Spanish version of “Self-Efficacy for Writing Scale” (SEWS)

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Abstract: Self-efficacy is a fruitful construct on psychological research, including the educational setting. The present study is focused on measuring the writing self-efficacy. Specifically, we translated into Spanish the “Self-Efficacy for Writing Scale” (SEWS; Bruning, Dempsey, Kauffman, McKim, & Zumbrunn, 2013) and assessed its psychometric properties on a sample of university students. Five hundred and twelve students (78% women, 22% men) from three different Spanish universities participated in our study. They filled a questionnaire that includes the Spanish version of SEWS, the General Self-Efficacy Scale, and the Self-Efficacy for Writing. Results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis has shown that SEWS keep their dimensionality in the Spanish version (explained variance of 65.86%), being composed by Ideation (α = .90), writing Conventions (α = .89), and Self-regulation of writing (α = .90). The correlations with the General Self-Efficacy Scale are high, but higher with the Self-Efficacy for Writing, outlining that are measuring the same construct. We also found that men report higher values on the overall SEWS and two of its dimensions (Ideation and Conventions). Finally, we discuss the implications of these results, point out the main limitations of our study, and suggest further research avenues.

Keywords: Self-efficacy; Writing; Scale; Adaptation; Spanish; SEWS.

Introduction

Through the last forty years, psychological research has shown the power of efficacy perception on further behavior, mainly from the Self-Efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy can be defined as “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy is built on four major sources that can be used to display interventions directed to increase self-efficacy perceptions: (1) performance accomplishments, that is, the success performing the task in the past; (2) vicarious experience, i.e. the observation of social models that succeed performing the task; (3) verbal persuasion, related with the statements of others’ related with perform the task successfully; and (4) interpretation of emotional states, i.e. helping learners to generate appropriate interpretations of emotions they are feeling. Thus, interventions can be designed to increase the probability of perform successfully a task.

The impact of self-efficacy on research can be seen on different areas like juvenile delinquency (Garrido, Herrero, & Masip, 2002), adherence to treatment (Ladero, Oregudo, & Carrobles, 2005), the work setting (García-Izquierdo, García-Izquierdo, & Ramos-Villagrasa, 2007), and of course into the educational setting (Valle et al., 2008). The present paper is focused on self-efficacy for writing on the educational setting, translating the scale developed by Bruning, Dempsey, Kauffman, McKim, and Zumbrunn (2013) into Spanish and assessing its functioning on a sample of University students. Additionally, we also want to investigate potentially differences in self-efficacy regarding sex. As we detailed above, following the Bandura’s model, the research on writing self-efficacy is relevant as it can make easier designing the intervention on specific parts of the writing process.

Writing Self-efficacy and the Bruning et al. (2013) Model

Being able to write successfully is a key competence in the current models of education (Zumbrunn, Marrs, & Mnewborn, 2016). Writing is a complex cognitive act that could be highly demanding, especially for novice writers (Flower & Hayes, 1980). According with the review by Pajares (2003), writing is also an emotional task, and self-efficacy for writing makes both direct and indirect contributions to such writing outcomes as essay scores, grade goals, lower writing anxiety, depth of processes, and expected outcomes.

Although self-efficacy beliefs can be seen as a general construct (e.g. Baessler & Schwarzer, 1996), Bandura (1977)
states that efficacy beliefs on specific tasks (being able to read an academic text, or being able to write an essay, etc.) is a better predictor of the performance of these tasks. In other words, as higher is the fit between the efficacy beliefs measured and the behavior analyzed, higher the predictive power of self-efficacy (Bandura, 2006). The latter rationale is the mainstream approach of educational researchers (e.g. Rosario et al., 2011, 2012), including those focused on writing self-efficacy (e.g. García & de Caso, 2006a, 2006b; Pajares, Hartley, & Valiante, 2001; Zimmerman, Bonner, & Kovach, 1996), as is the case of the present study.

According to Bruning and Kaufmann (2015), research on writing self-efficacy follows two different approaches: on the one hand, studies associating writing self-efficacy with writing outcomes and conditions which are related with differences in self-efficacy like gender or grade and, on the other hand, those which are focused on self-efficacy as outcome, showing the relevance of self-regulatory processes. Although research efforts on this topic are remarkable, Bruning et al. (2013) claim that is necessary a theoretical model to guide further research. That is, writing is a complex process that can be divided into dimensions, and people may have different efficacy beliefs for each of these dimensions.

Following this rationale, Bruning et al. (2013) propose a model with three dimensions: (1) Ideation, that is, the ability to generate useful ideas to communicate the objectives of the writer; (2) writing Conventions, the ability to use the accepted standards to put the ideas into written language; and (3) Self-regulation of writing, like being able to manage their emotions, or being able to avoid distractions, etc. To verify its model they developed a scale (i.e. the Self-Efficacy for Writing Scale, SEWS) to assess the three dimensions, and validate the scale and its dimensionality with two studies developed in the USA, one with middle school students and the other with high-school students. Continuing with their work, through the present paper we want to validate the SEWS in another kind of students (i.e. university students) and country (Spain).

The Present Study

In Spain, there are not so much instruments to assess self-efficacy for writing, especially validated at the University-level. Until the best of our knowledge, only two scales exist: the Cuestionario de Evaluación de Autoeficacia hacia Procesos Cognitivos Escritores (EAPCE, Álvarez-Fernández & García-Sánchez, 2014), and the translation of Pajares et al. (2001) scale performed by Pérez et al. (2008).

The EAPCE is a 20-item scale focused on cognitive processes that were answered by students between nine and fifteen years old. The items have a Likert 1–7 response format. Unfortunately, the authors do not report the content of the scale, the dimensions included or their psychometric properties excepting reliability. EAPCE is a multidimensional scale with nine dimensions, one for each cognitive process. Based on their papers, where the authors report the significant results (Álvarez-Fernández & García-Sánchez, 2014, 2015), some of the dimensions are thinking about audience, drawing up an outline, and reading text, that can be related with the ideation and self-regulation dimensions of SEWS.

Another scale in Spanish can be found, but is developed in Argentina. It is the translation into Spanish of Pajares et al. (2001) scale by Pérez et al. (2008), which has 10 items and is validated with university students and a Likert 0-10 response format. Unlike the EAPCE, this is a unidimensional instrument. Based on their content, it is focused mainly on the conventions dimension of SEWS.

Given the scarceness of appropriate scales (i.e. suitable for Spanish university students) we are interested to fill this gap translating and adapting the SEWS and analyzing its psychometrics properties in a Spanish sample. SEWS scale has a three dimensions (ideation, conventions, and self-regulation) distributed among 16 items in 0-100 response format. Its response format have shown is considered more appropriate and accurate than traditional Likert scales with a small set of responses (Bandura, 2006; Pajares et al., 2001).

From our point of view, this scale has many advantages such as: (1) it is theory-driven; (2) it assesses three different areas of writing (Ideation, Conventions, and Self-regulation), making easier the further intervention; (3) it is an instrument reliable and valid; (4) it provides a more detailed understanding of dimensions of efficacy that is being activated; and (5) its response format (0-100) have shown better results than the traditional approach with few steps.

Moreover, there is empirical evidence that shows differences among men and women in written expression in academic contexts (e.g. Keller-Margulis, Mercer, Payan, & McGee, 2015). Additionally, literature also highlights differences in academic self-efficacy related with sex (i.e. Huang, 2013; Pajares & Valiante, 1999), although findings have not been consistent (García & Fidalgo, 2008). Thus, we want to explore is, as is expected by prior studies, differences in self-efficacy for writing regarding also exist.

Method

Procedure

An observational, descriptive, longitudinal study was performed. In order to translate the scale, the method used was translation and back-translation of the original instrument by native speakers (Hambleton, Merenda, & Spielberger, 2005). Once translated, the SEWS was included in an online questionnaire that includes sociodemographic information and other two self-efficacy scales. The questionnaire was answered by university students at the beginning of the 1st or 2nd semester, depending on the subject where it was applied.

Participants

Five hundred and twelve university students (78% women, 22% men) from three different Spanish universities were
involved in our study. Of them, 43.2% were studying a Degree in Social Work, 19.7% a Degree in Psychology, 14.5% a Degree in Child Education, 10.9% a Degree in Job Relations and Human Resources, 10.5% a Degree in Primary Education, and 1.2% a Master in Educational Orientation. Practically all the participants stated that they need to improve their academic writing skills (97.3%).

A 43.0% of the participants were on its first year of studies, 40.8% on their second year, 14.8% on their third year, and 1.2% were studying a postgraduate. A series of previous ANOVA analyses has been performed to ensure that there are no significant differences on self-efficacy depending on participants’ university degree, to avoid differential selection.

**Instruments**

*Self-Efficacy for Writing Scale* (SEWS; Bruning et al., 2013). It is a scale with 16 items examining three different dimensions of self-efficacy for writing: (1) Ideation (5 items); (2) Conventions (5 items); and (3) Self-regulation (6 items). The items where answered in a Likert scale from 0 (‘I’m not sure I could do) to 100 (‘I’m totally sure I could do) according with the recommendations by Bandura (2006) and Pajares et al. (2001). The whole scale in English and Spanish can be seen on the appendix.

*General Self-Efficacy Scale* (Baessler & Schwarzer, 1996). This instrument assesses an overall perception of efficacy. We follow the Spanish adaptation by Sanjuán, Pérez, and Bermúdez (2000). It has 10 items in a Likert scale from 0 (Totally disagree) to 10 (Totally agree) and its internal consistency is $\alpha = .91$. A sample item is “I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough”.

*Self-Efficacy for Writing* (Pajares et al., 2001). This is a unidimensional scale focused on perception of efficacy regarding conventions of writing. The scale was translated into Spanish by Pérez et al. (2008) and validated in Argentina. It has 10 items in a Likert scale from 0 (Totally disagree) to 10 (Totally agree) and its internal consistency is $\alpha = .93$. A sample item is “Correctly spell all words in a one-page story or compose the two halves”.

**Data Analysis**

The descriptive analyses of the items were made calculating the mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis, minimum and maximum score, and the correlation coefficient between the item and the rest of the scale, as well as the value of Cronbach’s alpha is the item was removed; univariate normality was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test. Also, descriptive statistics ($M$, $SD$ and Cronbach’s alpha for internal consistency) were computed for the total scores of SEWS, each of its dimensions, the General Self-Efficacy Scale and the Self-Efficacy for Writing. Reliability of the SEWS was estimated using the Spearman-Brown formula (arranging the items by mean in order to compose the two halves). Factor validity was carried out by exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

The estimates of Mardia’s multivariate kurtosis and skewness coefficients were high (380.88 and 31.67, respectively, both $p < .001$), thus rejecting the hypothesis of multivariate normality; as a consequence, an unweighted least squares extraction method was selected. As the dimensions of the original scale are interrelated due the three underlying factors are different components of the writing process, and following the recommendations by Lloret-Segura, Ferreres-Traver, Hernández-Baeza and Tomás-Marco (2014), the Oblimin rotation method was used. Convergent validity was carried out analyzing the correlations between the SEWS and the remaining self-efficacy scales. Lastly, we explored the mean differences regarding sex. All statistical analyses were performed using the program SPSS 22.

**Results**

**Item Analysis, Internal Consistency and Reliability**

As can be seen on Table 1, item means varied between 57.52 (Item 5) and 84.86 (Item 7) and overall item average was 68.21. Regarding item standard deviations, they ranged from 16.10 (Item 7) to 23.12 (Item 12). Talking about the distribution of responses, we can see that all items have at least one participant who scores on the top of the scale, but in eight items the minimum value are higher than zero (i.e. has a value of 10 or 20; items 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 15). All items show a negative skewness, but different degrees of kurtosis. For all the items, univariate normality hypothesis is rejected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
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<th>$z_s$</th>
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<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.29</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>0.93</td>
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<td>4.19</td>
<td>4.23</td>
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<tr>
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<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-1.09</td>
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<td>0.01</td>
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<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.23</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>2.97</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
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<td>-0.16</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 512. $z_k = z$ score for Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (all $p < .001$). $a_k = $ Change in Cronbach’s alpha of the whole scale if the item is removed. $a_s = $ Change in Cronbach’s alpha of the dimension the item belongs to if the item is removed.*

Assessing internal consistency, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the SEWS dimensions ranged between .89 and .90. All these values are adequate according with Nunnally’s recommendations (1981) for tests in the validation or adapta-
tion stage. As can be seen on Table 1, removing the item 6 increases the Cronbach’s alpha of Ideations dimension from .89 to .90, but giving the low increase in the dimension’s consistency and its contribution to the scale’s overall consistency, we keep the item in our analyses.

EFA

EFA was performed using the correlations between items to statistically determine their underlying factors. The results of the EFA are showed in Table 2. As can be see there, both the KMO test, .93, and Bartlett’s test of sphericity, χ²(120) = 5886.60, p < .001, support the adequacy of the data for use of EFA. Given than item communalities are .50 or higher we consider our sample size as adequate (Lloret et al., 2014). Regarding the dimensionality of SEWS, and following the K1 method, we retained three dimensions composed by the same items as in the original scale, that account for 65.86% of the items total variance. The first factor, composed by the items 1, 3, 2, 4, and 5 is Ideation, and has an eigenvalue of 7.78 and explains 48.65% of the variance. The second factor is composed by items 8, 9, 7, 6, and 10 is Conventions, and has an eigenvalue of 1.60 and explains 9.97% of the variance. The last factor is composed by items 12, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 16 is Self-regulation, which an eigenvalue of 1.16 and an explained variance of 7.24%.

Table 2. SEWS results from Exploratory Factor Analysis. Structure matrix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Communality</th>
<th>Ideation</th>
<th>Conventions</th>
<th>Self-regulation</th>
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<td>.87</td>
<td>.33</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>.56</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>-.58</td>
</tr>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>.92</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>-.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eigenvalues before rotation: 7.78, 1.60, 1.16

% Variance explained: 48.65%, 9.97%, 7.24%

Note, N = 512. Unweighted least squares extraction method. Oblimin rotation. KMO = .93; Bartlett’ test of sphericity = χ²(120) = 5886.60, p < .001. Allocation of items to each factor based on its factor loading are in boldtype.

Scales Scores and Convergent Validity

Some descriptive statistics for the instruments used can be found on Table 3. Continuing with the analysis, we computed the Spearman’ correlations because neither of the scales nor the dimensions of the SEWS fit to the normal distribution, according to K-S tests. The results are on Table 3. As we can see there, all the dimensions of SEWS are linearly and directly correlated. Between dimensions, the higher association is between Ideation and Self-regulation dimensions, as in the original Bruning et al. (2013). More interesting for our research is the relationship with the other self-efficacy scales. The association of the SEWS dimensions with the Pajares et al.’ (2001) self-efficacy writing scale is statistically significant (being the highest correlation with Conventions, r = .78, p ≤ .010), as is expected in the measure of the same construct. Regarding the general self-efficacy scale, we also found a significant relationship but lower than with the self-efficacy for writing scale (its values are between r = .32 and r = .46, all p ≤ .010), as is expected because general self-efficacy is an overall, more general, construct.

Table 3. SEWS descriptives and mean differences regarding sex.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. SEWS – Ideation</td>
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<td>.90</td>
<td>.38</td>
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<td>2. SEWS – Conventions</td>
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<td>75.41</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.50</td>
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<td>3. SEWS – Self-regulation</td>
<td>386.54</td>
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<td>.63</td>
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<td>4. General self-efficacy</td>
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<td>.91</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Self-efficacy for writing</td>
<td>82.28</td>
<td>12.07</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note, N = 512. All the correlations are significant at p < .01.

Sex Differences

Finally, we want to explore the existence of differences regarding sex. Means and standard deviations can be seen on Table 4. We found significant differences on SEWS and general self-efficacy suggesting than male students reports higher efficacy beliefs than female students: SEWS-Ideation, t(212.40) = –6.00, p ≤ .001, r² = .037; SEWS-Conventions, t(509) = –2.21, p < .050, r² = .007; General self-efficacy, t(509) = –2.20, p < .050, r² = .012. However, these differences have a small effect size, due the participant’s sex accounts for 3.7% of SEWS-Ideation, 0.07% of SEWS-Conventions, and 1.2% of General self-efficacy. Moreover, no significant differences were found in SEWS-Self-Regulation or Self-efficacy for Writing.

Discussion

Self-efficacy for writing is a construct related directly and indirectly with writing outcomes. Following the previous ef-
forts by Bruning et al. (2013), with the present paper we have translated the SEWS scale into Spanish and evaluated their functioning on a sample of university students in Spain. First of all, our results support the three-dimensional structure SEWS (i.e. Ideation, Conventions and Self-regulation) and the psychometric properties are adequate. Thus, we conclude that SEWS can be used on the Spanish context, at least for research purposes on higher education university students. Compared with other Spanish-language available instruments, we believe that SEWS is useful to guide interventions at individual-level. As each student is analyzed in three different self-efficacy dimensions, strengths and weaknesses of each individual can be found.

Secondly, our study was conducted with university students. Bruning et al. (2013) uses secondary and high-school students because they “expected writing-related efficacy judgements to be well formed” (p. 29). Through the present research we have shown that this scale can potentially be useful at higher education level, and that the original structure is replicated on a different sample from a different population. At the light of these results, we believe that may be interesting to investigate the evolution of self-efficacy for writing through time among different levels of schooling, e.g. if some dimensions remain stable and others increase substantially as the student progresses in the educational system.

Thirdly, we have found sex differences on Ideation and Conventions. According with these results, women reported lower writing-self-efficacy, but not on all three dimensions. This result is contrary to the literature, where men tend to reach lower values than women, mainly by gender stereotypic beliefs developed in the socialization process (Pajares & Valiante, 2001), or no differences at all (Pajares et al. 2001). However, these differences do not exist neither on the Self-Regulation nor on the other writing self-efficacy scale used in the study. Furthermore, the differences found, though statistically significant, have a small effect size. Further research should investigate in our context could help to clarify this matter.

As in any research, our study has limitations. The main limitation is that we do not assess any writing outcomes. Thus, our validation was only conducted with other measures of self-efficacy. Although this is usual on translating scales into other languages, our results may be stressed if we can verify the relationship between SEWS and outcomes of writing as essay scores. This is a research avenue that may help to strengthen the value of use the instrument with university students, and we strongly believe that this should be the next step in the development of SEWS in Spain. Another limitation is that we do not make any control of prior experience of writing. All the participants are university students, and this may implies any kind of range restriction. As a consequence, we recommend the use of this scale only on university samples until a validation with overall adult population could be performed. Last but not least, in this study we decided to perform EFA to bring up the underlying structure of the data. There is empirical evidence and a theoretical model that would suggest a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). However, we thought the adaptation could lead to a distinct dimensionality of the data and the EFA, being a less restrictive method, is a better method to find out. Anyway, we believe that is necessary more research to perform CFA on another sample, to add further evidence on the cross validity of this instrument. In spite of these limitations and further research avenues, we believe that the present study contribute to the study of writing self-efficacy in different countries and settings.

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**Appendix.** Spanish version of Self-efficacy for Writing Scale (SEWS).

**Ideación [Ideaion]**

1. Soy capaz de pensar en muchas ideas para escribir [I can think of many ideas for writing].
2. Soy capaz de poner mis ideas en el texto [I can put my ideas into writing].
3. Se me ocurren muchas palabras con las que describir lo que pienso [I can think of many words to describe my ideas].
4. Soy capaz de tener muchas ideas originales [I can think of a lot of original ideas].
5. Sé exactamente cómo organizar mis ideas cuando escribo [I know exactly where to place my ideas in my writing].

**Convenciones del lenguaje [Conventions]**

6. Soy capaz de escribir sin faltas de ortografía [I can spell my words correctly].
7. Soy capaz de escribir frases completas [I can write complete sentences].
8. Soy capaz de utilizar los signos de puntuación correctamente [I can punctuate my sentences correctly].
9. Soy capaz de escribir frases gramaticalmente correctas [I can write grammatically correct sentences].
10. Soy capaz de empezar mis párrafos en el sitio correcto [I can begin my paragraphs in the right spots].

**Autorregulación**

11. Soy capaz de concentrarme en escribir durante al menos una hora [I can focus on my writing for at least one hour].
12. Soy capaz de evitar distracciones mientras escribo [I can avoid distractions while I write].
13. Soy capaz de ponerme a escribir la tarea rápidamente [I can start writing assignments quickly].
14. Soy capaz de controlar mi frustración cuando escribo [I can control my frustration when I write].
15. Soy capaz de pensar en los objetivos del texto que estoy escribiendo antes de empezar [I can think of my writing goals before I write].
16. Soy capaz de seguir escribiendo incluso cuando me resulta difícil [I can keep writing even when it's difficult].