read in the library and borrowed novels for all genres.
- I think my reading time is like squeezing a drain sponge. I definitely read much more than I wrote.
- I may spend one and half to two hours to read. I like books which have attractive stories. I read all genres including children's book.
- When other kids asked me to play with them outside on a holiday or weekends, I had to let them know that I couldn't go out because my dad locked me in the study room. I sat in my dad's three-sided wall full of books and read books the whole day.
- I don't know any writing theory or writing skills. I never learn writing systematically. I started to imitate my favorite writers.
- From my perspective, the most important thing in my writing career is to read a lot of good books. Read books that have high intensity of information.

Awareness of Readership

- If the story affects the reader, affects the writer himself, affects the editors, and affects the investors, the writer should be an excellent writer.
- If I can feel the excitement of readers, I would say my writing is good. It is hard to have an objective evaluation on my own writing ability.
- I would read internet novels that were particularly popular among readers, because I want to understand readers' taste.
- I agree with Rabbit on "reader is one of our teachers". I was nodding when he talked about that. But I think we can't write according to readers' need completely.
- I don't care if readers like my novel or not, I just want to write the story of my intuition.

Concentration

- I can sit still to write internet novels all the time.
 - I did not even do any housework at home before I quitted my job. After I came back from work, the only thing I do is to write. No cleaning, no cooking, no laundry.
 - I think I need to concentrate on writing to write efficiently.
 - I don't want to be addicted to games. Video games are like smoking and drugs. I am particularly self-discipline to some extent. For example, when I decided to write for the moment, I will turn off the game immediately. Then I'll think about my book quietly.
 - I would not be distracted by those if I wake up and work early. I feel particularly fulfilling when I finished daily writing tasks at noon.
-

Writing Self-Efficacy Theme

Participants were asked to describe their beliefs in their ability to perform written tasks successfully. Participants rated their writing ability on a scale of zero to ten, talked about the change of confidence level over time, shared the experience of prior accomplishment including accomplishment in writing and accomplishment in other areas, and expressed their feelings on other internet novelists' success.

Categories such as Perceived Writing Self-Efficacy, Prior Accomplishment, Casual Attribution, Emotional Arousal, Social Persuasion, Vicarious Experience, and Facing Challenges were all emerged among these participants. Some of participants did not mention Motivational Process (see Figure 3).

Perceived Writing Self-Efficacy. Writing self-efficacy in this study is internet novelists' judgments of their capabilities to write internet novels. These internet novelists gave different ratings for their writing self-efficacy. Most of the participants have high writing self-efficacy (e.g., Susan, Mark, George, Sophia, Grand, Austin, Sam, Julia, and Leo) and a few have low writing self-efficacy (e.g., Amy, Harry, Tyler, Jessica, and Diana). For example, Mark rated his writing an eight-points out of ten for the romantic genre, and he also stated that "if I compare my novel with the whole category of internet literature, I can only say that mine is above average, and is occasionally excellent"; George rated his writing an eight-points out of ten for his whole writing skills, and he specifically indicated that his creativity could get a ten-points and his ability to write poems is eight-points; Julia rated her writing a seven-points out of ten and said she have much to improve; Tyler gave himself a six-points out of ten, and he think his novels were wordy; and Diana rated her writing a five-points out of ten and she said that "I often felt hurt when I compared myself with other writers".

Writing self-efficacy was not static, and it changed through time. For example, Susan stated that “my confidence in writing goes up and down, and sometimes it depends on my real-time circumstances”; when Sophia read her old works, she sometimes spoke highly of her novels and said “what a nice work”, and sometimes she looked down upon her novels and said “what a piece of trash”. Several internet novelists mentioned that they were confident when they wrote their first novel and their writing self-efficacy decreased through time (e.g., Susan, Amy, Grand, Jessica, Diana). A Chinese proverb “the newborn calf is not afraid of tigers” was mentioned by Susan and Jessica. Diana said that “my confidence level was very high (when I wrote my first novel). I had an exaggerated expectation of my writing abilities. I thought I was great”; and Amy had similar quote that “I was biased on the internet literature industry when I wrote my first internet novel. I was showing off my writing style and writing ability and believed that I was better than most internet novelists. However, when my novels were not sold as well as theirs, I began to think about the issue. Why their novels sell well?” Some mentioned their writing self-efficacy increased over time (e.g., George, Harry, Austin, Tyler, Julia, and Leo). For example, Tyler said that “my confidence level for writing rises perpendicularly”; and Leo stated that “my confidence level increased, and my evaluation of my writing ability was high”.

Some internet novelists described their change in writing self-efficacy vividly. For example, Sam stated that “My first novel made a great success. However, my second novel was not as good as the first one. I was very disappointed at that time. I went through it by insisting on writing. I think my confidence level is a U shape”; and Leo stated that “when I wrote the second book, I recovered from the doubt because my second book was very good. My confidence level increased, and my evaluation of

my writing ability was high. By the time the third book was written, my confidence level was quite stable”.

Casual Attribution. Writing Self-efficacy has both direct and reciprocal associations with causal attributions and research indicated that causal attributions and subsequent self-efficacy significantly predicted subsequent performance (Stajkovic & Sommer, 2000). Research also showed that students who attributed failure to lack of effort had higher self-efficacy than students who attributed failure to other factors (Hsieh & Schallert, 2008). From the interviews, internet novelists felt that their writing performance had both innate grounding and effort grounding. They also believed that their ability to success in writing was due to other aspects, such as luck, determination, social background, and trend of the times. A Chinese proverb “eat the bowl of rice”, which means people have an innate ability gifted by god, was mentioned by Susan, George, and Grand. Half of these novelists (e.g., Susan, Sophia, Harry, Grand, Austin, Julia, and Diana) believed that innate ability was more important than writing practice for internet novelists. For example, Harry stated that “I believed that talent is more important than practice”; and Grand said that “I think talent might be more important. Practice is a way to learn how to write, but those who have talent might already know”. The other half believed that writing practice was more important than innate ability. For example, Amy said that “writing practice can enlarge the effect of writing talent”; and Mark stated that “technically speaking, practicing day after day is more important. I think no one can write by nature”. When asked about how they attributed their success or failure in novel writing, some internet novelists attributed their writing achievements more to their innate ability than to writing practice (e.g., Susan, George, Harry, Grand, Austin, Sam, and Julia). For example, Austin believed that “I did not deliberately cultivate my writing ability,

which may be a gift to me. I think my writing ability comes more from my talent”; and Sam stated that “I believe my talent accounts for 90% and practice accounts for 10%”. Some internet novelists attributed their writing achievement more to writing practice than to innate ability (e.g., Amy, Mark, Sophia, Tyler, Jessica, Diana, and Leo) For example, Tyler said he did not have any innate ability on writing, and his strength was diligence; Leo stated that “my writing skills comes entirely from my writing practice”; and Diana said that “I think talent accounts for 40% and practice accounts for 60%”. In addition, Harry believed that a writer’s success should also be attributed to luck and fortune.

Additionally, reports, biographies, and presentations also demonstrated causal attribution. For example, a writer named Yunlu Ke reported that “talent is diligence. Talent can be constantly enriched and growth through writing practice.” Another report describe the experience of an internet novelists who was chef and became a good internet novelist in five years. The report concluded that the novelist was “a hardworking genius”.

Prior Accomplishment. Bandura (1977) presented that prior performance accomplishments is a source of information that affect self-efficacy development. The prior experiences of writing mastery influences internet novelists’ perspectives on their abilities.

Accomplishments such as finishing the novel, incomes, awards, and the rise of status may lead to greater feelings of writing self-efficacy for these internet novelists (e.g., all participants). For example, Jessica talked about her income and said “my annual income from subscriptions for my novels is above one million RMB (approximately 148,177 US dollars) last year and I sold the copyright for my novel for approximately 1 million RMB (approximately 148,177 US dollars)”, and she

believed that she was a top-list female internet writer in China; Sam wrote 20 internet novels and all of his novels were published in print, and some of his novel even translated into foreign languages; Mark illustrated that he was an engineering major and came from a rural area, and it is great accomplishment for him to publish a book that he described as “it is a goal beyond the reach. However, I was keeping this dream, and I realized my dreams through efforts”; Harry talked about the rise of status and stated that “I was not confident for a long time. My social identity as an internet novelist moved up quickly these years. First, my income as an internet novelist was considerable. Second, I was sometimes invited to do lectures at universities. Third, I joined the Shanxi writers’ associations. I felt that my social identity was recognized and approved by the public. My confidence level continuously increased because of the uplift of the social identity for all internet novelists”.

Another type of prior accomplishment was achievement in other areas. Internet novelists also found that their experience other than the direct writing experience also influence their writing self-efficacy (e.g., Susan, Mark, George, Sophia, Grand, Sam, Tyler, Julia, Jessica, and Leo). For example, Tyler used to be a champion in the video game Counter-Striker tournaments, and he believed that his success in video games helped him learn teamwork and he stated “when I’m writing, I regarded readers as my teammates”; Susan stated that her Chinese composition tasks in school had always been the best which made her have confidence in her writing; Leo was an associate professor at a university and he stated that “Many Internet writers need to look up to me as a Ph.D. from the Academy of Social Sciences. My educational background is an achievement. I've done a lot of projects, and I've been praised by my clients and my consignors. All these projects have been highly evaluated, and I found myself a good writer because all these accomplishments are

achieved by writing. They strengthened my confidence in writing internet novels”.

On the other hand, failures or challenges may undermine or weaken their writing self-efficacy (e.g., Harry, Austin, and Sam). For example, Sam talked about his success in his first novel, and he failed in his second novel. He stated that “it was not as good as the first one. I was very disappointed at that time. I went through it by insisting on writing. I think my confidence level is a U shape”.

Vicarious Experience. Vicarious experience for internet novelists is a source of information comes from the observation of people around them, especially people they consider as role models (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997). Watching people similar to them succeed by their sustained effort raises their beliefs that they too possess the capabilities to master the activities needed for success (Bandura, 1997). All these internet novelists mentioned that other people’s experience would affect their beliefs in writing ability. For example, Jessica talked about her idol who wrote good internet literature, and she stated that “I love a book named *Military Counsellor* written by Suibozhuliu. I was so attracted to this book that I decided to write an internet novel at the website where her book was posted. I never thought I’d go on the career path for so long. It was only an interest at first. I was very lucky. I met my idol, Suibozhuliu, since I became famous on the websites as well.” Julia thought that “success for an internet novelist is fortuitous, but the failure is inevitable. If I observe someone’s success, I might want to know the hardship s/he went through”; Susan expressed her belief that “I will not underestimate myself because of others’ successes”; and Mark said that he increased his self-confidence in writing “after observing both failed and successful novelists”.

Social Persuasion. Social persuasion such as social message and encouragement is another source of self-efficacy beliefs for internet novelists

(Bandura, 1977). Research showed that social persuasion does not increase self-efficacy by itself, and it coupled with either direct or vicarious experience, when the persuasion comes from more than one person (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2014). Internet novelists receive feedback from readers, family, friends, editors, and mentors. Their encouragement, both implied and stated, could increase internet novelists' beliefs on capacity to write good internet novels.

Susan, Amy, Sophia, Grand, and Austin mentioned the encouragement from friends. For example, Susan said that her friends were very supportive and always told her she was good. Grand said that "my friends are willing to offer advice that is not offensive. For example, if there are any shortcomings in my work, my friends will talk about it and let me know I should pay attention to it".

Some participants mentioned that the encouragement from readers affects their writing self-efficacy (e.g., Mark, Sophia, Sam, Julia, Jessica, and Leo). For example, Jessica said that she made friends with some of her readers, and she was grateful for their encouragement. Mark stated that "the encouragement from readers was very important. Every day that a reader read my chapters, s/he left a message for me and then gave his/her opinion, as if our thoughts could resonate. I'm so pleased to be known by others. They gave me strong passions".

George, Sophia, and Austin mentioned the encouragement from teachers and mentors. For example, George stated that "I had the chance to meet Wang Meng, the chairman of China Writer's Association. He praised my debut novel for profound thoughts and innovative structure. I have met so many famous writers, and they always spoke highly of my works. It is impossible for me to be short of self-confidence".

Some internet novelists mentioned the encouragement and support from

family (e.g., Susan, Sophia, Grand, Julia, Jessica, and Leo). For example, Leo talked about the support from his mother and stated that “my mother read my hottest book. She read it from beginning to end and she recommended it to others. She thought highly of the book, which is encouraging to me”; and Grand said that his family was very supportive and he did not need to do housework so that he could write internet novels at ease.

Emotional Arousal. The physiological and affective states is also a principal source of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1977). Emotional states can influence how internet novelists feel and behave in writing. Bandura indicated that one way to improve self-efficacy beliefs is to “enhance physical status, reduce stress levels and negative emotional proclivities, and correct misinterpretations of bodily states” (Bandura, 1997, p. 107). These internet novelists described both their positive emotions and negative emotions.

Internet novelists talked about positive emotions such as excitement of accomplishing writing tasks and passions to be creative in writing. For example, Mark described his sense of achievement and stated that “I published a novel when I was 23, and I was very satisfied”; and Sophia mentioned that “once I was taking the high-speed train, I found someone on the train was reading my novel. That moment I felt great”. Some internet novelists (e.g., Amy, Harry, Sam, and Jessica) enjoyed the process of writing. For example, Harry stated that “my writing practice makes me feel comfortable, and I love to share my novels with readers. When I played a trick in my novel, and my readers tried their best to figure that out, I would feel so proud and excite”; and Jessica said that “I would be so excited and happy when I wrote novels...When I wrote novels, I would be concentrated on my stories, and I would smile, laugh, and cry”.

Internet novelists also talked about negative emotions such as the fear of disappointing audiences (e.g., Susan, Harry, Sam, and Julia), the stress and anxiety in writing (e.g., Mark, George, Sophia, Harry, Grand, Austin, Jessica, and Leo), and the concern on their physical conditions (e.g., Amy, 4, Harry, Austin, Jessica, and Leo). Susan was afraid that readers wouldn't like her novel and stated that "I suffered a lot when I wrote it". Harry felt very stressful in 2009 because he had a 10,000-words-update task every day and he was busy with his work as a high school teacher. George mock himself and said that "my negative emotions make me fat and bald"; and Jessica got an occupational disease for writers, hyperthyroidism, because she would be so excited and happy when she wrote novels, and her hyperthyroidism was caused by the emotional fluctuation.

Austin and Tyler mentioned their extreme negative emotions. Austin talked about his depression and attempting to suicide. He stated that "while I was standing in front of the windowsill on the fifth floor of my apartment, I smoked a cigarette at midnight. I was thinking what the value of my life is. Even if I published these novels, even if I earned so much money, and even if I was a Great-God writer, what's the meaning of my life? I was exploring the meaning of my life. I was skeptical when I was looking for it. I knew I can't suddenly leap from the window like any other suicided writer. I can't take my life away just like that. Life always comes to an end, but I really can't give up my life for that moment with depression". Tyler suffered from depression and attempted suicide because his novels were officially banned by the rectification campaign and this cut off all his income sources. Both of them described how they overcame the suffering and said that they came through the hard time by continuing to write novels.

Facing Challenges. Self-efficacy influences people's level of persistence

when they confront challenges (Bandura & Schunk, 1981). The higher the writing self-efficacy, the higher the challenges internet novelists set for themselves and the more resolution their commitment to the challenges (Bandura, 1993). Some internet novelists mentioned that they wanted to challenge themselves. For example, Harry stated that “I want to challenge myself and write something new”; Austin stated that “I’m looking for a way to make a breakthrough, find a new way to write, and to challenge myself”; and Sam said that “I wanted to challenge myself and write a new genre”. Internet novelists had different challenges such as daily task challenges (e.g., Susan, Harry, Sam, and Tyler), criticism and discouragement from others (e.g., Amy, Mark, George, and Diana), hardship of life (e.g., Mark, George, Austin, Tyler, Diana, and Leo), stress and anxiety (e.g., George, Sophia, Harry, Jessica). They used different methods to confront challenges. For example, Diana mentioned that she received lots of negative feedback and humiliations from readers, and she stated that “I captured those comments and saved the screenshots as pictures. I used the screenshots as the desktop background. Thus, I looked at those humiliating comments every day, and I would find peace in my heart eventually. I became stronger and I grew up step by step”; Tyler experienced the banning of his novels and lost his income source, and he overcome the hardship by continuing writing internet novels; Harry’s strategies to relieve the stress is to travel and to sing songs; and Mark mentioned that traveling is a good way to relieve the stress and he traveled for a few months after he finished each book.

Motivational Process. Writing self-efficacy affects internet novelists’ motivation to write. High writing self-efficacy might enhance their motivation to write. For example, Susan have high self-efficacy after she wrote her first novel, and she mentioned that “I found that I couldn’t stop writing since I wrote my first novel. I

gradually realize that maybe I could take this path”; and Austin said that he had high self-efficacy because other people called him the Great-God writer so that he motivated himself and “had to work harder”. Low self-efficacy might hinder the writing progress and weaken their motivation to write novels. For example, Julia mentioned that she quit writing because of her work for several years, and when she decided to write internet novels again, she was not confident and was afraid of writing; and Grand mentioned that he was discouraged by the readers, and “didn’t want to write anything at the moment”.

Table 7

Categories and Sample Quotes for the Writing Self-Efficacy Theme

Categories	Sample Quotes
Subcategory- High Writing Self-efficacy Perceived Writing Self-efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have very good logic ability. I can also design a complicated plot and I'm also good at characterization. • I was very confident at first. Newborn calves are not afraid of tigers. • At first, my confidence level was very high. I had an exaggerated expectation of my writing abilities. I thought I was great. • From a talent point of view, I am a writer who is good at writing. From a practice point of view, I am diligent. • I think my writing talent is very good. • Since I read so many classics and I trusted my writing ability. I was showing off my writing style and writing ability and believed that I was better than most internet novelists.
Subcategory- Low Writing Self-efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I didn't realize that I could write novels by myself, until I tried. • I didn't do it well enough. • I once thought everyone has the chance to rise to fame overnight. But I was wrong. • I think my novels are very wordy. I'll rate myself 6 points. • I can only say I'm a responsible and capable internet novelist. • In fact, compared with a lot of young writers, my writing skills, my imagination and my talent are not as good as them.

Facing Challenges

- One day, I should start writing at 8 pm and I had to write 10,000 words before 12 am. I push myself into that situation. I updated my chapters just two minutes before the 12 am deadline.
- Once I serialized a book online and I thought it was great. But the subscriptions and clicks were not as good as expected. There was a moment that I want to give up. However, I told myself, I had the responsibility to end the story.
- I quit writing for a while because of my own job.
- Depression may lead to insomnia. If I have too much mental pressure, I will not sleep well. My pressure will be even greater if I can't sleep well. There is a snowball effect. If I can't regulate and control my emotions, and if I can't get out of the emotional trap, I can't get out of the swamp. While I was standing in front of the windowsill on the fifth floor of my apartment, I smoked a cigarette at midnight. I was thinking what the value of my life is. Even if I published these novels, even if I earned so much money, and even if I was a Great-God writer, what's the meaning of my life?
- When I got stuck on the plot, I would feel so uncomfortable.

Prior Accomplishment

- I've published 6 books in print for Chinese simplified language, and 6 books in print for Chinese traditional language which sold well in Taiwan.
- On average, my subscriptions reach 10,000 to 20,000. Yes, the average subscriptions are about 20, 000.
- Then, from 2003 to 2006, I studied industrial economics at Chinese Academy of Social Sciences for my Ph.D. degree.
- Three books were translated into Thai and Vietnamese and published in Thailand and Vietnam.
- My work and life experiences shaped my understanding of the society and people. I need to create many supporting roles and leading roles in my stories. My work and life experience may help me avoid making up bugs.

<p>Casual Attribution</p>	Subcategory-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe I was a person who needs practice because I am not smart. Diligent is very important.
	Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice is a way to learn how to write, but those who have talent might already know. It takes little longer to explore if one does not have talent, but practice may help one experience fewer detours.
	Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think practice is also very important. Diligence means that we need to write consistently without a halt. We should also endure the loneliness and have a strong heart.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice needs us to make efforts. In fact, it was very difficult for me to reach such a high level, if I had not written millions of words. • I believe that writing practice can enlarge the effect of writing talent. • I think practice is not the most effective method to improve writing skills, and practice is just a tool.
	Subcategory-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are not a person who “eats this bowl of rice” (note: a Chinese proverb means a person mean to do the specific job), if you are only a mediocre person, and if you have no talent, it is very difficult to write something out.
	Innate Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I used to be very confident and I believed I was gifted in writing. But after a few years of writing experience, I gradually felt that my writing talent was not high enough. • It is unrealistic born to write. How can we express what we want to express? • My innate ability is the eloquence. • I think my talent for writing is the sensitivity. I am very sensitive when I deal with words and sentences. • Some writers are gifted by God. I could not reach their level even if I practice hard. • I did not deliberately cultivate my writing ability, which may be a gift to me.

Subcategory-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once I was taking the high-speed train, I found someone on the train was reading my novel. That moment I felt great.
Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When I played a trick in my novel, and my readers tried their best to figure that out, I would feel so proud and excited.
Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When I wrote my first novel, I wrote it entirely with enthusiasm. • When I designed a clever plot, and when the story was good, I would feel happy. • When I first received that positive feedback, I was so proud and pleased. • I felt good that I can deliver the goodness and beauty to my readers.
Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When my income increased, and when I published my novels in Taiwan, and the first time a person calls me teacher with respect, I feel very pleased and excited.
Arousal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would be pleased if I make progresses in writing.
Subcategory-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of my negative emotions come from readers' abuses. Readers who read pirated novels were more likely to abuse and humiliate writers.
Negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was in 2014. Chinese government carried out a rectification campaign and five of my books were banned officially. It almost cut all my income sources. I was so depressed and wanted to die. I was depressed and cannot recover after the setback for one year.
Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another negative emotion is that I stuck with a plot and can't write a word. • The stress was from outside. For example, one of my editors who supported me a lot quitted the job, the direction of internet literature industry changed, or I can't balance the time for writing and my staff job. Those are the reasons for my anxious. • I'm annoyed, why am I so poor? • I often felt hurt when I compared myself with other writers. I will think why I can't think of this idea, why I can't be so creative, and why my plots are so vulgar, and theirs' are so fashionable.

Social Persuasion

- I need to express my gratitude to my husband. I just mentioned my experience of quitting writing for a year. When I decided to write again, I told my husband that I want to write from 5 am to 6 am. My husband said “Okay, I’ll make breakfast for you.” He supported me a lot and make breakfast for me every day for a whole year.
- My daughter and husband support me very much.
- Those who knew I was writing novels are very supportive. They are encouraging, and they have faith in me.
- My mother read my hottest book. She read it from beginning to end and she recommended it to others. She thought highly of the book, which is encouraging to me.
- People call me the Great-God write, so I have to work harder.
- Acquaintances may be politer when giving me feedback. So, I don’t think their encouragement or criticisms is useful.
- I felt guilty that I never go shopping and go to a movie with my wife, because I need to write every day. I got into my study when other couples were sharing time together.

Vicarious Experience

- I’m not jealous of others’ success. I know exactly which area I am good at. I know they may have their expertise. I won’t imitate others if they succeed.
- One of my friends decided to give up writing after she got married and pregnant. She told me that she can’t find time to write. I told her that it is an excuse. You can find time if you want.
- When I observed other internet novelists’ success. I’ll be envious, jealous and hateful (said with a jocular tone). But I will introspect. I would think about why I can’t do as well as them. I will also analyze other’s failure, because I want to avoid their mistakes.
- I am very jealous. Those successful writers, behind their attractive appearance, there are countless bitter tears. So I was also inspired by them after I feel jealous.

Motivational Process

- I keep on my writing career because I realized that my book could actually influence others.
 - There is an old saying that “Preserve your dignity as a nobody and promote the social welfare as a somebody.” Internet novelist should have dignity and social responsibility. From my perspective, we internet novelists did not play the role of models well enough.
 - I will write something that makes me more satisfied.
 - I find it easier to try new themes. It's a little less difficult for me to write a new genre because I have worked hard in writing novels of various genres.
 - I actually began to influence other internet novelists. Nowadays, I'd like to help those internet novelists or script writers who suffered the same problems like me. I hope that everyone could produce great works.
 - If I say writing is my pure hobby before, now I am really thinking about entering the professional writing field.
-

Self-Regulation Theme

Participants were asked to describe their self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions that are planned and cyclically adapted to the attainment their writing goals. Participants described their daily writing routines, talked about the tools and techniques that were used to monitor their writing, shared the influential factors for the change of their writing behaviors. Categories such as daily writing routine, self-response and monitoring were all emerged among these participants. Some participants did not mention self-observation, self-evaluation, and control of distraction during the interview (see Figure 4).

Daily Writing Routine. In a 2004 Paris Review interview (Wray, 2004), Haruki Murakami revealed his daily writing routine as “when I’m in writing mode for a novel, I get up at four a.m. and work for five to six hours. In the afternoon, I run for ten kilometers or swim for fifteen hundred meters (or do both), then I read a bit and listen to some music. I go to bed at nine p.m.” Haruki Murakami emphasized the importance of keeping this routine and he said that “to hold to such repetition for so long—six months to a year—requires a good amount of mental and physical strength. In that sense, writing a long novel is like survival training. Physical strength is as necessary as artistic sensitivity.” In another Paris Review interview (Plimpton, 1958), Ernest Hemingway revealed his daily writing routine as “when I am working on a book or a story I write every morning as soon after first light as possible. There is no one to disturb you and it is cool or cold and you come to your work and warm as you write.” There were patterns in daily writing routines for famous writers in the history: 1) being consistent every day; 2) blocking out three to seven hours of a day to focus on writing without distractions; 3) getting physically prepared for the mental engagement in writing; 4) take breaks at regular intervals (Oshin, 2017). These

patterns were also found among these internet novelists.

Some participants, especially full-time internet novelists, had regular daily writing routines. For example, Susan described her daily writing routine as “I usually get up at eight o'clock in the morning, and I write until 12:00. I stop for lunch and take a rest for 2 hours, then I would continue to write. Stop for dinner and go out for a walk. Then I come back to write till midnight”. Amy described her daily writing routine as “I get up very early every morning, usually about 6 am. I begin to write at 7 am. At 11 am, I will go out to buy my lunch or cook by myself. Then I will have a rest till 2 pm. I will write again from 2 pm to 6 pm in the afternoon. In the evening, I will not write any more. I will check what I wrote today. Then make a plan for what should be written tomorrow”.

Part-time internet novelists also had regular daily writing routines, but they spent less time than full-time internet novelists. For example, Julia said that “I usually wake up at 5 and write for an hour. I'll go to work after breakfast”; Grand said that “Because I write novels part-time, I spend less than 2 to 3 hours a day...I write one chapter early in the morning and one chapter in the evening, and I work during other times”.

Some internet novelists described themselves as “nocturnal animal” because they usually wrote or used to write internet novels late until midnight (e.g., Mark, George, Harry, Austin, Sam, Tyler, Diana, and Leo). For example, Austin described his daily writing routine as “my schedule was not regular and rather chaos. I may get up around noon and have lunch. I will watch a movie and relax for inspirations at one or two o'clock in the afternoon. After dinner, I will have a rest and take some good exercise. I will write after 9 pm. I'll write until 3 to 4 am in the morning. Then I go to bed. When everyone gets up early in the morning, I am sleeping”. These writers

realized that they had health issues and that they would like to change or had already changed their daily writing routine. For example, George said that “I’m changing my daily routines. Now I wake up at 4 am and write for the whole morning”; and Sam said that “I want to elongate my writing career. I don’t want to work too hard to harm my health”. Amy also raised the issue and said that “another issue is the health problem. Obesity and baldness are occupational diseases for internet writers, especially for male writers. (I laughed during the interview) Don’t laugh. That’s true and cruel. Health problems are inevitable because we need to sit in front of a computer for a long time”.

Some internet novelists mentioned how they take breaks during their writing progress. For example, Mark talked about that he traveled for several months every time he finished a novel; and Sam, Tyler, Diana and Leo mentioned that their way to relax during the writing process was by playing video games.

Self-Observation. The first step of the self-regulation process is self-observation, which is also known as introspection (Bandura, 1986). Self-observation is a process of deliberate attention to one’s own behaviors, thoughts and feelings (Bandura, 1986). Self-observation is necessary during the self-regulation process but by itself insufficient for sustained self-regulation (Schunk, 1995). Internet novelists was aware of the effectiveness and efficiency of their writing progress and paid deliberate attention to their writing progress. They could describe their daily writing routines specifically and compared their work load with other novelists. For example, Susan observed that she was highly susceptible by other people as she said that “when a writer announces in the chatting group that ‘I don’t want to write today’, I would be influenced by his/her moods and type ‘I don’t want to write, either’ in the group chat”. Austin observed that he only wrote one book during the last six years because

of his procrastination; and Tyler observed that he was very self-regulated because he could sit still to write for a long time.

Self-Evaluation. The second step of the self-regulation process is self-evaluation, which was also known as self-judgement (Schunk, 1995). Self-evaluation is the use of internal standards to judge oneself when comparing current performance with one's goal (Bandura, 1986). Internet novelists judged the acceptability of their writing progress by comparing their current writing performance with their goals. For example, Amy assessed herself as a diligent internet novelist as she wrote eight novels in five years, and she believed that her daily writing routine was healthy and regulated; Harry mentioned that the doctor suggested him to sleep earlier and wake up earlier to keep healthy and he thought he was not self-regulated; Austin assessed himself as a “lazy writer” and he did not reach his goal of writing more chapters; Jessica said that “I thought I would have a regulated writing schedule, but I actually can't do it”; and Diana said that “I'm not self-disciplined. If I could be self-disciplined, my writing skills would be improved, and I might be a rich woman already”.

Self-Response. The third step of the self-regulation process is self-response, which was also known as self-reaction (Schunk, 1995). Self-response is the reaction as participants reward or punish themselves for their success or failure (Bandura, 1986). After internet novelists evaluate the acceptability of their writing progress, they would react by sustaining the satisfying actions or altering strategies. For example, Amy said she changed her daily writing routines several years ago because she read some news about the sudden death of several internet novelists. She found out that her healthier daily writing routine helped her with writing because “I would not be distracted by *WeChat* (a Chinese multi-purpose messaging, social media and

mobile payment app developed by Tencent) and *Weibo* if I wake up and work early. I feel particularly fulfilling when I finished daily writing tasks at noon”. Mark decided not to change his daily writing routine even he knew he worked late at night and sometimes “when I stayed in bed and suddenly thought of a good plot, I would immediately get up at midnight and write novels”. He kept his writing schedule because “it is useless to get up early. Writing is not like any other jobs because creativity and inspirations come out unexpectedly”.

Monitoring. Monitoring is supervising activities in progress to ensure they are on-course and on-schedule in attaining the objectives and performance targets.

Zumbrunn et al., (2011) found that self-monitoring was an important component for students to become self-regulated writers. Research indicated that skilled writers were more active at monitoring their writing than non-skilled writers (Beal, 1996; Beal, Garrod, & Bonitatibus, 1990). Internet novelists used different monitoring methods to supervise their writing progresses and to ensure their writing performance meet their writing objectives and targets.

Internet novelists’ self-monitoring was usually not directly expressed by these participants. For example, Diana said that “the only judge to supervise me is my conscience. Only when I find my conscience can I force myself”; and Jessica said that “I’m responsible for the readers because they paid the subscription fee for my novels. One of my commendations is that I’m really responsible for my readers. I will either not write or complete a novel consistently. I never suspend my updates, and I always update daily chapters on time”.

Some participants mentioned that they used the computer program such as Da Shen Writing Software or the Little Black House to monitor their writing progress (e.g., Susan, Sophia, Harry, Grand, Tyler, and Julia). For example, Susan talked about

how she used the Da Shen Writing Software to monitor her writing by competing with other writers for writing speed and writing quantity, and she explicitly explained the competition as “We have a group of writers, several groups, which consist of internet novelists who are familiar with each other. There will be a list of people displayed in the app. The list shows how many words a writer wrote in the app, how many words a certain writer writes at a certain point of time. There is a real time rank list for these writers. We’ll have a small group, acquaintances, and log on to this software together. Sometimes I will bet, for example, if anyone wins (write the most words) that day, he/she will send an electronic red packet (a Chinese traditional custom that send money in a red envelope to wish someone fortunes, nowadays the red packet are usually e-gifts-cards send by *WeChat*)”. Sophia also said that “I would use the Little Black House and the Da Shen Writing Software. Friends would monitor each other by observing the rank list on the program”. Some writers did not use the software and opposed to use them. For example, Austin said that “the reason why I don't like to participate in such activities is that I don't agree with it. Turn writing into a daily task, or a daily constraint. I don't quite agree with this way of life, so I won't use this software”; Sam said that “if I was locked in the Little Black House, writing might be a boring task for me, not an innovative creation”; and Tyler said that “I believe that if a person was really lazy and procrastinate, those software and Apps are still useless. The only one that could monitor ourselves is our self-regulation.”

Some participants talked about the monitoring from family and editors. For example, Sophia mentioned that “my mother likes to prompt me for the manuscript. She liked to monitor me since I was a child. When I was taking care of my new-born daughter, she would ask to write novels and she would take the responsibility of the childcare instead of me... my husband also monitors me. He was doing that not

because he wanted me to earn money, but because he wanted me to be energetic on my job all the time”; Amy and Austin mentioned that editors will send them reminders of the deadline and monitor their writing progress.

Control of Distraction. Zumbrunn et al. (2011) found that attention control was an important component for students to become self-regulated writers. Baumeister & Heatherton (1996) found that self-regulation failure was due to the loss of attention control. These internet novelists described their attention control during the interviews. Some internet novelists used different strategies to control attention. The first strategy is to keep a healthy schedule and wake up early (e.g., Susan, Amy, and George) For example, Amy illustrated that she woke up and worked early in the morning to control her attention and to focus on writing because she would not be distracted by *WeChat* and *Weibo* (note: messaging and social media Apps); The second strategy is to use computer programs to assist with attention control (e.g., Susan, Sophia, Harry, and Grand). For example, Harry mentioned that he used the Little Black House to control his attention when he did not want to be interfered. The third strategy is to seek help from friends and family. Harry, Tyler and Jessica mentioned that the support from family helped with attention control. For example, Harry expressed his family took care of the housework so that he could focus on writing; Jessica said that “after I came back from work, the only thing I do is to write. No cleaning, no cooking, no laundry”. Some writers realized that they were distracted (e.g., Sam, Diana, and Leo). For example, Sam said that “I might be distracted by *QQ* group chat and *Weibo*, but I will definitely complete my task before noon”; and Diana said that “I think I can write better in school. At home, I’m a naughty girl and I was always distracted by trivial things. But I am more self-discipline at school.”

Table 8

Categories and Sample Quotes for the Self-Regulation Theme

Categories	Sample Quotes
Daily Writing Routing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I usually get up at eight o'clock in the morning, and I write until 12:00. I stop for lunch and take a rest for 2 hours, then I would continue to write. Stop for dinner and go out for a walk. Then I come back to write till midnight. • Every time I finished a book, I would go to study for a period of time. I will give myself a break and go out for a vocation. • I've been writing for 3 to 4 hours per day for 4 to 5 years. Recent years, I found a new way to write. I usually record the story by narrating it, and then organize my transcript into manuscript. If I narrated it smoothly, I could produce 10,000 words in an hour. • I woke up at 6 am and went to bed at 10 pm. I was writing except eating and sleeping. • I usually go to bed late after 12 am. I wake up at 9 am. However, recently some doctor recommended that I should sleep earlier and wake up earlier to keep healthy. • I will write after 9 pm. I'll write until 3 to 4 am in the morning. Then I go to bed. When everyone gets up early in the morning, I am sleeping. • I usually wake up at 5 and write for an hour. I'll go to work after breakfast. This is the daily routine from 2017 to 2018. I actually began to write internet novels when I was a graduate student in 2009. I need to do some experiment and research. For example, when the centrifugal machine was working, and I needed to wait for 10 minutes for the experiment result. I would use the 10 minutes to write a few hundred words. • I may sleep till 10:00 in the morning, have a brunch, and then take a nap. It is necessary to keep a clear mind before starting to write after taking a nap. Then I write for 3 to 4 hours. But the timing is not fixed.

Self-Observation

- This year I changed my career to a part-time screenwriter and entered a new field. I needed to watch movies and TV shows every day and learn from them, so I reduced some of my time on writing.
- I needed to make a plan, a plan for a year, for each month, and for every day. I would put it on the agenda. Nowadays, as I am a professional internet novelist, I still have such plans, so as many other internet novelists.
- I'm not very strict to myself. You can tell from my fat figure. I think self-discipline is important.
- Writing internet novels at home is a freelancer job. It is dangerous if no one remind me to work hard.
- I would rather do something else, and I would not set writing as a must-do task. I feel that some activities and experience are also part of my writing.
- My procrastination has also taken up a lot of my time in these six years.
- I am a little tired in writing. Then I lack the creative passion. Most of time, I just don't want to write anymore.

Self-Evaluation

- I'm also very self-regulated. I wake up at 5 am, but most novelist couldn't do that.
 - There are ups and downs in my writing practice.
 - I must be a self-regulated writer, because I persist in writing for 5 years.
 - I don't mean I'm not self-regulated, I will complete the daily tasks, for example 3000 words, on time.
My institution has stringent regulations, so I'm much regulated.
 - I'm undisciplined. I thought I would have a regulated writing schedule, but I actually can't do it.
 - I'm not self-disciplined. If I could be self-disciplined, my writing skills would be improved, and I might be a rich woman already.
-

Self-Response

- Therefore, I'm trying to change my daily routine.
- Sometimes I need to update more chapters, I will push myself to my limit, and write eight hours a day. But if I was lazy and wanted a cozy life, I would even turn off my computer for a whole day.
- I might not be self-regulated on smoking, but I can sit still to write internet novels all the time.
- I don't think I need such tools to regulate my writing.
- I will definitely complete my task before noon.
- I will use these tools because I can quickly increase the volume of updates. But I could not keep on using those for long.
- I decided to change my state of inertia.
- When I have inspirations, I will write more words and more chapters than usual and keep those draft. Therefore, I won't be nervous or worried if I don't have inspirations one day.

Monitoring

- My mother also likes to prompt me for the manuscript. She liked to monitor me since I was a child. Sometimes when I was taking care of my new-born daughter, she would ask to write novels and take the responsibility of the childcare.
 - We internet writers usually use the Da Shen Writing and the Little Black House. These writing APPs have a ranking function. Writers could compete on writing quantity and writing speed.
 - I've been using Da Shen Writing recently. If I wrote a new book and I did not want to be interfered, I would use the Little Dark House.
 - I haven't use any tools to monitor my writing. I wrote novels spontaneously.
 - Deadline is the God. If I was lazy for a while, the editors will send me a reminder of the deadline.
-

Control of Distractions

- If I feel tired of writing the script, I would write some poem. If I feel tired of writing poems, I would even go to be an extra in my movies and TVs.
 - If we have a lot of social activities, it is impossible to write novels, and we must have a very quiet environment. We need to be alone when we write.
 - If I was distracted by *WeChat*, *Weibo*, and news, I would waste much time. I would not be distracted by those if I wake up and work early. I feel particularly fulfilling when I finished daily writing tasks at noon.
 - Sometimes I will post some *Weibo*. My morning time is spent on these trifles.
 - I don't have many hobbies. I don't like singing, dancing, playing video games. My only hobby is reading.
 - I can write better in school. At home, I'm a naughty girl and I am always distracted by trivial things. But I am more self-discipline at school.
-

Interrelation among the Three Core Themes

Theory and empirical findings have explored the relationships among deliberate practice, self-efficacy, and self-regulation. Deliberate practice requires goal setting which might help increase self-efficacy. The higher one's self-efficacy, the more likely one would be motivated to practice deliberately. Rojas & Zumbrunn (2011) indicated that deliberate practice is one of the strategies that could encourage self-regulation. Zimmerman & Schunk (2011) suggested that self-regulation is processed through which learners transform their mental abilities into task-related skills for learning, including continuously monitoring progress toward a goal, check outcomes, and redirecting unsuccessful efforts, which were found in the process of deliberate practice. Adesola and Li (2018) found that self-efficacy was highly correlated with self-regulation indicating that student with advanced self-regulation skills also applied self-efficacy in achieving their goals. Research has also determined that self-efficacy plays an important role in the development of self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992).

A code relations grid is shown in Figure 6. Each square represents the co-occurrence for two subthemes. The larger one indicates higher co-occurrence. For example, effortful exertion is highly co-occurring with repetition and tasks. Referring back to the interviews, internet novelists who spent time and energy in writing tasks may also rehearsal and repeat their daily tasks. For example, Susan talked about her writing practice and said that "from 2013 to 2018, I kept on writing for more than 8 hours a day, because I must keep a ten-thousand-word update per day. Sometimes if there were a high volume of chapters to write, the time of writing may increase up to 12 to 14 hours." Her description of her writing experience involves both "effortful exertion" and "repetition and tasks."

There are some significant co-occurring relations among three core themes. For example, the subtheme Timely Feedback in Deliberate Practice core theme is frequently co-occurred with the subtheme Facing Challenge in Writing Self-efficacy core theme. Referring back to the interviews, internet novelists often mentioned how negative feedback made them anxious and annoyed, which were emotional challenges for them. For example, Diana mentioned that “I was hardly insulted by readers. I have a fragile heart, so I was really hurt after being humiliated. You know, I can’t insult them back because I would suffer more stress if I call their names back. I had to hold my breath and submit to the humiliations”. Diana mentioned the negative feedback she received from readers, and those “humiliations” were huge challenges for her and she confronted the challenge by looking at the negative comments day after day and tried to “find peace in my heart eventually”. Another example is that the subtheme Prior Accomplishment in Writing Self-efficacy core theme is frequently co-occurred with the subtheme Effortful Exertion in Deliberate Practice core theme. Referring back to the interviews, internet novelists with higher self-efficacy is more likely to be motivated to maintain high intensity of practice. For example, Leo talked about his writing practice and said that “the more I write, the faster I think, and the higher my ability to express myself”, and he also said that practice made him write more fluently and faster.

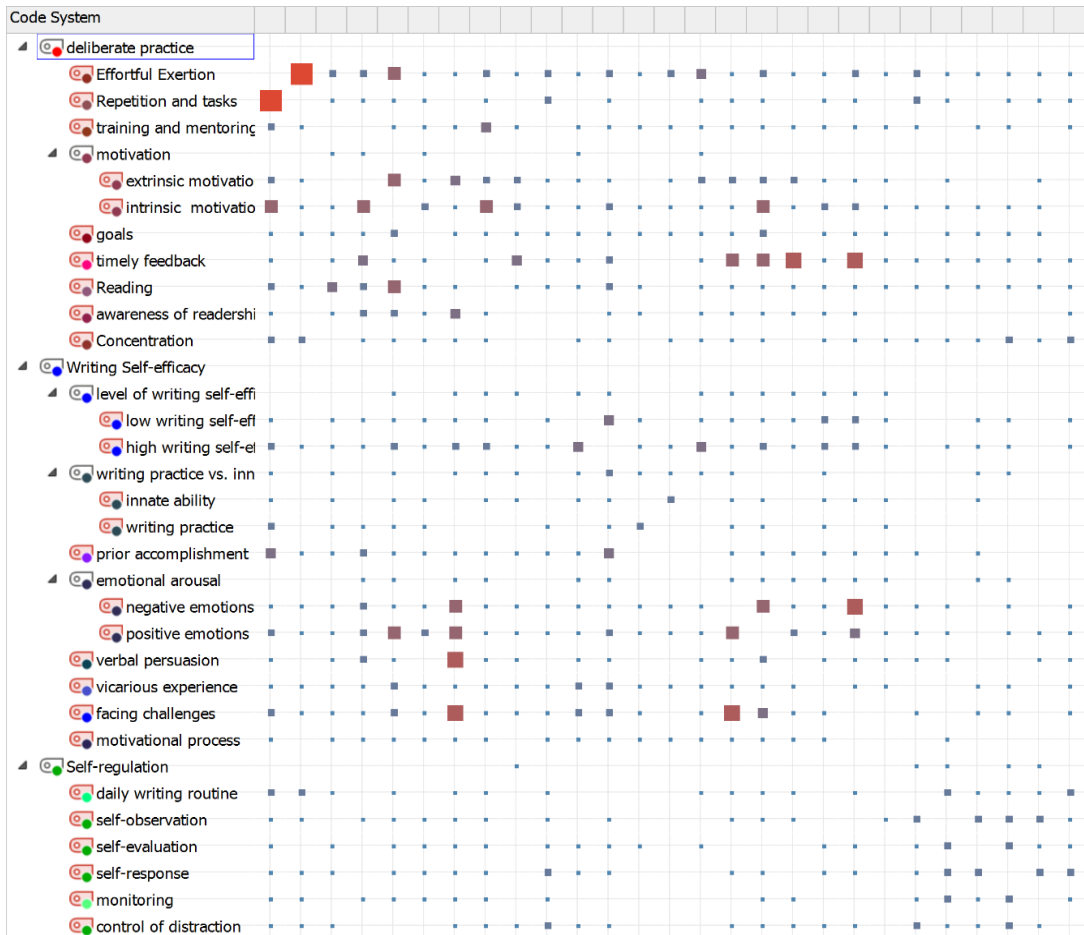
A code co-occurrence model is shown in Appendix K. In this model, codes are connected with a black line to the code(s) with which they co-occur. The thickness of the lines indicates the frequency of the co-occurrences. If the two codes overlap many times, the line connecting the two will be thicker (“Code Co-Occurrence Model,” n.d.). In this model, Effortful Exertion, High Writing Self-efficacy, Timely Feedback, and Positive Emotions are subthemes that have more connections with other

subthemes. For example, High Self-efficacy frequently co-occurred with Prior Accomplishment, Effortful Exertion, Casual Attribution, and Positive Emotions. These subthemes might play more significant roles from internet novelists' perspective of their experience.

This model does not show the connections between Writing Self-efficacy and Self-regulations, which is unusual because research findings showed that self-efficacy and self-regulation skills are interdependent (Gaskill & Woolfolk Hoy, 2002). Co-occurrence was not found between Writing Self-efficacy and Self-regulation does not mean that these two core themes are not associated. Revisiting the quotations might help find the underlying factors that shape and give meaning to these two core themes. For example, Grand stated that "I must be a good novelist because I persist in writing." He had high self-efficacy because he self-evaluated himself as a self-regulated writer. Diana thought she was not self-regulated and couldn't control distractions while writing internet novels at home. In the meanwhile, she reported low self-efficacy and stated that "I'm not self-disciplined. If I could be self-disciplined, my writing skills would be improved."

Figure 6

Code Relations Grid



Essence

This study focused on internet novelists' perspectives of their writing experience. The essence of this study is that internet novelists used deliberate practice to improve their novel writing skills and writing performance. While they accomplished certain stage of achievement, their writing self-efficacy increased, which might, in turn, motivate them to continue their deliberate practice. Internet novelists with high self-efficacy have outstanding writing performance. In the meanwhile, self-regulation skills were applied during deliberate practice of writing, and self-regulation skills helped with the development of writing expertise for internet novelists.

Management of writing motivations, management of the cognitive load during the writing process, management of the emotional fluctuations, and monitoring and attempting to accomplish specific goals are the underlying factors that were associated with the three core themes for these participants. As the participants spoke in the interview, I noted their feelings and emotions including happiness, relief, anger, sadness, stress, and frustrations in my journal. They were excited to talk about their motivation to write, their writing achievements, the efforts they made, and the emotions they experienced.

First, different individuals have different motivations, intrinsic, extrinsic, or both. Participants who have intrinsic motivations (e.g., interest, literature dream, love of reading and writing) to write internet novels might often have positive emotions (e.g., excitement, enjoyment, and comfortable) during their writing processes. They set up goals based on their intrinsic motivation. For example, Harry had a literature dream and he set up a long-term goal as being a member of the China Writers' Association. He said that he did not write for money and he wrote with joy.

Participants who had extrinsic motivations (e.g., money, social status, recognition by others) to write internet novels might also have positive emotions (e.g., satisfactions) during their writing processes. They might be more aware of readers' need, more likely to be influenced by other's feedback.

Second, writing is a cognitively demanding task and it requires management of cognitive load. These internet novelists talked about their experience of intentional efforts to involve cognitive and metacognitive thought processes. For example, Mark, Austin, Tyler, and Jessica talked about that they were thinking about writing throughout the day, even when they were having rest, absent-minded, traveling, and queuing up in the ticket office at the movie theater. Participants also introduced the self-regulation skills to plan and monitor their writing tasks.

Third, emotions were frequently mentioned during the interviews. Participants who had positive emotions usually received positive feedback, were supported by others, and had strong motivations (either intrinsic or extrinsic) to write internet novels. They might also have higher writing self-efficacy. For example, Sam enjoyed writing because he wanted to be a story-teller. He received lots of positive feedback from readers and support from others, and he had high writing self-efficacy. Participants who had negative emotions usually confronted challenges during the writing processes. They might either received negative feedback from readers, or might not have been supported by families and other people. For example, Harry mentioned that one of his novels was not welcomed by readers and had not sold well, and he felt very anxious. He also experienced negative emotions when observing his peers' success. He dealt with the negative emotions properly by strengthening his writing self-efficacy and he stated that "if I write well, I will be better than him one day".

Fourth, internet novelists monitored and attempted to accomplish specific goals. Most of their goals were self-selected and some of their goals were set by the websites or their teacher. Deliberate practice required internet novelists to plan and manage their writing tasks. For example, Susan talked about a group of writers who monitored each other by using the rank list feature of *Da Shen Writing* software and stated that “when a writer did not reach the goal he/she set for that day, the writer would send *WeChat* red packets to friends in the group who would supervise his/her writing plans”.

Each internet novelists had his/her unique experience and story. The essence of the phenomena is clear in that engaging in deliberate practice, applying self-regulated strategies and having appropriate writing self-efficacy appeared to lead to more successful achievement in writing for internet novelists.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter will summarize the findings of the study by presenting an overview of the evidence as it related to the research questions. The implications of the findings will then be discussed. Finally, the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research will be presented.

Discussion of Findings

Research question one. Research question one asked, “how do Chinese internet novelists describe their deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation in novel writing?” This study showed three core themes that arose from internet novelists’ experiences. They were Deliberate Practice, Writing Self-efficacy, and Self-regulation. Each core theme has six to nine subthemes. As internet novelists experienced on-line writing and the practice of writing, the transition of their writing self-efficacy and the application of self-regulation skills, they introduced their experiences in detail. Table 6, 7, and 8 in Chapter 4 present the subthemes and quotes from participants. Table 9, 10 and 11 below present the summarized experiences of their deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation respectively.

The practice among Chinese internet novelists could be identified as deliberate practice because of their unique writing experiences. As traditional writers might not have specific tasks or goals for their writing, internet novelists usually need to keep several thousand words of update every day. Traditional writers may wait for a long time for the feedback from critics and readers after their novels were published and sold to the public, while internet novelists could get instant feedback from readers in the comment section of the websites. Their perspectives of deliberate practice are summarized in Table 9. Chinese internet novelists’ deliberate practice follows the

same pattern. This pattern is shown in the Deliberate Practice Roadmap in Figure 7. Chinese internet novelists usually read a lot and were motivated to write novels and to “tell stories”. They maintained their intrinsic and/or extrinsic motivations which allow them to keep a high level of writing practice for years. After they decided to write internet novels, they needed to set goals based on writing tasks, either self-assigned or assigned by the website, and they also had short-term and long-term plans for their writing career. Considerable and regular efforts were made with focused attention and strategic repetitions. Their consistent practice might also involve self-regulation processes. Chinese Internet novelists got feedback from readers, families, friends, and editors. Readers’ feedback was usually the most instant and constructive. Then, they assessed their writing ability based on their achievement (e.g., income, awards, and feedback). They might be motivated to continue writing or discouraged to give up writing during this stage and writing self-efficacy was involved in this stage. Training and mentoring is optional for Chinese internet novelists because most of them were self-taught and learned how to write novels by extensive reading. If they were still motivated to write, they would continue reading and writing and would follow this roadmap circularly.

The Deliberate Practice Roadmap for Chinese Internet Novelists is important because this roadmap illustrated their novel writing experience and how they perceived their deliberate practice in writing.

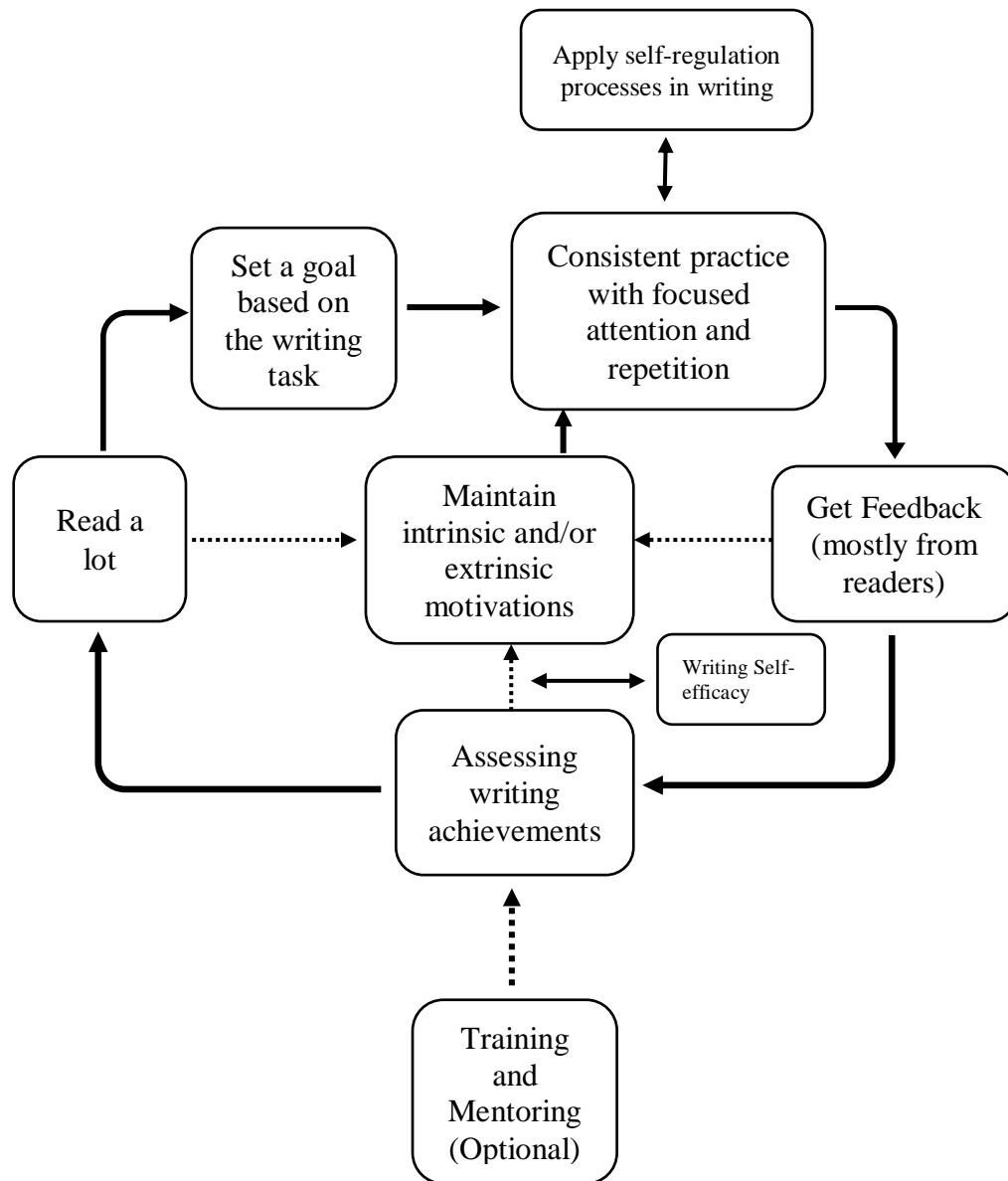
Table 9

Summary Table for the Deliberate Practice Theme

Subthemes	Experiences
Effortful Exertion	Novelists make continuous investment in writing practice which requires time and energy.
Repetition and tasks	Novelists keep high intensity of repetition because of their writing tasks.
Motivation	Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations allow internet novelists to maintain a high level of writing practice for years.
Concentration	Novelists sustain concentration for a limited period of time.
Goals	Novelists set up daily, monthly, yearly, short-term and long-term goals.
Timely Feedback	Novelists receive timely feedback from different people, especially readers.
Training and Mentoring	Novelists are mostly self-taught without training and mentoring.
Reading	Reading is a way to practice writing as well as a motivation to write internet novels.
Awareness of Readership	Novelists are aware of readers' taste and needs and apply them in their writing practice.

Figure 7

Deliberate Practice Roadmap Drawn from Experiences of Chinese Internet Novelists



Chinese internet novelists' perspectives of writing self-efficacy are summarized in Table 10 and the Writing Self-efficacy Model for Chinese Internet Novelists is shown in Figure 8. Findings confirmed that Chinese internet novelists used the four sources of information (i.e., prior accomplishment, social persuasion, vicarious experience, and emotional arousal) to form their self-efficacy beliefs in novel writing. Achievements in their internet novels or in other areas could enhance their writing self-efficacy. Social persuasion such as encouragement from readers, families, friends, and editors was influential, especially for those with low self-efficacy. Encouragement, praise and positive messages about their novels fueled their sense of confidence in writing. Discouragement, humiliations and abuses about their novels or themselves might diminish their perceived writing self-efficacy, but sometimes might motivate them to make more efforts on writing practice. Positive emotions such as enjoyment and satisfaction were arose during the writing process, and could increase their perceived writing self-efficacy; negative emotions was a bit complicated as disappointment and suffering might decrease their perceived writing self-efficacy, but sometimes sadness and distress when writing tragic plots might be a signal of high writing self-efficacy. Perceived writing self-efficacy might also affect their emotions. Those with high writing self-efficacy were more likely to have positive emotions, and those with low writing self-efficacy were more likely to have negative emotions. Watching others' success, especially peers, might affirm their beliefs on their own writing ability and increase their perceived writing self-efficacy. Chinese internet novelists' perceived writing self-efficacy was dynamic and was changing through time. Currently, some hold high writing self-efficacy, and some hold low writing self-efficacy according to real-time circumstances. Perceived writing self-efficacy appeared to be predictive of deliberate practice, motivational processes,

and approaches they used when facing challenges. High writing self-efficacy enhanced their motivation to practice writing deliberately, and low self-efficacy hindered the writing progress and weakened their motivation to write novels. Novelists with high self-efficacy readily undertook challenging activities and view challenges as opportunities to develop writing skills. Challenges might also influence their writing self-efficacy. In addition, Chinese internet novelists with high writing self-efficacy attributed their success to both writing practice and innate ability, and they usually attributed their failure to insufficient efforts. Those with low writing self-efficacy attributed their success mostly to writing practice, and they usually attributed their failure to low innate ability.

This model is important because it indicates how Chinese internet novelists formed their writing self-efficacy, as well as how their writing self-efficacy affected their behaviors. It is a visualized way to interpret Chinese internet novelists' writing experiences and their perspectives of writing self-efficacy.

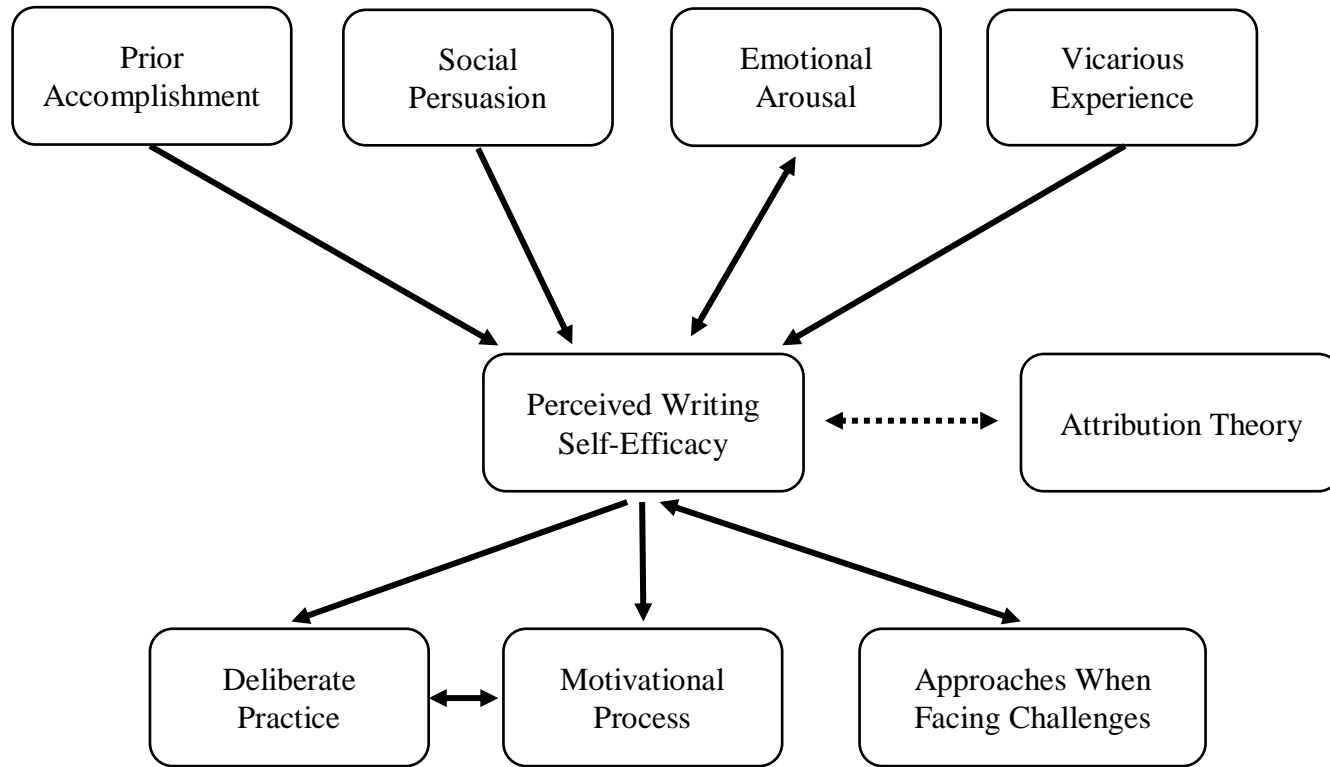
Table 10

Summary Table for the Writing Self-Efficacy Theme

Subthemes	Experiences
Perceived Writing Self-Efficacy	Novelists' levels of writing self-efficacy were dynamic. Currently, some hold high writing self-efficacy, and some hold low writing self-efficacy.
Casual Attribution	Half of these novelists attribute their success to writing practice, and the other half attribute their success to innate ability.
Prior Accomplishment	Prior accomplishments enhance novelists' writing self-efficacy.
Emotional Arousal	Both positive and negative emotions arose during the writing process.
Social Persuasion	Social persuasion, especially encouragement, enhance novelists' writing self-efficacy; and discouragement diminishes novelists' writing self-efficacy.
Vicarious Experience	Watching others' success affirms novelists' beliefs on their own writing achievements.
Facing Challenges	Novelists with high self-efficacy have high level of persistence when confronting challenges. Challenges influence novelists' writing self-efficacy.
Motivational Process	High writing self-efficacy enhance novelists' motivation to write, and low self-efficacy hinder the writing progress and weaken their motivation to write novels.

Figure 8

Writing Self-Efficacy Model Drawn from Experiences of Chinese Internet Novelists



Chinese internet novelists' perspectives of self-regulation are summarized in Table 11. The Self-regulation Model for Chinese Internet Novelists is shown in Figure 9. Findings confirmed that Chinese internet novelists used a three-phase cyclical self-regulation process. These cyclical self-regulation process permeated their daily writing routines and their deliberate practice. Some novelists have tight and fixed daily schedules, and some have unstructured daily schedules. The similarity is that they all spend 3-12 hours on writing every day; set goals and expectations for their writing; observed their writing progresses; evaluated their performance compared to goals; and utilize strategies to manage their writing progresses. The first strategy was that Chinese internet novelists self-monitored or used tools to monitor their writing progress, and their friends and family also monitored their writing progresses. The second strategy was that Chinese internet novelists might control their attention and prevent themselves from distractions. Chinese internet novelists might circulate the self-regulation during their deliberate practice of writing.

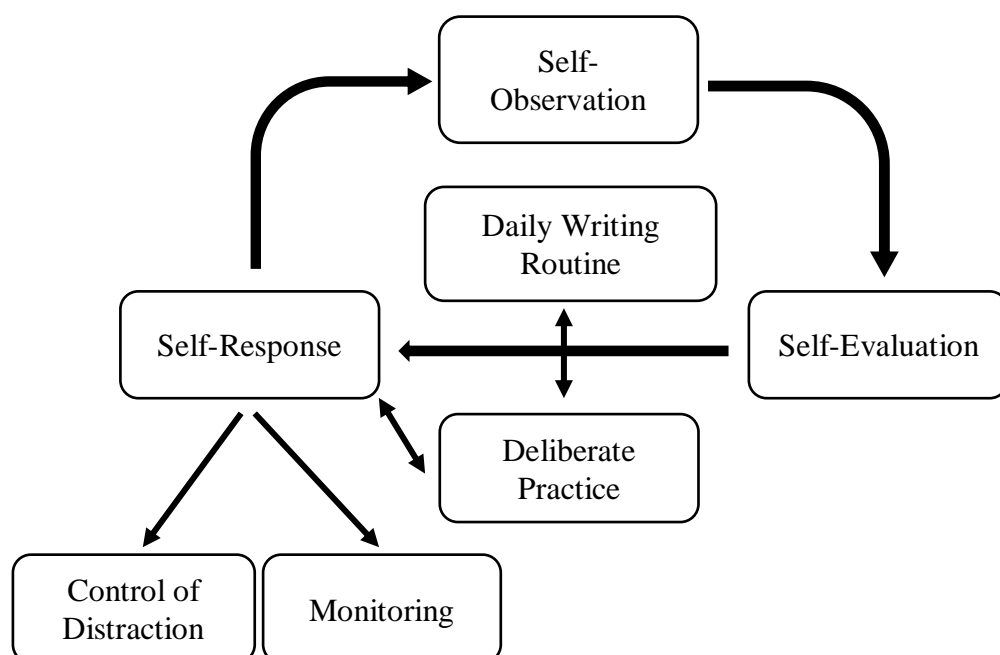
This model is important because it visualized how Chinese internet novelists applied self-regulation during their writing processes. It presents Chinese internet novelists' writing experiences and their perspectives of self-regulation.

Table 11

Summary Table for the Self-Regulation Theme

Subthemes	Experiences
Daily Writing Routine	Some novelists have tight and fixed daily schedules, and some have unstructured daily schedules. The similarity is that they all spend 3-12 hours on writing every day.
Self-observation	Novelists pay deliberate attention to their writing practice, feelings, and thoughts.
Self-evaluation	Novelists judge themselves when comparing their performance and their goals on writing.
Self-response	Novelists sustain satisfying actions or alter strategies after self-evaluation.
Monitoring	Novelists self-monitor their writing progress and use tools to monitor their writing progress. Friends and family also monitor their writing progress.
Control of Distraction	Novelists control their attention and prevent themselves from distractions.

Figure 9

Self-Regulation Model Drawn from Experiences of Chinese Internet Novelists

Research question two. Research question two asked, “how has writing self-efficacy, deliberate practice, and self-regulation influenced Chinese internet novelists’ writing performance and their development of writing expertise?” Internet novelists believed that deliberate practice was the direct source that influences their writing performance and the development of writing expertise. For example, participants claimed that they were diligent in writing and they might need several years of practice to achieve their goals (e.g., good writing performance, being professional writers, develop advanced writing expertise). Internet novelists with high self-efficacy were more likely to perform better in writing and develop writing expertise. Perceived writing self-efficacy might directly influence their writing practice, which might provide positive guides and supports for writing performance. For example, participants with high self-efficacy were more likely to be motivated to write consistently and substantially, which may improve their writing performance and writing expertise. Chinese internet novelists who were self-regulated were more likely to improve their writing performance and develop their writing expertise because they might have healthier daily writing routines and monitor their writing progresses effectively. These findings were important because they added knowledge to the learning theory as deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation were all key psychological components in the development of writing expertise.

Research question three. Research question three asked “are writing self-efficacy, deliberate practice and self-regulation related to each other? If so, how are they related from the perspective of Chinese internet novelists?” From the perspectives of internet novelists, deliberate practice and writing self-efficacy were related to each other; deliberate practice and self-regulation were related to each other; but writing self-efficacy and self-regulation were not closely related to each

other. The relations between deliberate practice and writing self-efficacy was shown in Figure 7 and Figure 8. Chinese internet novelists assessed their writing ability based on their achievement (e.g., income, awards, feedback, and training) during their deliberate practice, and it yielded to perceived writing self-efficacy, which might contribute the motivational processes and determined the goals they set, the efforts they made, and how they dealt with the difficulties and failures. These motivational processes, in turn, influenced their deliberate practice. For example, most participants reported increases in writing self-efficacy through years of deliberate practice. Participants with high writing self-efficacy also reported great efforts and adjustment of writing goals in their deliberate practice. The relations between deliberate practice and self-regulation was shown in Figure 7 and Figure 9. Chinese internet novelists' deliberate practice might interact with their self-regulation processes because both processes involve the attempt to monitor, regulate, and control of their goal settings, motivations, and behaviors. For example, participants who reported good self-regulation skills also reported focused attention, goal-directed, and systematic deliberate practice. Participants who reported effective deliberate practice also made keen observations and evaluations, readjusted their strategies, and were organized and carefully planned in their writing progresses. These findings were important because they highlighted the interactions of social cognitive theory and the learning theory from the perspectives of Chinese internet novelists. Findings also indicated that deliberate practice might be the most important construct, and self-regulation might be the weakest construct in their novel writing processes.

Implications

This study provides an in-depth understanding of Chinese internet novelists' experience based on studies of social cognitive theory (i.e., self-efficacy and self-regulation) and learning theories (i.e., deliberate practice). The study is innovative and exploratory, and it used a qualitative approach to increase our knowledge of the studied phenomenon. Qualitative interviews allow the investigator to explore the research questions in depth. Face-to-face contact with participants allows the investigator to identify affective and cognitive aspects of participants. Interviews allow the investigator to explain and clarify questions, so that participants may provide accurate and useful response. These interviews yield new details, new insights and rich information. Researchers, novelists, and educators may find this information helpful.

Implications for researchers. First, it may help researchers understand the subject of internet literature and internet novelists and it provides new understandings and insights about the psychological aspects of their writing practice. Deliberate practice may have been the most important construct for developing writing expertise and improving writing performance for Chinese internet novelists. Although previous studies showed high correlation of reading and writing (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000; Shanahan et al., 2006), and indicated that reading have positive impacts on the quality and quantity of students' written products (Graham & Perin, 2007; Graham & Sandmel, 2011; Rogers & Graham, 2008), reading was not included in deliberate practice theory in writing. In this study, reading played a critical role in deliberate practice of writing from the perspectives of Chinese internet novelists. Reading had positive impacts on their novel writing practice and writing expertise development, and it was also a motivator for them to write internet novels. Researchers could

include reading as a construct in future studies of deliberate practice in writing. Awareness of readership was also brought out as a new construct for deliberate practice, which was not frequently explored in previous studies. Chinese internet novelists mentioned this construct a lot because they received feedback from readers more frequently and abundantly than traditional writers and students. Awareness of readership among Chinese internet novelists could be a potential topic for future deliberate practice studies in writing.

According to the participants, self-regulation was found to be the least important construct for developing writing expertise and improving writing performance for Chinese internet novelists. Although most Chinese internet novelists practice writing deliberately, many of them were not self-regulated in their daily writing routines and lived unhealthy lives. They were aware of their self-regulation issues and reported they would be willing to change their schedules and monitor themselves more effectively. Researchers could learn from these findings and explore the question such as if self-regulation did play an important role in developing writing expertise.

Implications for novelists. Aspiring novelists, especially Chinese internet novelists, may understand how they might develop their writing expertise through deliberate practice. They may understand what type of goals should they set, estimate how many hours should take for them to achieve writing goals, seek effective training and mentoring, and expect what to learn from timely feedback and how to respond to their feedback. They may also better understand the importance of writing self-efficacy and self-regulation for writing practice. For example, they could learn how to build high writing self-efficacy from four sources of information (i.e., prior accomplishment, social persuasion, vicarious experience, and emotional arousal), and

the challenging experiences and how to deal with difficulties mentioned by participants in this study could be used as a reference point for other novelists.

Novelists may also benefit from applying the three-phase self-regulation model, and by keeping healthy and well-regulated daily writing routines in their writing practice.

Implications for educators. Educators of writing may find this information helpful because the experiences introduced by successful novelists are good sources as they build teaching models and strategies. For example, educators could develop a teaching model based on the Deliberate Practice Roadmap for Chinese Internet Novelists in Figure 7. While the current study did not test the efficacy of these models, they may help provide an evidence-based framework for developing instruction and intervention. Basic components for a model that the current study and evidence suggest that educators could use as the basis for potential instruction would be: 1) provide sufficient reading materials for students to enhance their motivations to write and to offer the models to imitate from; 2) set up appropriate goals and tasks for students; 3) encourage them to practice repetitively with focused attention; 4) provide timely feedback and provide peer-review opportunities for students; 5) assess their writing achievements as well as provide self-rating opportunities; and 6) always be aware of students' motivations to write, and motivate them by providing constructive feedback and encouragement, and 7) inspire their intrinsic motivation by nurturing enjoyable reading and writing environment, and maybe add some external incentives to motivate them extrinsically.

While educators provided feedback and assessed students' writing achievements, they should be aware that encouragement and positive feedback were very important because it might influence their writing self-efficacy. Students who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master writing were likely to

make greater effort and sustain it. Educators could also inform the idea that writing could be improved through deliberate practice, and innate ability might play a role but was not the most crucial role. Educators could monitor students' writing progresses as well as their daily writing routines. Educators could also teach students to self-observe, self-evaluate, and self-response for their writing progresses.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered while accessing the reliability and validity of this research. First, this study was based on a strong theoretical foundation drawn from Ericsson's deliberate practice theory and Bandura's social cognitive theory. Although I set aside my bias to the best of my ability during the interviews and data analysis procedures and tried to let the themes emerge by themselves, there might still have been some of my apriori presumptions and hypothesized positions that impacted the interview and data analysis procedures.

Second, although the sample in this study is relatively diverse regarding the age, gender, and cities of origins of participants for a phenomenological study, this study used purposeful and snowball sampling strategy. Most participants were successful and relatively expert writers. The sample might thus be comparatively homogeneous and the evidence gathered may not be applicable to less experienced writers or writing in other domains.

Third, when asked questions about writing self-efficacy, participants frequently chose to provide vague answers. The comparison of writing self-efficacy among these internet novelists was thus sometimes hard to carry out. Additionally, as humility is a traditional virtue in Chinese culture, some Chinese internet novelists might be hesitant to report high writing self-efficacy, and this may have influenced the interpretation of this research finding.

Future Research

There should be more studies about the psychological aspects of Chinese internet novelists. Studies of deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy and self-regulation among Chinese internet novelists could focus on a broader population which could include better representation across novice novelists, intermediate novelists, and veteran novelists. More research questions could be asked in the future such as 1) why Chinese internet novelists' self-regulation processes were not effective from their perspectives; 2) why writing self-efficacy and self-regulation were not closely related from the perspective of Chinese internet novelists; and 3) why some internet novelists experienced depression, anxiety and other health problems, and how to solve the issue.

A mixed methods approach could also be used to capture a fuller picture of Chinese internet novelists' experience in future research. For example, an exploratory mixed-methods design could be used as a quantitative phase could be designed to follow this study. The results of this study can help develop or inform the quantitative study. Questionnaires about deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation could be developed for the specific group of people, the internet novelists. After developing the survey and finish the data collection and data analysis, the quantitative results would be used to interpret the qualitative results, and researchers could explore the phenomenon in depth and then estimate its prevalence.

An explanatory mixed-mixed design could also be used. Distributing the Self-Efficacy for Writing Scale (SEWS) and the Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ) to a large sample of internet novelists. Then, quantitative data would be collected for data analysis. After the quantitative data analysis, collect qualitative data by identifying participants from the quantitative sample for follow-up interviews. Interpret the result

of quantitative data based on the in-depth qualitative study and explain why the results occurred.

In addition, teaching models for writing could be developed from this study and their potential efficacy could be empirically examined. This would be a necessary step before any larger-scale interventions based on this work were implemented. I described a teaching model for teachers in the implication section in Chapter 5. If the teaching model is applied to a group of aspiring internet novelists, an intervention study could be conducted in the future that could test the utility of this model. For example, researchers could assign novice internet novelists to groups that receive novel writing mentoring following the model suggested and performance could be compared to groups who receive no intervention and who receive traditional writing workshop interventions. Then, the researchers can evaluate the effects of the interventions and the outcomes of their writing achievements.

Conclusion

As previously mentioned, the present study used a qualitative, phenomenological approach to reveal meanings that were “hidden” in lived experiences of Chinese internet novelists. It provided rich descriptions of their experiences about their deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation. This study implied that Chinese internet novelists could develop their writing expertise through deliberate practice, enhance their writing self-efficacy through writing practice, and apply self-regulation process in the writing practice. While this group was of participants was small, further study and use of mixed methods and/or intervention designs could yield results were generalizable and could be a reference for the development of future teaching models for writing instruction.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



IRB Number: 20180418173EX

Project ID: 18173

Project Title: Deliberate Practice, Writing Self-Efficacy, and Self-regulation among Internet Novelists in China: A Phenomenological Approach

Dear Shuangshuang:

This letter is to officially notify you of the certification of exemption of your project for the Protection of Human Subjects. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as exempt. Exempt categories are listed within HRPP Policy #4.001: Exempt Research available at: <http://research.unl.edu/researchcompliance/policies-procedures/>.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Exemption: 4/30/2018

o Review conducted using exempt category 2 at 45 CFR 46.101

o Funding: N/A

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- * Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- * Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- * Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- * Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- * Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 402-472-6965.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Becky R. Freeman".

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB



Appendix B

Informed Consent Form (Chinese)

知情同意书

研究课题：网络小说作家的刻意练习，写作自我效能和自我调节

研究目的：本研究的目的是探讨网络小说作家的写作经历，研究其心理因素诸如刻意练习，写作自我效能，和自我调节。

研究过程：我们将邀请您参与一个为时 45 分钟的采访。采访的内容是有关您网络小说写作的经历以及心路历程。采访将在一个已预约的安静会议室进行，或通过网络视频进行。本次采访将录音。

参与本项目的好处：本研究对您没有直接的好处，您的参与对于网络文学的研究具有推动作用，能帮助研究者了解网络小说作家的心理因素。

参与本项目的风险：本次采访可能存在信息安全方面的风险。我们会尽全力保护您提供的信息不被泄露。

信息保密：本次采访的音频文件以及采访稿将电子储存在一个受密码保护的硬盘中，并存放在研究者的，有电子锁的办公室。任何可以直接辨别您身份的信息会严格保密。在科学会议或者科学杂志上发表本研究获得的研究信息和数据时，您的身份将不会被公开。

您的权利：您参加采访是自愿的。您可以拒绝参加或者在采访的任何阶段以任何方式退出参与而不会遭到惩罚或损害与研究机构和研究者的关系。

相关问询：如果您有与本研究相关的任何问题，请联系研究员蔡爽爽，电话 (+1)402-472-6965，电子邮件 scai@unl.edu。如果您有与自身权益相关的任何问题，或者您想反映参与本研究过程中的不满和忧虑，请联系内布拉斯加大学伦理委员会（IRB），联系电话：(+1) 402-472-6965，电子邮件 irb@unl.edu。

告知声明：

“我已被告知‘网络小说作家刻意练习，自我效能和自我调节’科学研究的背景、目的、步骤、风险及获益情况。我有足够的时间和机会进行提问，问题的答复我很满意。我也被告知，当我有问题、不满、忧虑，或想进

一步获得信息时，应当与谁联系。我已经阅读这份知情同意书，并且同意参加本研究。我知道我可以在任何时候、无需任何理由退出本研究。我被告知我将得到这份知情同意书的副本，上面包含我和研究者的签名。”

研究员签名

获得知情同意的受访者签名

日期

联系方式

项目负责人：蔡爽爽 scai@unl.edu (+1)402-480-0861

项目研究员：Eric Buhs ebuhs@unl.edu (+1)402-472-6948

Appendix C
Informed Consent Form (English)

Informed Consent Form

Title: Deliberate Practice, Writing Self-Efficacy, and Self-regulation among Internet Novelists in China: A Phenomenological Approach

Purpose: The purpose of the study is to explore the phenomenon of internet novelists' online writing experiences, focusing on their psychological aspects such as writing self-efficacy, self-regulation, and deliberate practice.

Procedures: You will be asked to have an interview with the investigator. You will be asked questions about your writing experience as an internet novelist. The procedures will last for 45 minutes and will be conducted in a quiet location such as a reserved classroom, an office or a conference room or through Skype. This interview will be audio-recorded.

Benefits: There is no direct benefit to you as an individual participant. Your participation will help us understand the psychological aspects of internet novelists.

Risks and/or Discomforts: Because we are collecting your contact information, there is a minimal risk that someone other than investigators could obtain access to your data and identify you. We have, however, taken precautions to prevent this from occurring.

Confidentiality: All audio files and transcripts will be stored electronically. We contacted you because you are willing to participate in the qualitative interview, and you meet the criteria for this qualitative interview. Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored in a password-protected hard drive in investigator's locked campus office and will only be accessed by the investigator during the study and for one year afterward. The information obtained in this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings, but the data will be reported as aggregated or de-identified data.

Compensation: There is no compensation for this study.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may contact the investigator(s) at the phone numbers below. Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (+1) 402-472-6965 or email to irb@unl.edu to voice concerns about the research or if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant.

Freedom to Withdraw:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Signature of Participant:

Signature of Research Participant Date

Signature of investigator

Name and Phone number of investigator(s)

Shuangshuang Cai, Principal Investigator: (+1) 402-480-0861 scai@unl.edu

Eric Buhs, Secondary Investigator: (+1) 402-472-6948 ebuhs@unl.edu

Appendix D
Interview Protocol (Chinese)

采访草案

项目名称: 网文作家的刻意练习, 写作自我效能和自我调节: 现象学研究方法

日期 _____

时间 _____

地点 _____

采访者姓名 _____

受访者姓名 _____

是否阅读并签署知情同意 _____

开场白:

感谢您的参与! 您的采访对这项研究非常重要。这项研究主要想了解您作为网文作家, 对刻意练习, 写作自我效能和自我调节的观点以及个人经历。

本项研究的保密性能得到保证。

本次采访将进行 45 分钟左右。

请问我可以开始采访了吗?

1. 请你自我介绍一下好吗?
 - 您的笔名是什么?
 - 您的年龄范围是多少?
 - 您的教育背景是什么?
 - 您在网上写小说有多久了?
 - 您在网上出版了多少本书?
 - 您的网络小说的订阅/读者的平均数量是多少?
 - 您曾经在传统的印刷出版商一起出版过书吗? 你从一个传统的印刷出版商出版了多少本书? 如果是, 为什么要切换到网文?
 - 能透露一下, 您网文写作的平均年收入吗?
2. 关于小说家对其写作经验的看法问题涉及到有意识的实践、写作的自我效能感和自我调节。
 - 1) 你能告诉我你是如何发展你的写作技能的吗?
 - 你每天写几个小时的书?
 - 你以这样方式过几个月/几年的相同的例行公事?
 - 这些年来你花的时间是怎么改变的?
 - 你有写小说的导师吗? 你的导师在小说创作中扮演什么角色?
 - 在你在网上写小说之前, 你用其他方式练习过你的写作吗? (例如, 学校)。

- 你的写作实践如何影响你小说写作的质量、流畅性和生产力?
 - 你把你的成功和失败归因于你的小说写作, 天生的能力或实践? 为什么?
 - 请描述您如何监控自己的写作实践的任何工具或技术。
- 2) 你能告诉我是什么促使你成为一名在线小说家的吗?
- 当你写网络小说时, 你是如何激励自己的?
 - 作为一名网络小说家, 你写小说的短期目标(一到两年)是什么?
 - 作为一名网络小说家, 你写小说的长期目标是什么(五到十年)?
 - 你想被认为是一位伟大的小说家吗? 你想获得文学奖吗?
 - 在你的写作过程中你是如何处理你的积极/消极情绪的?
 - 当你写作时, 你有没有感到沮丧或焦虑? 当你经历负面情绪时, 你有没有考虑过放弃写作? 如果你真的考虑过放弃, 你是如何说服自己继续下去的?
- 3) 你能描述一下你自己对网络写作的态度吗?
- 你如何评价你的写作能力(例如, 语法、结构、故事、创造力等)?
 - 当你第一次写在线小说时, 你对写作的信心水平如何? 你目前的写作信心水平如何?
 - 你的写作信心水平是如何随时间变化的? 增加(或减少)的主要原因是什么?
 - 除了写作之外, 你在其他领域或职业生涯中是否取得过成功? 你在这方面的成就是如何影响你对写作能力的信念的?
 - 观察其他网络小说家的成功如何影响你写作的信心? 请你描述一下当你观察其他小说家的成败时, 你会做些什么?
 - 你能描述一下你如何评价你的小说和你的写作经验吗?
- 4) 你能描述一下其他人对你的网络写作的态度吗?
- 你从朋友、家人、编辑、读者和导师那里得到了什么样的反馈?
 - 他们的鼓励或批评如何影响你写作的信心?
 - 他们的鼓励或批评如何影响你的写作计划和实践?

Appendix E
Interview Protocol (English)

Interview Protocol

Project: Deliberate Practice, Writing Self-Efficacy, and Self-regulation among Internet Literature Novelists in China

Date _____

Time _____

Location _____

Interviewer _____

Interviewee _____

Release form signed? _____

Note to Interviewee:

Thank you for your participation. I believe your input will be valuable to this research on deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation among Internet Literature Novelists in China.

Confidentiality of responses is guaranteed.

Approximate length of the interview is 45 minutes.

Questions to be asked:

1. Would you please introduce yourself?

- What's your pseudonym/pen name?
- What is your age?
- What's your educational background?
- How long have you been writing novels online?
- How many books have you published online?
- What were the average numbers of subscriptions/readers for your online novels?
- Have you ever published books with a traditional print publisher? How many books did you publish with a traditional print publisher? If yes, why did you switch to online formats?
- Would you mind letting me know your average annual revenue from online novel writing?

2. Questions about novelist's perspectives of their writing experiences related to deliberate practice, writing self-efficacy, and self-regulation.

1) Please tell me about how you developed your writing skills?

Prompts:

- How many hours per day do you work at your writing?
- How many months/years have you been doing the same routine?
- How has the amount of time you have spent on writing changed over the years?
- How long do you think it takes to become an expert writer?
- Do you have a mentor for novel writing? What's the role of your mentor in novel writing?
- Before you wrote your novel(s) on line, did you practice your writing in other ways? (e.g., schools)
- How did your writing practice influence your novel writing?
- Where you think writing skill comes from (e.g., innate ability and practice)? And why?
- Please describe any tools or techniques that you used to monitor your writing practice.

2) Tell me about what motivates you to become an on-line novelist?

Prompts:

- What made you want to become an online novelist?
- How do you motivate yourself for writing?
- What are your short-term goals (one to two years) for writing novels as an online novelist?
- What are your long-term goals (five to ten years) for writing novels as an online novelist?
- Tell me about what you think make a writer successful? (e.g., publications and literary award)
- How did you deal with your positive/negative emotions during your writing process?
- Have you ever considered giving up writing when you experience negative emotions? If you did consider quitting, how did you convince yourself to continue?

3) Tell me how you feel about your own writing skills.

Prompts:

- How do you rate your writing ability (e.g., grammar, structure, story, creativity)?

- How was your confidence level for writing when you wrote online novels for the first time?
- How did your confidence level for writing change over time? What was the major reason for the increase (or decrease)?
- Tell me about your experiences at other jobs? How did your experiences in those jobs influence your beliefs in your writing ability?
- Tell me about how you feel when you observe other novelist's success or failure?
- Would you please describe how you evaluate your novels and your writing experience?

4) Tell me about other people's attitudes towards your online writing experience.

Prompts:

- What kinds of feedback did you received from friends, families, editors, readers, and mentors?
- Has your on-line feedback and comments affected how you feel about your writing skills?
- How does encouragement or criticism influence your confidence level for writing?
- How does encouragement or criticism influence your writing plans and practice?

Appendix F
Recruitment Letter

Recruitment Letter in Chinese Language

招募研究对象

内布拉斯加大学研究员正招募研究对象。这项研究的目的是探讨网文作家的写作经历，研究其心理因素诸如刻意练习，写作自我效能，和自我调节。

如果您曾发表过数部网文作品，或有 5 年到 10 年的网文写作经验，我们诚意邀请您进行一次 45 分钟的采访。

本次采访采取完全自愿原则。您可以拒绝要邀请或在任何时间退出采访。您不会因为拒绝或退出受到任何形式的利益损失。

如果您对本次采访有任何疑问，请联系研究员蔡爽爽，电话 (+1) 402-480-0861，邮箱 scai@unl.edu。

这是一项经批准的参与研究的请求，该申请已得到内布拉斯加林肯大学机构审查委员会（IRB）的批准。批准号码是 20180418173EX。

English Translation for the Recruitment Letter

Call for Participants

The purpose of this study is to explore the phenomenon of internet novelists' online writing experiences, focusing on their psychological aspects such as writing self-efficacy, self-regulation, and deliberate practice.

If you have published several novels online or have five to ten years of online novel writing experience, and you're willing to participate in this research, you will be invited to participate a 45 minutes face-to-face interview.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Questions or concerns about the research may be directed to the IRB at (+1) 402-472-6965 or email to irb@unl.edu. Questions about this research may also be directed to Shuangshuang Cai, (+1) 402-480-0861, scai@unl.edu.

This message is an approved request for participation in research that has been approved by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB number is 20180418173EX.

Appendix G
Sample Interview Transcript

Sample Interview Transcript

Investigator (Abbreviate as I)

Participant H (Abbreviate as H) Male

I: Hello, thank you very much for your participation. You have signed the informed consent form, which shows some information you need to know. You are also aware of the research and you can contact me if you have any questions. Could you please introduce yourself briefly?

H: My name is Lee X. Lee X is one of my pen names and is the most common one I use to publish books now. In addition, you can see my other pen names in some newspapers, so I won't introduce them in detail. I was born in 1983. I'm a Post-80s. I graduated from a college with a major in art decoration and interior design. I was born in Xinjiang. In 2000, I moved to Dalian because of school.

I: How long have you been writing novels on the Internet?

H: I began to write on the internet in 2008. It has been 10 years.

I: How many books have you published online?

H: What you said is a bit confusing, not how many books have been published online, is how many books have been serialized online. I have ten books in series, only one of them has not been published. (I: Nine books have been published in paper format, right?) Right.

I: Can you make an estimate of the subscriptions and readers of your novels?

H: First, we need to talk about the clicks or views. There are more than five hundred million views in total for my novels. The most popular novel was the "Seamless Zone". I signed the contract with yuedu.163.com in April this year. The highest number of views for this novel is 150 million, it reached 150 million views last month. I really didn't pay attention to the subscriptions, because I mainly sell my books for copyrights. Each of my novel could be 200,000 to 300,000 words. I did not write the long novels. Basically, I did not earn much money or get paid from subscriptions. But my subscriptions are still respectable, in fact, quite a few. For example, I used to write a mystery novel and some spy stories. Each chapter should have more than 30,000 subscriptions, one even has more than 40,000 subscriptions. I just check it out two days ago.

I: Can you disclose your annual income as an internet novelist?

H: I really haven't counted it. I can say that I got the highest profit from a novel for 900,000 RMB (approximately 133,360 US dollars) from selling its copyright. The lowest one brought me 300,000 RMB (approximately 44,453 US dollars). I published nine novels, eight have already sold their publishing and movie copyrights. But I did not sell it for audio books and video game copyrights. I mainly wrote spy stories and mystery stories, they are hard to adapt to video games, almost impossible.

I: OK, how do you develop your own writing skills?

H: I did not deliberately cultivate my writing ability, which may be a gift to me. I think my writing ability comes more from my talent. If I have to summarize how I develop my writing ability, I may summarize them as follow. First, read more books and use all the free time to read, so as to study by oneself and improve one's writing ability. The second way should be reflections. Every day before I go to sleep, I like to lie in bed and spend half an hour or so to have some self-introspection. What are the contents of these reflections? Meditation. It includes thinking about what has been done wrong today, or what has been done right, where I need to adjust as I observe others' advantages, and what needs to be done tomorrow. Third, the best way to cultivate writing ability is observation, summarization and synthezation. This involves some issues in pure literature. For example, traditional literature asks you to deliberately observe an object objectively, and then provide a more objective description. For example, (H point the finger out) here is a jar of flowers in front of me. Where are they planted? What material is it made of? How to make the decoration of this layer of iron on the decoration? What shape is it and what pattern does it have? What is the difference between this flower bed and the other one which looks similar? The elaborative observations. There is a short story that I read when I was young. When Maupassant asked his teacher, Flaubert, for advice. By the way, Maupassant was young then. He complained to Flaubert and said, "why can't I write as good as you?" Flaubert said, "Now, get close to the window and open it. Look out from the window." He continued, "Here comes a carriage, a carriage with two white horses. These two white horses are white, but they are different. Can you find out the differences between these two horses? Every detail is different. Their body shapes, their hair color, and their eyes are all different. Then, what are the features of the carriage? What do two men look like in the carriage? There is a lady in the carriage. Can you guess the status of the lady? What kind of clothes she wears. You have to describe them carefully. It requires your observation skills." Flaubert told Maupassant, "When you practice this observation skills to a certain level, you can use your own language to describe their differences, which might seem to be the same, but in fact they are different. This is a way to improve writing." Therefore, Maupassant later became a master of fiction, and he was especially remembered as a master of the short story. Flaubert's guidance leads him to his success.

I: Sure, how many hours a day do you write?

H: I don't write these days, not even an hour. (Laugh) I don't have time recently. I've been advertising my new book. When I wrote the book *Seamless Zone*, I spent at least 3 to 4 hours. There is a total of 345,000 words that serialized online, and 325,000 words for publication. My writing speed is very slow when compares with other internet novelists.

I: How many hours did you spend when you started writing online? How many words did you update every day?

H: When I wrote my first novel online in 2008, I could write at least 20,000 words a day because I have many passions then. Now, I feel that I need to break through myself. I'm looking for a way to make a breakthrough, find a new way to write, and to challenge myself. When I wrote my first novel, I wrote it entirely with

enthusiasm. I was obsessed with a novel named “Ghost Blows Out the Lamp”, which was very popular. I felt that I could write a book that was as good as it. Thus, I wrote it to prove myself. (I: How many hours did you spend then?) About six to seven hours a day.

I: How is your writing practice change over time?

H: I spent less time writing over the years. With the growth of age and experiences, and with the increase in social interactions, I have less time to write novels. I spend more hours to think and ruminate. You may find me absent-minded when you talk to me, that’s when I was thinking and pondering.

I: Do you have a mentor in writing?

H: Yes.

I: Could you tell me about the role of the mentor in your writing practice?

H: My mentor in writing are sages in the history. First one is Hemingway, who is a tough man. He was an American novelist and journalist, and his economical and understated style, which he termed iceberg theory, had a strong influence on literature. He is my teacher of literature. I liked to read his novels when I was a kid, especially the book *The Old Man and The Sea*, and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. I also like Jules Verne. His book *Five Weeks in a Balloon*, and *Journey to the Center of the Earth* and all the other novels, I’ve read all of them. (I: is there a real mentor?) The person who gave me the enlightenment should be Su Su, the vice president of the Liaoning Writer Association. She is a woman and she wrote prose. She won a lot of national awards. She was also the winner of Luxun Prize in Literature. She was my mentor in literature.

I: Can you tell me in detail how they teach you?

H: I’ll start with Verne and Hemingway. They taught me how to be a tough guy, and how to get rid of the shadow of my childhood. The suffering of childhood affected me, and impact the path of my life, and they taught me how to go on the right path. Hemingway once said, a man can be destroyed but not defeated. We can’t bow our heads to the hardships. In other words, I can die, but I can’t live without meaning.

I: How did your writing practice influence the quality, fluency, and the productivity of your novel writing?

H: Writing practice did influence my writing fluency, a huge impact. Writing practice takes up my time. If I read books or learn another skill, I will have less time to write novels. However, I believe that other activities such as reading books and learning another skill also benefit me. These activities may provide some materials, and my feeling, both objective and subjective, could be applied to my writing in the future.

I: How did your previous work experience influence your writing?

H: I have extensive work experience before I write professionally. My work experience influenced my writing to some extent. For example, I was an interior designer before, and I have opened a Taobao store. It was summer, and the weather was so hot. I delivered a lipstick to a girl from my home to Dalian airport. I transferred the buses three times. It was about 50 kilometers back and forth. I went there under the scorching sun for three hours to earn only 10 RMB (approximately 1.48 US dollars). That was a kind of suffering for me. It let me know that I must get rid of the miserable life. I need to pay more, and to bear it. I need to find a new way to live.

I: To what do you attribute your success and failures in novel writing, innate ability or practice? And why?

H: I really didn't think about it. I never calculate what percentage of my talent and writing practice are. But in my opinion, I value a person's talent most, not a person's ability to develop through practice. This is my perspective. If one has a gift for writing, he would be easier to succeed than those who have no talent but work harder. If one has a gift, but he doesn't work hard later, it was like an ancient story, Zhong Yong hurts. I particularly care about the talent, and I think talent comes first. Edison, very talented. Tesla is also very talented. It was not because he worked hard that he became a famous inventor and scientist, but because he was so talented that he became a scientist.

I: What's your daily schedule? For example, when to get up, what to write, and what time to go to bed?

H: My schedule was not regular and rather chaos. I don't have a fixed time to get up. Once my biological clock has developed, I may get up before 12 o'clock at noon. I have lunch. I will watch a movie and relax for inspirations at one or two o'clock in the afternoon. After dinner, I will have a rest and take a good exercise. I will write after 9 pm. I'll write until 3 to 4 am in the morning. Then I go to bed. When everyone gets up early in the morning, I am sleeping.

I: How do you monitor your writing practice in writing? Do you have any tools to assist you?

H: To monitor the writing time, I can look at the time in the lower right corner of the computer screen. (I: For example, many Internet writers have mentioned the Little Black house and the Great-God Writing Software.) I never use such software. Whether it is on my mobile phone or on my computer, I have never thought about downloading such a mobile phone app or similar software on the computer. I don't quite understand what you are talking about. I just heard about it. (I: It is a software that allows lots of writers write online together, it also provides a rank that shows how many words a writer wrote for the moment.) I don't like to compete with others for the speed of writing. I don't like to participate in this kind of activity. (I: The Little Black House is an APP that does not allow you to get out until you reach the goal of writing.) The reason why I don't like to participate in such activities is that I don't agree with it. Turn writing into a daily task, or a daily constraint. I don't quite agree with this way of life, so I won't use this software.

I: What motivates you to become an Internet writer?

H: That's a long story. Long story short, my parents divorced for the second time in 2007, and my family suffered from it, so I can't establish my decoration company in Dalian. I went to Qinhuangdao city in Hebei province in 2008 because I didn't have enough money to make the investment. I was planning to open a small convenience store like 7-11 but failed. The policy then was that noncitizen was not allowed to open a store at Qinhuangdao city. I could only buy a small apartment in Qinhuangdao. I decided to have a try. I want to see if I can take a career path as a professional writer. It was like phoenix nirvana. That was my fundamental motivation to become an internet novelist. I need to prove my social value and prove my ability.

I: Before you write online, do you have other writing experiences? How those experiences improve you confident?

H: Before I officially started writing my novel online in 2008, I told my father that I wanted to be a professional writer. Instead of supporting me, he poured some cold water on me. He said that I can't be a professional writer. He thought that it is very difficult to be a professional writer, it is even impossible to make a living and to become famous by writing novels. From his perspective, since he was a traditional writer and poet, it was impossible to succeed as a professional writer. Then, I published a prose poem in a city newspaper. It was like a spark that gave me hope. It started a prairie fire, and then I told myself that I should be able to be a successful writer. From then on, I began my writing career as an internet writer.

I: How do you encourage yourself to continue writing?

H: In fact, writing is a very painful process. I might constantly deny my own works and have a negative attitude toward myself. I thought it was beautiful and touching right after I wrote a paragraph. I believed the plot was very intricate, even philosophical. However, when I looked back on it the next day or the next year, I might think it was very stupid. This is a kind of self-denial, but I was constantly looking for my own value in the process of self-denial and self-affirmation. In fact, it is a way of self-realization when I look for paths to express myself and contribute to the society and readers. What question did you ask just now? (I: How did you motivate yourself in the process of writing?) Okay, when I wrote novels, I sometimes felt that I can't, and I wrote worse now than I used to. Sometimes, I might feel that I was getting better, and I still have talent in writing. I was better than before. Here I would find a sense of balance. For example, I have published nine novels now, and I will compare with some other writers who have never published a novel. I may feel balanced mentally. To tell the truth, they haven't published a novel yet. They just wrote a few million words, and they may envy me very much. I would be glad. I motivate myself, I can do it, I'm better than them. People call me the Great-God write, so I have to work harder.

I: You just mentioned some negative emotions, have you ever had some positive emotions?

H: Yes, I have. I have a spy war fiction that sells 900,000 RMB (approximately 133,360 US dollars) for copyrights, which ranks top 3 in China at present. I think this

brought me some positive emotions. It is a kind of encouragement. I was recognized by others. The recognition of the society and the literary field.

I: Have you ever felt depressed or anxious when you write? Have you ever considered giving up writing when you experience negative emotions? If you did consider quitting, how did you convince yourself to continue?

H: I've never thought about giving up. I've thought about suicide once, but I've never thought about giving up writing. I believed that after I committed suicide, my soul might still write, if there was a soul.

I: Why did you want to commit suicide? Are you prone to depression?

H: You see, my dark circles have not been eliminated yet. Depression may lead to insomnia. If I have too much mental pressure, I will not sleep well. My pressure will be even greater if I can't sleep well. There is a snowball effect. If I can't regulate and control my emotions, and if I can't get out of the emotional trap, I can't get out of the swamp. So many writers have committed suicide. Among those I knew one was 23 years old. (I: How did you get out of the swamp by yourself?) While I was standing in front of the windowsill on the fifth floor of my apartment, I smoked a cigarette at midnight. I was thinking what the value of my life is. Even if I published these novels, even if I earned so much money, and even if I was a Great-God writer, what's the meaning of my life? I was exploring the meaning of my life. I was skeptical when I was looking for it. I knew I can't suddenly leap from the window like any other suicide writer. I can't take my life away just like that. So, I think whether I drive a broken car or a Cadillac or Rolls-Royce, I need to go ahead. Life always comes to an end, and I really can't go on with depression.

I: What are your short-term and long-term goals?

H: My short-term goal in writing is to sign up with two websites and try out a new genre. I want to make a breakthrough. Because I have been writing the spy war fiction for a long time, and I think I brought the spy novel to a new era. Thus, I need to stop writing this genre for a while. For example, I would like to try a youth fiction genre, or science fiction. I'm looking forward to it. Then I want to be closer to pure literature and belles-lettres. No matter what genre I write in the future, I will express it in a real pure literature way. It is my long-term goal to gain the recognition of both internet literature domain and traditional literature domain.

I: Do you want to be thought of as a great novelist? Do you want to win a literary award/prize?

H: I just told you that my mentor is Mrs. Su Su. She told me many years ago, that there are two kinds of writers: second-class writers tell stories, and first-class writers tell ideas. She also said that having meaning and having fun are completely different. Some writer wrote a lot of novels, and many readers love to read them. Readers think the novel was very interesting, but they won't regard it as a meaningful novel. Although my novels were not very long, and there is less pleasure when readers read them. But my books can lead people thinking about the world and life. These are different meaningful values. I didn't mean that my books were better than theirs.

Literature is like a skyscraper. There are some people live on the first floor, and there are also some people live on the top floor. Then the skyscraper's value was realized. If there is no one living on the first floor, and all of us live in the top floor, the skyscraper can't realize its value.

I: How do you evaluate yourself?

H: I can only evaluate my ability to write novels of my current genre. I can speak objectively, and I can judge myself in the genre of spy war fiction that I am very good because of my reasoning ability, logical thinking, and my observation ability. My ability of analysis and induction is also very strong. (I: you can also talk about the structure, creativity, fluency of your novels.) We cannot call someone a writer if he/she can't write a sentence fluently. In terms of structure, first, I feel that my structure is pretty general. I must have a breakthrough in the plot and write something that has never been published before, especially those have been shown on TV. I will write different characters and different plots.

I: How many points do you score if you grade your own writing ability?

H: My writing ability is 80 points. I am a very lazy writer. Sometimes I could have written for 6 to 7 hours a day, but I will not force myself to write. I would rather do something else, and I would not set writing as a must-do task. I feel that some activities and experience are also part of my writing. Every minute and every second of life, including sitting alone and thinking, is a part of writing.

I: How did your confidence level for writing change through time? What was the major reason for the increase (or decrease)?

H: When I started writing novels online ten years ago, I was not very confident. I talked about it just now, my dad poured cold water on me, and he thought I couldn't make a living by writing novels online. I was influenced by him and I was not very confident. But from the bottom of my heart, I still believed that I could write well. I summarized my life experience for 30 years, and I could tell that I can be successful in everything I do. This is also the comment from my relatives and friends.

I: Can you talk about your work experience? How did your accomplishments in other areas influence your beliefs in your writing ability?

H: For example, I didn't earn much money from my entrepreneurial experience. But I was actually very successful in another way. You know, although I closed my Taobao store eventually, I have got a hundred percent praise and have got two diamonds label for my Taobao store. I was trying to maintain every client for even one yuan. I was very concerned about comments from others. My confidence was largely based on how others think of me.

I: How does observing other online novelists' success influence your confidence level for writing? Would you please describe what you might do when you observed other novelist's success or failure?

H: If they are my close friends, no matter they are traditional writers or Internet writers, their success or failure certainly have an emotional impact on me. For example, I'll rejoice and bless them from the bottom of my heart if they succeed, and I'll feel bad if they fail.

I: How does it affect your confidence?

H: Sometimes I'll envy them if they succeed. I usually turn the jealousy into an incentive. I will sure work harder and write better than them in the future.

I: Okay. What kinds of feedback did you receive from friends, families, editors, readers, and mentors?

H: The feedback I got from my family is that I am a member of the family no matter what achievements I've got. I'm still my dad's son, and this is the fact that will never change. My friends, especially those writers who I've known for 10 years, said that no matter how successful or frustrated I am, I am always their friends. Editor-in-chief of the website gave me a very fair evaluation that I reached the highest level of spy war fiction genre. You may look at the comments the readers gave me. They are all at the Netease website, the page of my novel. They said that my novel, as an internet novel, was the closest one to the classical novels. They said that my novel reached a high ideological realm from all previous online spy war novels.

I: How does their encouragement or criticism influence your confidence level for writing?

H: In fact, I received more praise and encouragement than criticisms. My criticisms are: first, my novel is too short; second, my update speed was too slow; and third, I wrote as slow as snails and turtles. Those are the criticism they gave me. I am lazy. That is the criticism I gave to myself. What was your question again? (I: How do these criticisms affect your confidence?) These criticisms have also raised some doubts about my own writing and I might doubt whether I could be productive in the future. I think I have severe procrastination. I have hardly updated a book and I wrote one book for six years. Another reason that I wrote so slowly is that I need to spend more time digging into the historical materials, and I have investigated on the history of World War II carefully. My procrastination has also taken up a lot of my time in these six years.

I: How do you usually rule out distractions and focus on writing?

H: I seldom use a mobile phone, because I don't have much desire to use it. I might think the conversation was not interesting or appealing if I use a mobile phone to chitchat. I used to play online games on the computer occasionally, but later I found that I must have self-control on it. I don't want to be addicted to games. Video games are like smoking and drugs. I am particularly self-discipline to some extent. For example, when I decided to write for the moment, I will turn off the game immediately. Then I'll think about my book quietly.

I: I think it is necessary to ask again whether the encouragement and criticism you have received has affected your writing plan or the content.

H: It doesn't affect. My writing career may not end because of their comments. I am now actively seeking a breakthrough, so their criticism gives me a kind of encouragement. If their suggestions get to the point, I can accept them.

I: How many books have you read?

H: If I estimate it, there can be less than 20,000 books, and definitely more than 15,000 books. My father is a famous writer. When I was five years old, my parents divorced, and my childhood was different from other kids. When other kids asked me to play with them outside on a holiday or weekends, I had to let them know that I couldn't go out because my dad locked me in the study room. I sat in my dad's three-sided wall full of books and read books the whole day. When those kids were playing football and sandbags outside, I could only watch them play from the window. Then, I would continue reading books.

I: In fact, reading has a great impact on you, right?

H: I just estimated more than 15000 copies because books on the shelves in my study room are about ten thousand copies. I almost read all of them. Now I am a slow reader. Nowadays, when I read a book, I will read them thoroughly.

I: That's all for my questions. Thank you very much for your participation.

Appendix H
Sample Hand-coding Page

H: I really haven't counted it. I can say that I got the highest profit from a novel for 900,000 RMB from selling its copyright. The lowest one brought me 300,000 RMB. I published nine novels, eight have already sold their publishing and movie copyrights. But I did not sell it for audio books and video game copyrights. I mainly wrote spy stories and mystery stories, they are hard to adapt to video games, almost impossible.

writing achievements

I: OK, how do you develop your own writing skills?

H: I did not deliberately cultivate my writing ability, which may be a gift to me. I think my writing ability comes more from my talent. If I have to summarize how I develop my writing ability, I may summarize them as follow. First, read more books and use all the free time to read, so as to study by oneself and improve one's writing ability. The second way should be reflections. Every day before I go to sleep, I like to lie in bed and spend half an hour or so to have some self-introspection. What are the contents of these reflections? Meditation. It includes thinking about what has been done wrong today, or what has been done right, where I need to adjust as I observe others' advantages, and what needs to be done tomorrow. Third, the best way to cultivate writing ability is observation, summarization and synthetization. This involves some issues in pure literature. For example, traditional literature asks you to deliberately observe an object objectively and then provide a more objective description. For example, (H point the finger out) here is a jar of flowers in front of me. Where are they planted? What material is it made of? How to make the decoration of this layer of iron on the decoration? What shape is it and what pattern does it have? What is the difference between this flower bed and the other one which looks similar? The elaborative observation. There is a short story that I read when I was young. When Maupassant asked his teacher, Flaubert, for advice. By the way, Maupassant was young then. He complained to Flaubert and said, "why can't I write as good as you?" Flaubert said, "Now, get close to the window and open it. Look out from the window." He continued, "Here comes a carriage, a carriage with two white horses. These two white horses are white, but they are different. Can you find out the differences between these two horses? Every detail is different. Their body shapes, their hair color, and their eyes are all different. Then, what are the features of the carriage? What do two men look like in the carriage? There is a lady in the carriage. Can you guess the status of the lady? What kind of clothes she wears. You have to describe them carefully. It requires your observation skills." Flaubert told Maupassant, "When you practice this observation skills to a certain level, you can use your own language to describe their differences, which might seem to be the same, but in fact they are different. This is a way to improve writing." Therefore, Maupassant later became a master of fiction, and he was

innate ability

reading

self-observation

vicarious experience

self-trained

mentoring of other people

importance of observation

especially remembered as a master of the short story. Flaubert's guidance leads him to his success.

mentoring

I: Sure, how many hours a day do you write?

H: I don't write these days, not even an hour. (Laugh) I don't have time recently. I've been advertising my new book. When I wrote the book Seamless Zone, I spent at least 3 to 4 hours. There is a total of 345,000 words that serialized online and 325,000 words for publication. My writing speed is very slow when compares with other internet novelists.

repetition

writing speed

vicarious experience

I: How many hours did you spend when you started writing online? How many words did you update every day?

H: When I wrote my first novel online in 2008, I could write at least 20,000 words a day because I have many passions then. Now, I feel that I need to break through myself. I'm looking for a way to make a breakthrough find a new way to write, and to challenge myself. When I wrote my first novel, I wrote it entirely with enthusiasm. I was obsessed with a novel named "Ghost Blows Out the Lamp", which was very popular. I felt that I could write a book that was as good as it. Thus, I wrote it to prove myself (I: How many hours did you spend then?) About six to seven hours a day.

passions

challenges

enthusiasm

writing self-offering (high)

I: How is your writing practice change over time?



H: I spent less time writing over the years. With the growth of age and experiences, and with the increase in social interactions, I have less time to write novels. I spend more hours to think and fuminate. You may find me absent-minded when you talk to me, that's when I was thinking and pondering.

ruminate

pondering

I: Do you have a mentor in writing?

H: Yes.

I: Could you tell me about the role of the mentor in your writing practice?

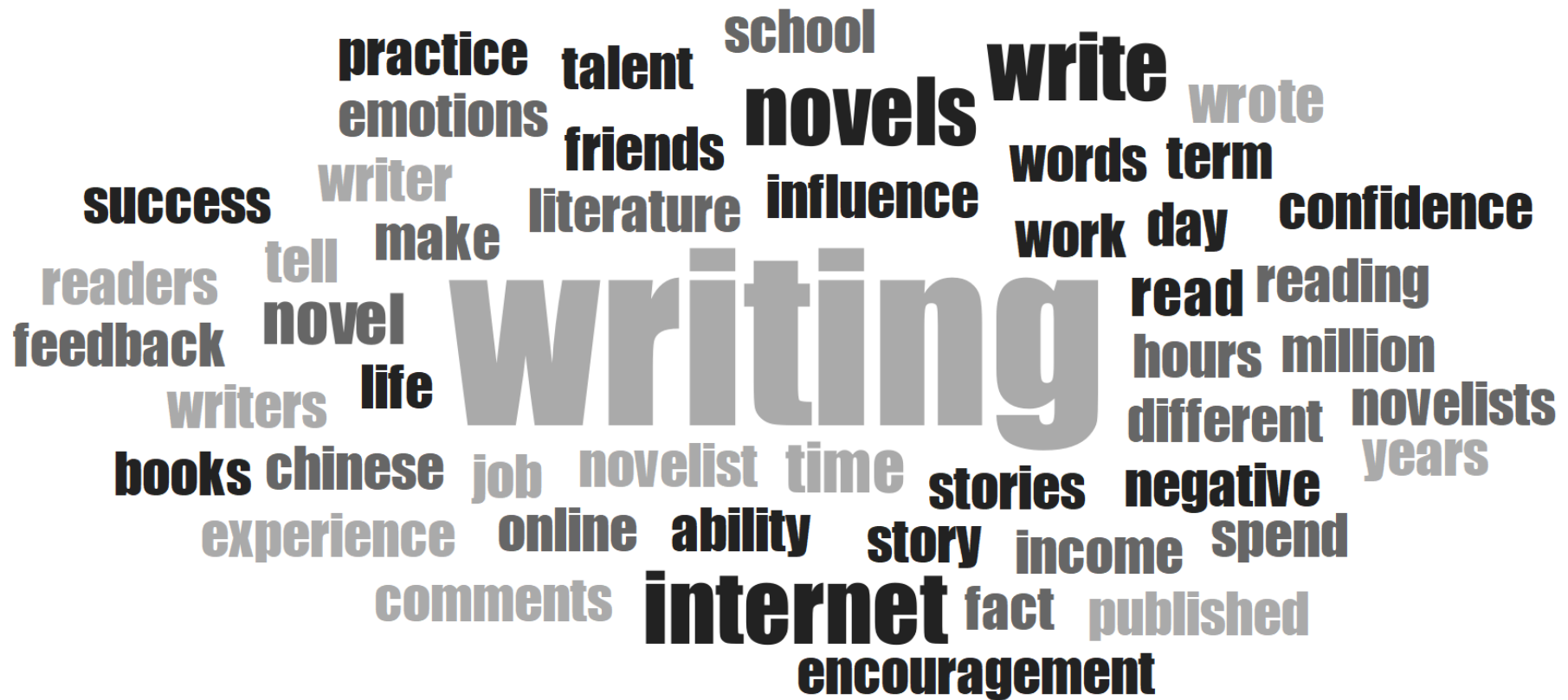
H: My mentor in writing are sages in the history. First one is Hemingway, who is a tough man. He was an American novelist and journalist, and his economical and understated style, which he termed iceberg theory, had a strong influence on literature. He is my teacher of literature. I liked to read his novels when I was a kid, especially the book The Old Man and The Sea, and For Whom the Bell Tolls. I also like Jules Verne. His book Five Weeks in a Balloon, and Journey to the Center of the Earth and all the other novels, I've read all of them. (I: is there a real mentor?) The

reading

mentoring

Appendix I

Word Cloud for the Word Frequency in 14 Interviews



Appendix J

Summary Grid for Themes and Categories Displayed by Times of Occurrence

Code System	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	SUM
▾ deliberate practice															0
▾ Effortful Exertion	8	9	11	5	4	8	8	7	6	7	7	5	8	7	100
▾ Repetition and tasks	6	2	4	3	3	4	2	2	3	1	2	3	5	4	44
▾ training and mentoring	9	2	8	4	5	2	3	3	1	1	2	5	3	4	52
▾ motivation	13	15	10	5	10	12	8	5	7	8	9	6	10	15	133
▾ goals	8	2	5	2	3	4	1	2	2	1	1	1	4	2	38
▾ timely feedback	8	4	7	5	7	8	8	10	4	2	3	7	11	9	93
▾ Reading	4	2	7	3	3	4	5	8	3	4	2	6	6	9	66
▾ awareness of readership	6	1	1	2	2	5	4	2	2	1		4	4	3	37
▾ Concentration	3	3		1		1	1	3		3		2	3	3	23
▾ Writing Self-efficacy															0
▾ level of writing self-efficacy	12	8	11	10	2	10	8	11	7	4	3	5	9	15	115
▾ writing practice vs. innate ability	3	4	4	1	3	4	3	3	5	3	7	6	6	5	57
▾ prior accomplishment	5	10	8	6	8	6	6	7	5	6	6	7	6	11	97
▾ emotional arousal	11	8	7	5	9	12	4	13	8	5	6	14	14	8	124
▾ verbal persuasion	4	3	4	3	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	4	2	3	37
▾ vicarious experience	1	3	1	3	4	5	4	7	1	2	3	2	4	3	43
▾ facing challenges	5	2	6	5	6	8	4	5	2	3	4	5	4	3	62
▾ motivational process	3	1	1	1			1	2		1		1		2	13
▾ Self-regulation						1	1			2	1				5
▾ daily writing routine	2	2	5	2	1	2	4	1	3	2	2	3	2	1	32
▾ self-observation	3	1	3	2	1	1		2	1	2		2		2	20
▾ self-evaluation	3	3	2	1		1	1	5	1		1	2	3	3	26
▾ self-response	2	3	3	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	7	1	28
▾ monitoring	2	1	2	1	4	3	2	1	1	1	1	2	5	1	27
▾ control of distraction	1	2	1	1		1	1	3	3	1		3	6	4	27
Σ SUM	122	91	111	72	79	105	82	107	67	63	64	96	122	118	1,299

Appendix K

Code Co-occurrence Model for Deliberate Practice, Writing Self-efficacy, and Self-regulation

