

An Exploration into Grade 9 Students' Writing Anxiety in English Class: The Case of Sabian Secondary School, Dire Dawa, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The main objective of this study was to explore grade 9 students' writing anxiety in English class concerning Sabian secondary school. To identify the factors that cause writing anxiety in the grade 9 students, the participants' perception towards writing, the impact of anxiety, and the strategies that the teachers use as the student overcome writing anxiety. Two kinds of data collection instruments were used; namely, questionnaire and interview. The data collected using these instruments were analyzed by making use of different statistical analysis methods and quantitative descriptions, percentage, and description of some qualitative data. The finding indicated that the large majority of the subjects of the study were found language difficulties, limited knowledge of vocabulary, personal perception, insufficient writing technique, time pressure, and fear of evaluation and making mistakes.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching, English as a Foreign Language and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

Introduction

Investigating second/foreign language anxiety is a necessity and of great significance, due to the negative effects, it can have on language learning, performance, achievement, and perception towards the whole educational process (Dornyei, 2005; Pajares, 2003). A considerable number of studies have pointed to the detrimental effects of anxiety on learners' language achievement (e.g., Horwitz et al, 1986), and on social-communicative interaction (MacIntyre, 1995), in addition to its interference in the three stages of learning; input, process, and output (Tobias, 1986). The importance of creating a low-stress learning situation in improving learner's language competence is stressed by Krashen (1982) when he proposes the Affective Filter Hypothesis which indicates that anxiety, motivation, and other affective factors greatly affect second language acquisition.

Statement of the Problem

The students' English language ability in writing paragraph plays a great role in both contemporary academic and future careers. Hence, the key role of English language ability in Writing has an important and encouraging impact on the academic achievement of students. This is because the ability to write various genres of writing effectively through English is becoming increasingly important in our global community (Weigle, 2002). Students feel writing is the most complex and difficult issue among other language skills. Students are also affected by many factors. In his study, Wondwosen (2007) found that one of the factors that affect secondary school students were to be poor in their writing because of their high level of anxiety of writing.

Objectives of the Research

General Objective

The general objective of this study was to explore students' writing anxiety in EFL class in the case of Sabian secondary school in grade nine (9) students.

Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- Explore factors that cause writing anxiety of grade nine students in English class.
- To find the perception of students towards writing skill in English class.
- To find the effects of writing anxiety on students' writing performance.
- To examine strategies that the teachers use as the students overcome from writing anxiety.

Research Questions

This study was aimed to identify the different factors that arouse grade 9 students' writing anxiety from the learners' views and hence suggest suitable strategies for this phenomenon. From displaying and exploring the problem of the study, the following questions were answered in the study.

- What are the factors that cause writing anxiety in grade 9 students?
- What are the effects of writing anxiety on students' writing performance?
- What are the perceptions of the students towards writing in English class?
- What strategies that the learners use to overcome writing anxiety and how the teachers help them?

Scope of the Study

It is felt that demonstrating all aspects of writing anxiety in writing activities could not be carried out with a short time so that the study delimited to raise only problems evoking writing anxiety in writing the classroom and recommending some solutions. So, the current study focused on determining to explore students' writing anxiety on grade 9 students concerning Sabian Secondary School. The reason why the study was delimited only to students and teachers is that the primary relevance of the study is to cope up with learners writing anxiety-providing teachers with information to help students alleviate writing anxiety.

Significance of the Study

This study is expected to have the following significances. Firstly, this study has shed some light on whether or not anxiety should be taken into consideration while teaching English in high schools in Ethiopia. For example, if learners' achievement in English differs according to their level of anxiety, this may suggest that teachers and other concerned bodies need to think of ways of reducing anxiety students experience when learning writing English in the classroom. Secondly, English teachers and students of Sabian secondary School may get supportive feedback from the results of the study. Therefore, teachers may be informed about the occurrence of classroom anxieties in an English language class. Thirdly, it may suggest methods, techniques, and approaches that attempt to lighten anxiety and stress to facilitate writing learning. Finally, this study may open a way for further investigation for those who might be interested in this area.

Limitations of the Study

This study focused on the major factors that make students in a state of anxiety when they took writing tasks in Sabian secondary school. Due to time and reference constraints, this study was limited to only one school. It would have generated more generalized information if it had included a wider area. It is felt that demonstrating all aspects of writing anxiety in writing activities could not be carried out with a short period so that the study

delimited to raise only problems evoking writing anxiety in writing the classroom and recommending some solutions.

Operational Definitions

The following definitions are the terms to be used in the study.

Anxiety: a state of uneasiness or tension, apprehension, and fear resulting from the anticipation of a threatening event or situation.

Writing Anxiety: It can be defined as distinctly complex self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to using a foreign or second language for writing in a writing classroom.

Writing performance: the ability students portray in using the skills of writing in producing texts.

Factor: is one of the things that affect an event, decision, or situation.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The meaning and concept of Anxiety

Various research studies have identified several factors or situations which are believed to account for differences in the level of performance attained by language learners. Among these variables is anxiety, which is defined by Davidoff (1987) as an emotion characterized by feelings of anticipated danger, tension, and distress and by tendencies to avoid or escape such feelings. Spielberg (1983) defines anxiety as the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with the arousal of the nervous system. Anxieties can be classified into two kinds: anxiety as a personality trait and a transient anxiety state, which is regarded as a response to a particular anxiety-provoking stimulus. Anxiety is believed to consist of two components: the first is cognitive anxiety, which refers to the mental aspect of anxiety experience including negative expectations, preoccupation with performance, and concern about others' perceptions. The second is somatic anxiety that refers to learners' perceptions of the physiological effects of the anxiety experienced as reflected arousal and unpleasant feeling states such as nervousness, pounding heart, sweating, and tension (Morris, Davis, and Hutchings 1981).

On the other hand, (Lang 1971; and Cheng 2004 anxiety has three different components rather than two: cognitive, physiological (somatic), and avoidance behavior (behavioral). It is believed to involve a variety of dysfunctional thoughts, increased physiological arousal, and maladaptive behaviors. Some studies find somatic anxiety and cognitive anxiety co-vary and are hard to separate. Learners experience apprehension, worry, and dread. They exhibit behavior such as missing the class and postponing the work or assignment. The relations among anxiety, cognition, and behavior are best seen as recursive or cyclical where each influences the other.

Types of Anxiety

Zhang (2011) identified the type of anxiety that was most common among two groups of Chinese learners (49 freshmen and 47 sophomores) majoring in English and different strategies in which they can cope with them.

General Anxiety

Morris, Davis, and Hutchings (1981) regarded general anxiety as worry and emotionality. Jonassen and Grabowski (1993); Brown (1994); Oxford (1999); Chen and WU (2004); Horwitz and Cope; (1986) saw that anxiety constitutes trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety. These anxiety types are considered as general anxieties and were discussed briefly as follows.

Trait Anxiety

Trait anxiety has been defined as a likelihood of an individual becoming anxious in any situation (Brown, 1994). A tendency to be anxious is a permanent personality characteristic. Therefore, an individual with high trait anxiety would probably become apprehensive in many different kinds of situations (Macintyre and Gardner, 1991). The

trait anxiety perspective has been productive in reporting the effects of generalized anxiety and it has been applicable across situations (Macintyre and Gardner, 1991; Jonassen and Grabowski, 1993).

State Anxiety

Spielberg (1983), in Chen and WU (2004), defined state anxiety as unpleasant temporary emotional state or condition, activated by the individuals' nervous system, such as the apprehension experiences before taking a test. Young (1990), in Cubuku (2007), noted that the negative effects of anxiety, such as diminished cognitive performance, are generally associated with state anxiety. It depends on an event or combination of events experienced at the time. It represents a transient emotional mood or condition (Jonassen and Grabowski, 1993). According to them, state anxiety is determined by the interaction of trait anxiety and the situational threat perceived, and so is responsive to situational factors. An individual who generally responds to any number of situations with low anxiety may react with high anxiety if there are multiple anxiety-causing conditions present.

Situation-Specific Anxiety

This describes anxiety that occurs constantly over time in a given situation. Taking tests, for example, might cause situation-specific anxiety in some students, whereas for others, it may be giving an oral report that causes anxiety (Jonassen and Grabowski, 1993). Foreign language classroom anxiety that is different from other types of anxieties belongs to situation-specific anxiety (Horwitz, et al., 1986).

Foreign Language Anxiety

Foreign language anxiety is a special kind of anxiety related to foreign language classes. It can be considered as a kind of 'situation-specific anxiety' just like 'stage anxiety', 'math anxiety', and 'test anxiety' (Batumlu and Erden, 2007). Were the first to approach foreign language anxiety as a separate phenomenon specific to foreign language experience and they outlined the theoretical framework of foreign language anxiety? They argue that although general anxiety plays an important role in the development of foreign language anxiety, foreign language anxiety is different from all kinds of anxiety because it is a distinct complex of self-perceptions, feelings, and behaviors related to the classroom language learning process (Batumlu and Erden, 2007). Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) argue that foreign language anxiety can be related to three different forms of anxieties that are related to academic and social evaluation situations: Communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety.

Test- Anxiety

Test anxiety refers to a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure in a test (Brown, 1994). Test anxious students, according to Cubuku (2007:135), often put unrealistic demands on themselves. Test anxiety is believed to be one of the most important aspects of negative motivation. It can be defined as an "unpleasant feeling or emotional state that has physiological and behavioral concomitants and that is experienced in formal testing or other evaluative situations. High anxious students are overly concerned with parent or teacher evaluations and have difficulty attending to relevant task information and they are easily distracted by incidental stimuli, being overly preoccupied with the possibility of failure. Test anxiety occurs when students have poor performance in the previous tests. They develop a negative stereotype about tests and have irrational perceptions in evaluative situations. These students might have an unpleasant test experience from either language class or other subjects, and they transplanted the unhappy image to the present English class unconsciously (Chan and Wu, 2004). According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), test anxious students have false beliefs in language learning.

These students habitually put impractical demands on themselves and feel that anything less than perfect test performance is a failure. Young (1991) claims that test anxiety would affect foreign language learners with low levels of oral proficiency more than those with high levels of proficiency. On the other hand, learners experience more language anxiety in highly evaluative situations. Consistent evaluations by the instructor in the foreign language classrooms are rather commonplace, and even the brightest and most prepared students often make

errors (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986). So, test anxious learners will doubtlessly suffer from stress and anxiety frequently. Generally, test anxiety is a type of performance anxiety deriving from a fear of failure and evaluative situations. And if it is high it fails exams.

Fear of Negative Evaluation

Fear of negative evaluation is the avoidance of evaluative situations and expectation that others will evaluate them negatively. Learners may be sensitive to the evaluation of their peers (Cubuku, 2007). Chan and Wu (2004) explained fear of negative evaluation as apprehension about others' evaluation, distress over their negative evaluations, and the expectations that others would evaluate themselves regularly. Although it is similar to test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation is broader in scope because it is not restricted to test-taking situations (Spolsky, 1989). In addition to situations of tests, it may take place in any social, evaluative situations such as interviewing for a job or speaking in a foreign language class. Macintyre and Gardner (1991) propose that fear of negative evaluation is closely related to communication apprehension. When students are unsure of what they are saying, fear of negative evaluation occurs and they may doubt their ability to make a proper impression (Chan and Wu, 2004). In a foreign language context, fear of negative evaluation derives mainly from both teachers and the students' peers because foreign languages require continual evaluation by the teacher and anxious students may also be intensely susceptible to the evaluation of their peers (Worde, 2003). Students with fear of negative evaluation might adopt the action of avoidance (Chan and Wu, 2004; Spolsky, 1989 and Casado and Dereshiwsky, 2001). In Aida's (1994) opinion, students with fear of negative evaluation might sit passively in the classroom, withdrawing from classroom activities that could otherwise enhance their improvement of the language skills. In extreme cases, students may think of cutting class to avoid anxiety situations, causing them to be left behind (Wilson, 2006). These three components are considered to have hampering effects on second language learning. They are debilitating factors rather than facilitative. Besides, they overlap and are closely related to each other (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986).

Definition and types of Second Language writing anxiety (SLWA)

Studies on writing anxiety are an offshoot of studies on oral communication anxiety. Previous research into writing anxiety wanted to find out whether there is a link between the oral and the writing anxiety. Some argued that people with high oral communication anxiety tended to compensate by writing, and others claimed the links between the oral and the writing anxiety did not exist (Hassan, 2001). Cheng et al. (1999) attempted to differentiate the components of general oral language anxiety and second language writing anxiety. They found that second language writing anxiety is distinguishable from oral communication anxiety; at the same time, they found underlying similarities between the two specific facets of language anxieties.

Writing anxiety, as a subject and situation-specific anxiety, was defined as a general avoidance of writing behavior and situations thought to potentially require some amount of writing accompanied by the potential for evaluation of that writing (Hassan, 2001: 4). Cheng (2004) offered a multidimensional L2 writing scale—the the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) which conforms to a three-dimensional conceptualization of anxiety, such as Somatic Anxiety, Cognitive Anxiety, and Avoidance Behavior. Somatic Anxiety refers to one's perception of the physiological effects of the anxiety experience, as reflected in an increase in the state of unpleasant feelings, such as nervousness and tension (Cheng, 2004: 316). Cognitive Anxiety refers to the cognitive aspect of anxiety experience, including negative expectations, preoccupation with performance, and concern about others' perceptions (Cheng, 2004: 316). Avoidance Behavior refers to the behavioral aspect of the anxiety experience, avoidance of writing (Cheng, 2004: 316).

Cheng (2004: 331) also pointed out that the negative relationship between test anxiety and L2 writing performance is primarily due to the cognitive components rather than somatic components or avoidance behavior.

Writing Anxieties

The concept of writing anxiety also called writing apprehension can be defined as a language-skill-specific form of anxiety, unique to the language-particular skill of writing (Blaine et al. 2001). It encompasses fear of the writing process that prevails over the expected gain from the ability to write, which may eventually lead to relatively

enduring predispositions to dislike, evade, or fear writing. L2 writing anxiety is associated with the tendency to avoid the writing situation because it causes elevated anxiety levels. It is also found to lead to difficulties in producing effective and coherent written pieces, as well as with problems in writing simple letters or complex reports (Schweiker-Marra and Marra 2000). This is the reason why L2 writers produce shorter compositions and use less-intense words (Daly and Miller 1985, Steinberg and Horwitz 1986). Other behaviors frequently observed are procrastination, apprehension, tension, low self-esteem, and lack of motivation (Leki 1999). According to Tsui (1996), writing is predominantly product-oriented and requires individual works, which are treated as a significant stressor because FL learners are deprived of help, support, and encouragement. In effect, students are threatened by serious negative consequences of their poor work, such as a limitation of their career choices (Young 1986).

Writing Anxiety due to difficulties of Writing Process

Writing anxiety is most often manifested due to students' inability to writing (Hall, 2005). More specifically, according to Byrne (1988: 4) students' levels of writing test anxiety may increase due to the following three main problems or difficulties. These are psychological problems, linguistic problems, and cognitive problems. Thus, unless these factors are well managed by teachers in the early stages, they will hinder students' development of writing. Therefore, to give a clear picture of each problem, it would be better to see each in some detail.

Psychological Problems

When the teacher reads students' written tests, the writer (student) and the reader (teacher) are isolated from each other. In this case, the teacher hardly has the opportunity of asking the student whatever the teacher's faces while correcting students' writing attempts. For this reason, the student might fall in a state of anxiety if what he thinks and what he puts on paper in written form do not go together. In general, psychological problems are the problems of conveying the message. They refer to the writer's sense of isolation while writing because of the absence of any physical interaction with and feedback from the teacher. Therefore, the writer (the student) feels alienated (Byrne 1988 and Clifford 1991). Thus, Students may be in a state of anxiety while attempting the writing tests. According to Boughey (1997), it is possible to reduce students' psychological problems of writing if they practice on different writing items before they sit for writing tests, by sharing ideas with their classmates and get the opinion of others. He (Ibid) further notes that writing in a group may be a crucial means of introducing valuable writing practice to students. This encourages students to share ideas and develop their writing abilities. And it ultimately motivates students in developing confidence in their writing ability. Consequently, students may not as such be in a state of anxiety when taking the writing tests individually.

Linguistic Problems

In writing, communication is hampered unless the correct forms of the language (English in this case), such as language structure, words, mechanics, and others are used effectively (Pincas 1982, Hedge 1988, Bloor and Bloor 2004). Besides different studies identified various linguistic problems faced by students in their Writing attempts (Raines, 1983). To mention some of them, writing ungrammatical and long sentences, the unbalanced distribution of different words in the given samples, wrong distribution of parts of speech, and some types of grammatical errors are believed to be the major areas in which linguistic problems affect writing skills. Byrne (1988) also explains that because of the absence of prosodic features in writing, the writer (student) has to compensate these features by keeping the channel of communication open through own efforts by choosing the appropriate sentence structure so that the text the student produces can be interpreted on its own. However, if students are not practicing the major linguistic features, mentioned above relevant to writing, they will be highly frustrated when they sit for writing tests. This implies that teachers are expected to address these features keeping their students' levels of understanding. Linguistic problems can be best explained by its subparts: grammatical problems, sentence-structure problems, and the problem of diction (choice of words).

Grammatical Problems

Students have committed a number of mechanical problems in their second language (English) writings (Hedge, 1988). For example, according to Tyner (1987), students may not use verbs properly. This means, they do not

realize that verbs can take different forms depending on tense and subjects they are used with. Therefore, due to this problem, students may face a great challenge when taking the writing tests as they cannot keep the proper grammatical patterns. Moreover, students have problems with subject-verb agreement, pronoun references, and connectors, and so on (Krashen, 1987). From this, one may realize that if students are not well acquainted with the grammatical usage of the language, their anxiety will be high when they take writing tests.

This is because one's writing will be attractive if one keeps the proper grammar of the language with a good flow of ideas to the point.

Sentence Structure Problems

As we all know, the test of writing rests on the kind of sentence structures encompassed in the writing, Byrne further elaborates this as follows:

We have to keep the channel of communication open through our efforts and to ensure both through our choice of sentence structure and by the way our sentences are linked together and sequenced that the text we produce can be interpreted on its own (1988: 4). Likewise, Kharma (1986) emphasizes that those students who have the problem of writing good sentences are unable to produce longer sentences requiring subordination and co-ordination when writing a single paragraph properly. This is to show that being unable to use proper sentence structures leads to being incapable of writing paragraphs and essays. Hence, if students face such big linguistic problems, they cannot express what they intend to express, especially during writing tests. Consequently, this situation may aggravate students' levels of writing test anxiety.

The Problem of Diction

Good writing or composition should consist of an appropriate and varied range of vocabulary used along with proper grammar and varied range of sentence structures (Norrish, 1983; Alamirew G/Meriam, 2005). When the writer makes a choice of vocabulary that would reflect a concern for the reader and the purpose of writing, the composition written would give sense to the reader(s) (Reid, 1993). However, writing in a foreign or second language (English, for example) using appropriate words in their right places is a major problem for most students. For example, White (1980) says that most students usually use 'big words' which may not go with the actual context, in writing their paragraphs or essays to impress their teacher.

Inevitably, this attempt leads to a problem of diction. So, the problem with diction can lead a student to develop a negative attitude towards foreign language essay writings (Ibid). If this happens, a student may get frustrated in taking the writing tests as he/she cannot choose the appropriate words suitable to the given specific context.

Cognitive Problems

In the past, special attention was given to grammar and lexical problems of students in investigating their English language writing difficulties. But, currently, with the advances of socio-linguistic studies and discourse analysis, the supra-segmental aspects of writing have been given emphasis (Kharma, 1986). The cognitive problems that students face in their second language writing include problems of punctuations, capitalization, spelling, organization of ideas and others (Carroll and Willson, 1995; Gower et. al, 1995; Reid, 1993). They further state that these are the major cognitive problems that students frequently forget or miss to apply them in their writing attempts (maybe in tests). So, these problems can lead to students' anxiety in this regard.

Punctuation Problems

Students most often encounter punctuation problems in taking writing tests. Notably, there are three basic reasons which make punctuation problematic for students to learn and apply it in their writings. Firstly, the rules of punctuation are not universal or absolute to the meaning they give. Secondly, punctuation marks are complex to learn, and lastly; punctuation relies on the style of the writer and the intended meaning (Carroll and Willson,

1995). This implies that students are expected to be confused in using the appropriate punctuation marks when they take writing tests. So, this problem by itself can lead students to be in a state of anxiety.

Capitalization Problems

When students take the writing tests, they have to know the actual words which should be capitalized (Kharma, 1986). This is a mechanical skill. As Kroll (1991) explains, capital letters have always signified important words. Besides they are useful for sentence initials, important words in topics or headings, in proper names and even including the first-person pronoun (I), wherever it appears, it has to be capitalized. Students, however, may not properly use capital letters in their writing. This means that they fail to use capital letters at the beginning of new sentences and to signal titles and headings. This may emanate due to poor students' background knowledge of capitalization rules. In this case, being unable to know words that need to be capitalized in writing tests will aggravate students' levels of anxiety.

Spelling Problems

Owing to the influence of other languages, variant pronunciations and other historical reasons, the English spelling system which has become inconsistent, is complex for students (Gower et. al. 1995). That is why students are expected to study or memorize the spelling rules before they are going to sit for writing exams. This is because, teachers while checking students' answer scripts, most often consider spelling as one parameter in giving marks. As students know this very well, they usually get frustrated when they are not sure of the correct spellings of words in their writing exams. This by itself induces anxiety.

Organization Problems

Students may have also problems structuring the paragraph, topic development of a paragraph, organizing the whole discourse, and development of a theme in a discourse (Kharma, 1986). Pincas (1982) has also shown that students or writers have the problems of writing united paragraphs. The reason for this, according to him (Ibid), may be partly due to their failure to use cohesive devices appropriately. Using these devices properly may help the writer to create a clear transition from one idea to the next, developing coherent paragraphs, summarizing the main points in their chronological order (Pincas, 1982; Alamirew G/Mariam, 2005). However, as Pincas (ibid) notes above, students may be in a state of anxiety when they take writing exams if they do not practice well how to organize composition (writing).

Content problems

Teachers are expected to encourage their students to give attention to the message, ideas, or thoughts they wish to convey along with other features discussed above (Clifford, 1987). Leki (1991) also states that to keep the content in writing is very important before emphasizing the other aspects of the language: error-free writing without substance is not as good as substantive writing even with errors. If all goals of correctness and substance can be accomplished, wonderful; if not, it seems better to save the energy for the content (1991: 10-11). Here, we can see how priority is given to content in writing because appropriate language and related tools will be developed as learners attempt to generate ideas to transmit their message or content. This can be achieved by motivating encouraging learners to write drafts and to develop their editing skills. So far, we have seen the major features in which students commonly commit errors while writing.

And, one may realize that writing is a complex skill which needs frequent practice in different developmental stages. Thus, if students are not well exposed to various types of writing, they will experience test anxiety as a result of their deficiency in writing skills.

Research Design and Methodology

Research Design

A descriptive survey method was employed in this study to explore students' writing anxiety. This method was used to describe the experience of teachers and students. This is because descriptive research spans both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. It brings the ability to describe events in greater or less depth as needed, to focus on various elements of different research techniques, and to engage in quantitative statistics to organize information in a meaningful way (Phillip Grace 2001). This method contains the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) (Cheng, 2004) questionnaire measures the degree to which an individual feels anxious when writing in L2 which delivers both qualitative and quantitative data.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The researcher selected the school purposely because there has not been any significant research conducted concerning the current study. The subjects of the study were one hundred eighty (i.e. 25% of the total population of 720) from ten sections of students. In each section, there are 72 students. From these sections, by using simple random sampling techniques the researcher took 180 students from all sections based on the first-semester final exam and three grade, nine English language teachers, by using a purposive sampling technique as their numbers are a few. This was done to make activities manageable.

Instruments of Data Collection

The choice of data collection methods is determined by the needs of a given research project, and in particular, by the research questions confronted. As a result, the researcher has used a questionnaire and interview data-gathering instruments.

Questionnaire

A set of questionnaire for students was adapted from second language writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) that was devised by Cheng's, (2004), for objective one i.e. to find the causes of writing anxiety during English Class and for objective two i.e. the anxiety level of student's during writing activities have in the English class among grade nine students. The original version of the SLWAI is an instrument that measures the degree to which student feels anxious in L2 writing and is considered in many studies related to second language writing anxiety valid and reliable. This questionnaire was SLWAI which consists of 27 items, scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The 20 items of the SLWAI were divided into three categories of anxiety, such as Cognitive Anxiety, Somatic Anxiety, and Avoidance Behavior. For each item, respondents were required to respond with an answer like strongly agree, agree, undecided, and strongly disagree. Thus, a higher score shows a higher level of writing anxiety.

Semi-Structured Interview

A semi-structured interview was used for three grade nine English language teachers teaching in the school to find out their strategies of helping the students to overcome writing anxiety. Since the interview allows to probe and ask for clarification of questions, it helped the researcher to know whether the cause and consequence of writing anxiety on grade nine students and the impact on their writing skill and to identify the challenges that impeded the writing skill. Moreover, it also helped to make the subjects of the study suggest solutions to improve or/and strengthen the current practice of teaching writing skills. The interview was undertaken in the form of person-to-person encounters (face-to-face) using semi-structured questions, enabling respondents to address matters in their terms and words.

Data Collection Procedure

Data for the study was collected using a questionnaire adapted from SLWAI, and interview. Before the distribution of the questionnaire, each respondent was instructed on the mark compiling sheet and the subjects were guided to complete the questionnaire genuinely. During the administration of the questionnaire, students needed explanations about the items or the way they have to give their answers were given clarifications. Therefore, the questionnaire was employed to 180 students who were selected using simple random sampling

before the other data gathering instruments were employed. From 6 English language teachers, three of them were selected purposely for the interview.

Data Analysis Procedure

After carefully gathering the appropriate data, using the two instruments of data collection mentioned under Section 3.4, from all subjects of the study, the data were analyzed by using different statistical tools and narration. The data collected through the questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively and the data collected through a semi-structured interview was analyzed qualitatively. Thus, the percentage and description of some qualitative data were used to analyze and describe the data. In this respect, each response of the items, such as strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, strongly agree is mentioned by using percentage. Finally, based on the findings obtained in chapter four (i.e. Results and Discussion part), summary, conclusions, and recommendations were offered.

Results and Discussions

Data from the questionnaire of students

The questionnaire was the main tool of this study. Data was gathered from students in the study area mainly through questionnaire and presented in tables by applying the percentage.

Factors that Cause Writing Anxiety

The first research question of the study is concerned with the causes of learners' writing anxiety. To identify causes of learners' writing anxiety, which has a significant role in language learning. Writing is an emotional and cognitive activity, that is, we think and feel while we are writing. Depending on the responses of respondents, common causes of learners writing anxiety, which they experienced during writing activities, identified and categorized as follows.

Cognitive Anxiety

This part reports the result obtained from the first category of the SLWAI labeled as cognitive anxiety which deals with negative expectations, fear, or worry of negative evaluation and tests.

Table1: Anxiety scales Related to Cognitive Anxiety

Items	Questions	Scales	No. of student.	%
1.	While writing in English, I am not nervous at all.	SA	37	21%
		A	95	53%
		UN	0	0
		D	20	11%
		SD	28	15%
2.	While writing English compositions, I feel worried and anxious if I know they will be evaluated.	SA	43	24%
		A	89	49%
		UN	0	0
		D	29	16%
		SD	19	11%
3.	I do not worry that my English compositions are a lot worse than others'.	SA	45	25%
		A	37	21%
		UN	0	0
		D	78	43%
		SD	20	11%
4.	If my English composition is to be evaluated, I would worry about getting a very poor grade.	SA	50	28%
		A	98	54%
		UN	8	4%
		D	18	10%
		SD	6	3%

As can be seen from Table 1, the scores of the four questions revealed that students seem that Cognitive Anxiety is the most common type of L2 writing anxiety experienced by learning to write. For example, if we consider the subjects' score in the question (1), 95(53%) agreed with it. It is evident from the scores most students seem to suffer from cognitive anxiety. Consequently, students' face of cognitive anxiety influences them from the active participation of writing activities. The results of data indicated in the above table that more than half of the participants 73 (41%) strongly disagree or disagree with the ideas. The scores depicted that most of the students do not feel free to write in English. This may result from limited knowledge of vocabulary, personal perception, and limited knowledge of the subject matter. As a result, they suffer from anxiety. This means that they were a worry to write in English. According to the scores of students, it can be deduced that because of their cognitive anxiety students do experience writing anxiety and fear of test or fear of any evaluative situation which in turn affects their writing skills. Cognition performance is diminished because of the divided attention, therefore performance suffers, leading to negative self-evaluations, and more self-deprecating cognition which further impairs performance, and so on. Hassan (2001) pointed out some possible causes of writing anxiety from a linguistic and cognitive perspective, such as poor skill development, inadequate role models, lack of understanding of the composing process, and authoritative, teacher-centered, product-based model of teaching.

Somatic Anxiety

This part reports the result obtained from the second category of the SLWAI labeled as somatic anxiety which is defined as an individual perception of the physiological effects of the anxiety experience, as reflected in an increase in the state of unpleasant feelings, such as nervousness and tension (Cheng, 2004: 316). The scores of the responses are illustrated in the following table.

Table 2: Anxiety scales Related to Somatic Anxiety

Items	Questions	Scales	No. of student.	%
5.	I feel my heart pounding when I write English compositions under time constraint.	SA	43	24%
		A	77	43%
		UN	0	0
		D	25	14%
		SD	35	19%
6.	My mind often goes blank when I start to work on an English composition.	SA	55	31%
		A	105	58%
		UN	10	5%
		D	4	2%
		SD	6	3%
7.	I tremble when I write English compositions under time pressure.	SA	68	38%
		A	82	45%
		UN	8	4%
		D	12	7%
		SD	10	5%
8.	My thoughts become confused when I write English compositions under time constraint.	SA	59	33%
		A	81	45%
		UN	10	5%
		D	17	9%
		SD	13	7%

As can be seen from Table 2, a large number of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that writing in time constraints causes tremble to write English compositions. Among 180 students of the study, 115 (64%) of them strongly agreed or agreed that writing English compositions under time constraint feel heart-pounding to write. Therefore, they were not willing to participate in classroom activities and they felt anxious about writing. Cheng (2002) suggested that it is critical to establish a learning environment where students can write in their flawed L2 without embarrassment, where every student writer's contribution is adequately valued, where activities and writing tasks lead to feelings of achievement, not a failure, and where self- confidence is built up.

Avoidance Behavior

This theme presents the result concerning learners' behavior. Referring to the results of the Questionnaire, most students reported that they experienced avoiding writing English compositions or avoiding situations that require writing in English. Avoidance Behavior refers to the behavioral aspect of the anxiety experience, avoidance of writing (Cheng, 2004:316). It is widely acknowledged that writing is a productive activity and needs a certain quantity of practice. Avoidance behavior, as a result of ESL writing anxiety, would, in turn, be harmful to L2 writing improvement and cause higher anxiety. Some students reported physical effects of writing anxiety. They experienced various symptoms of anxiety more or less, such as accelerated heartbeat, perspiration, and shyness.

Table 3:Anxiety scales Related to Avoidance behavior

Items	Questions	Scales	No. of student.	%
9.	I often choose to write down my thoughts in English.	SA	15	8%
		A	18	10%
		UN	0	0
		D	64	35%
		SD	83	46%
10.	I usually do my best to avoid writing English compositions.	SA	30	17%
		A	64	35%
		UN	13	7%
		D	46	25%
		SD	27	15%
11.	I do my best to avoid situations in which I have to write in English.	SA	44	24%
		A	85	47%
		UN	12	7%
		D	21	12%
		SD	18	10%
12.	Unless I have no choice, I would not use English to write compositions.	SA	34	19%
		A	79	44%
		UN	0	0
		D	41	23%
		SD	26	14%

As can be seen from Table 3, a large number of respondents strongly disagree or disagree on learners' avoidance behavior while learning to write English. For example, among 180 subjects of study 110 (61%) strongly disagree or disagree that choose to write down their thoughts in English. But they seek the way they overcome or avoid writing anxiety when performing some activities.

Other Causes of Writing Anxiety

This part deals with the last category of the questionnaire (SLWAI) which is named as other causes of writing anxiety from the English classroom and other problems frequently raised by the respondents (teachers) of the interview.

The perception of the students towards writing in English class

This part concerned is about the participants' perception of writing English, such as how important they think it is to learn to write English and how much they enjoy writing it. Ones' beliefs about language learning may contribute to anxiety or tension in language classrooms. In SLWAI items like (13) "I often feel fear when I write English compositions under a time constraint," and (14) "I am afraid of my English composition being chosen as a sample for discussion in class" are used to examine learners' beliefs about writing English and their writing anxiety. The second item is aimed to see learners' consideration of accuracy in learning to write English in the classroom as an example.

Table 4: Perceptions of the participants' towards writing in English class

Items	Questions	Scales	No	%
13.	I often feel fear when I write English compositions under time constraint.	SA	55	31%
		A	95	53%
		UN	0	0
		D	14	8%
		SD	16	9%
14.	I am afraid of my English composition being chosen as a sample for discussion in class.	SA	42	23%
		A	88	49%
		UN	9	5%
		D	29	16%
		SD	12	7%
15.	I am afraid that other students would deride my English composition if they read it	SA	79	43%
		A	60	33%
		UN	20	11%
		D	10	5%
		SD	11	6%
16.	If my English composition is to be evaluated, I would worry about getting a very poor grade	SA	83	46%
		A	77	42%
		UN	11	6%
		D	7	3%
		SD	2	1%

This table shows that among 180 students 150 (83%) of the item strongly agreed or agreed with the idea that wouldn't anxious to take more writing classes. This data indicates that almost half of the students were not worried to take more writing classes. It shows that some students of EFL learners afraid to attend more writing classes. Learners seem to adopt a negative perception to write the English language. Such beliefs may stem from the demanding nature of the writing classroom. This unrealistic belief seems to cast considerable influence on the ultimate achievement and performance in the target language. The table indicates that 150 (83%) students viewed that they were worried about time constraints while writing the target language. This may be generated from the desired to write correctly. The result of findings indicated that since some language learners believe that they must write the English language correctly, they were fearful to use the language. From the responses of students, one can note that unrealistic conception about language learning can be a source of anxiety in learning English as Foreign language. The results of existing researches also support this idea. Horwitz (1986) has indicated that certain beliefs about language learning contribute to students' tension and frustration in class. Moreover, such kind of unrealistic perceptions or beliefs on language learning and achievement can lead to frustration towards students' poor performance in a foreign language.

Anxiety from Personal Problems

This theme elicits anxiety that may occur as a result of personal problems related to an individual student. In SLWAI, questions (17) and (19) are indicators of students' problems related to lack of concentration and forgetfulness. The results are illustrated in the following table.

Table5: Some Anxiety Related to Personal Behavior

Items	Questions	Scales	No	%
17.	My mind often goes blank when I start to work on an English composition	SA	51	28%
		A	79	44%
		UN	10	5%
		D	23	13%
		SD	17	9%
18.	I usually feel my whole body rigid and tense when I write English compositions.	SA	57	32%
		A	66	37%
		UN	0	0%
		D	30	17%
		SD	27	15%
19.	Finding words meaning-less when reading the instructions and questions	SA	65	36%
		A	81	45%
		UN	5	2%
		D	19	10%
		SD	10	5%
20.	Trembling (shocking)	SA	78	43%
		A	72	40%
		UN	0	0
		D	18	10%
		SD	12	6%

As can be seen from Table 5, more than half of the participants strongly agreed or agreed with the item (15). 79 of (44%) indicated that they have a positive view of thinking things that have nothing to do with the lesson. From the scores of the students, it can be said that more than half of the students lack concentration while learning to write. They seem that they were maybe busy with things not related to the topic of the lesson. Also, in item 17 (37%) of students endorsed the idea that they become tense when they start to write a composition.

Almost all students verified that they strongly agreed or agreed with being mind goes blank when they started to write. The results indicate that many students might feel anxious when they fail to write because of nervousness.

Knowledge of Vocabulary

This section presents the problems related to writing as a result of the inadequacy of vocabulary. With regard, the results of previous researches indicate that learners can process only a limited amount of information at one time (Lightbown and Spada 2006). Therefore, it can be deduced that limited knowledge of vocabulary and unable to recall the existing words from memory seem to play a significant role in provoking learners' writing anxiety. Learners with limited knowledge of vocabulary experience incomprehensible output which may affect the whole process of language learning. It seems to affect learners' language achievement and performance. To sum up, the above sub-topics of the current study focused to address causes of writing anxiety EFL/ESL learners. Accordingly, cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance behavior attitude to writing anxiety, anxiety from personal problems, and knowledge of vocabulary were investigated as a great contributor to writing anxiety. Further analysis of data revealed that fear of evaluation and making mistakes were the biggest anxiety-provoking situations in learning to write English. Besides, personal perception of writing anxiety, anxiety from personal problems, and limited knowledge of vocabulary were situations that escalating learners writing anxiety.

The Effects of Writing Anxiety on Students' Writing Performance

The effect of writing anxiety on the writing skill of students is the third question to be addressed in this study. Thus, this part presents the impact that anxiety exerts on learners' writing skills.

Table 6: The Effect of writing anxiety on students' writing

Items	Questions	Scales	No	%
21.	I freeze up when unexpectedly asked to write English compositions.	SA	52	29%
		A	91	51%
		UN	0	0
		D	25	14%
		SD	13	7%
22.	I usually feel my whole body rigid and tense when I write English compositions.	SA	72	40%
		A	84	47%
		UN	4	2%
		D	11	6%
		SD	9	5%
23.	I feel unpleasant feelings tension when I write English compositions	SA	77	42%
		A	71	39%
		UN	6	3%
		D	17	9%
		SD	9	5%

As can be seen from Table 6, many respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the detrimental effect of writing anxiety is manifest when the anxious students are unexpectedly asked to write English compositions. Among 180 students of the study, 143 (79%) of them strongly agreed or agreed that writing English compositions under time constraint feel heart-pounding to write. Also, the effects of writing anxiety on writing processes and behaviors, such as physiological effects as reflected in unpleasant feelings of tension. Briefly, from the results of the questionnaire findings, it can be concluded that learners' writing anxiety exerts significant roles that impede learners' language competency. The result also indicated that writing anxiety affects one's output of the language. Moreover, it is indicated that writing anxiety impedes language performance and students' attitudes toward the target language. That low anxious students write better quality components than their high anxious counterparts. At the same time, low anxious students write more than high apprehensive students. From the results depicted, it can be concluded that writing anxiety affects academic, cognitive perspectives, and personal levels of the students. These findings are in line with the findings of Macintyre (1999) which indicated anxiety interfere learners' academic, cognitive, and personal level.

Strategies Teachers' use to help students' Overcome Writing Anxiety

This part is aimed to respond to the fourth research question which is about the strategies being used by participants to overcome writing anxiety.

Table7: Strategies students' use to overcome Writing Anxiety

<i>Items</i>	<i>Questions</i>	<i>Scales</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>
24.	I do my best to avoid situations in which I have to write in English.	SA	43	24%
		A	77	43%
		UN	0	0
		D	44	24%
		SD	16	9%
25.	I usually seek every possible chance to write English compositions outside of classroom.	SA	12	7%
		A	20	11%
		UN	8	4%
		D	95	53%
		SD	45	25%
26.	Utilizing the time and energy effectively by avoiding wondering what others doing during the writing tasks	SA	10	5%
		A	15	8%
		UN	5	2%
		D	73	40%
		SD	77	42%
27.	Seeking possible chances to write English composition before taking the writing tasks	SA	69	38%
		A	51	28%
		UN	6	3%
		D	40	22%
		SD	14	7%

It also can be seen from Table 7 that the subjects' score in item (24), 120 (67%) agreed or strongly agreed with it. It is evident from the scores most students seem to do their best to avoid situations in which they have to write in English. Furthermore, the responses of the student showed that the students seek every possible chance to use English compositions outside of the classroom.

Analysis of interview items with English teachers

This was done in asking and answering verbal questions which are termed to be dyadic communication. And the interview was believed to give deeper information in the area of exploring the cause of writing anxiety. In this regard, all possible ways were used to communicate with the English teachers of the selected school. The analysis was made on the data from three English teachers bringing together because the interview items used were similar for all participants.

And due to this reason, before the analysis, points raised as responses on each question were organized to similar bases one by one so as to bring them to one umbrella. To address basic issues, questions picked up and analyzed in this regard are 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively.

Question no.1. How do you see the causes of writing anxiety?

Respondent(s): First of all, I (we) would like to thank you for your invitation to provide you information about writing anxiety which is the main problem of our students. It is the main problem in language learning. This is to say that writing anxiety is seen in the writing classroom. Almost all of the students feel fear to write English which has brought significant effect on their language performance and competency.

Question no. 2.: If your students feel fear to write English in the classroom, what do you think are the causes of learners' writing anxiety?

Respondent(s): There are many causes of anxiety in relation to language classes specifically writing. To mention some: insufficient writing practice is the most important factor that caused their English writing anxiety, fears of tests. In addition, experiencing anxiety is caused by low self-confidence in English language writing.

Question no. 3.: Ok, how do you help your students when they feel fear to write in English? What strategies/methods do you use in order to help them to manage the problem?

Responder(s): I (we) try to help all my (our) students write in-group on the given writing activities which may be pertinent to their knowledge of understanding. I (we) limit the amount error corrections and give sufficient information and materials as well as adequate opportunities of guided practice I (we) praise creative ideas during writing practice and also I(we) used to strategies of facilitating for writers to develop from immature writing to mature writing, at the same time, by guide practice to avoid plagiarism.

Question no.4. : What can you say about the effect of anxiety on the students' writing skills?

Respondent(s): Anxiety has a great impact on learners to learn the English language in general and learning to write in particular. Anxiety has a devastating impact on language learning and achievement. It affects students' writing skill performance. As a result, anxiety has a significant effect on English classrooms in general and writing lessons in particular.

Question no.5.: In general, what can you say about the strategy's students should use to minimize writing anxiety in the process of writing?

Respondent(s): Writing anxiety can be minimized in the following ways. Knowing about students' learning style preferences helps writing teachers to choose suitable teaching strategies to accommodate these preferences in the English writing class. For instance, devising instruction types, writing tasks, and activities that take the differences in learning style preferences into consideration and which maximize the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of them all.

Hence, knowing about students' learning style preferences helps writing teachers to choose suitable teaching strategies to accommodate these preferences in the ESL/EFL writing class. Accordingly, the results of the findings indicated that teachers use praise or psychological backup, systemic provision of error correction, and creating a good relationship with students in alleviating learners' writing anxiety.

Discussion of the findings

In order to explore the writing anxiety of the grade nine students, I employed two instruments of data gathering, questionnaire, and interview. Then, to check the validity of them, the findings of each instrument were triangulated. According to the questionnaire findings (Table I, II, and III) reveals that students in the present study are more willing to write down their thoughts and compositions in English than those who participated in Abd Rahim and Hayas (2014) study. However, the results of the current study partly correspond with the results of the study that Zhang (2011) conducted, as it showed that both groups of Chinese learners who participated in her study suffered mainly from CA. The 180 Sabian secondary school students who participated in the study also suffered from high levels of CA mainly because of linguistic difficulties, fear of tests, fear of negative evaluation, and limited knowledge of vocabulary. In somatic anxiety, the learners were not willing to participate in classroom activities and they felt anxious about writing in time constraints. Due to this, learners seem to adopt a negative perception to write the English language.

This generated from desired to write correctly. Both the students' and teachers' responses show that fear of negative evaluation and writing under time constraints are the two main causes of writing anxiety. These results seem to confirm the findings of Negari and Rezaabadi (2012), whose results showed that students felt less anxious when they knew in advance that their writing will not be graded.

Conclusions

On the basis of the major findings, the following conclusions can be drawn.

- The result of this study clearly indicates that the students have suffered from high levels of cognitive anxiety because of linguistic difficulties, fear of negative evaluation, and limited knowledge of vocabulary.
- In Somatic and avoidance anxiety the learners were not willing to participate in classroom activities and felt anxious about writing in the time constraints.
- The result also indicated that EFL learners experience communication apprehension because of participants' perception of writing, anxiety from personal problems, and knowledge of vocabulary and input stage of learning.
- Anxiety has a great impact on learners to learn the English language in general and learning to write in particular. Anxiety has a devastating impact on language learning and achievement. It affects students' writing skill performance. As a result, anxiety has a significant effect on English classrooms in general and writing lessons in particular.
- The results of the findings also revealed that in order for learners to overcome writing anxiety, they seek every possible chance to use English compositions outside of the classroom. The teachers also use co-operative teaching, praise, systemic provision of error corrections, and creating a good relationship with students in alleviating learners' writing anxiety.
- Knowing about students' learning style preferences helps writing teachers to choose suitable teaching strategies to accommodate these preferences in the ESL/EFL writing class.

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APPENDICES
QUESTIONNAIRE TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENTS

Instruction

The following items are helpful to indicate the anxiety level students have in the English class. Select and circle the item that best describes your reaction.

Strongly Disagree = 1,

Disagree = 2,

Undecided = 3,

Agree =4,

Strongly agree=5

		SD -1	DA -2	UD= 3	A= 4	SA =5
1.	While writing in English, I am not nervous at all.					
2.	I feel my heart pounding when I write English compositions under time constraint.					
3.	While writing English compositions, I feel worried and anxious if I know they will be evaluated.					
4.	I often choose to write down my thoughts in English.					
5.	I usually do my best to avoid writing English compositions.					
6.	My mind often goes blank when I start to work on an English composition.					
7.	I do not worry that my English compositions are a lot worse than others'.					
8.	I tremble when I write English compositions under time pressure.					
9.	If my English composition is to be evaluated, I would worry about getting a very poor grade.					
10.	I do my best to avoid situations in which I have to write in English.					
11.	My thoughts become confused when I write English compositions under time constraint.					
12.	Unless I have no choice, I would not use English to write compositions.					
13.	I often feel fear when I write English compositions under time constraint.					
14.	I am afraid that the other students would think my English composition was terrible if they read it.					
15.	I freeze up when unexpectedly asked to write English compositions.					
16.	I would do my best to excuse myself if asked to write English compositions.					
17.	I do not worry at all, about what other people would think of my English compositions.					
18.	I usually seek every possible chance to write English compositions outside of class.					
19.	I usually feel my whole body rigid and tense when I write English compositions.					
20.	I am afraid of my English composition being chosen as a sample for discussion in class.					
21.	I am not afraid at all that my English compositions would be rated as very poor.					
22.	Whenever possible, I would use English to write compositions.					

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

1. How did you see the nature of writing anxiety and consequences on students' writing skill in your classroom?
2. Do you think that learning English as Foreign Language can cause writing anxiety on the students? How?
3. How do you help your students when they feel fear to write in English?
4. What strategies/methods do you use in order to help them to manage the problem?
5. What can you say about the impact of anxiety on the students' writing skill?
6. In general, what can you say about the strategies students used to minimize writing anxiety in the process of writing?

Sample Paragraph Writing Activity

Develop the following topic sentence into paragraph by providing at least three supporting sentences.

Epiphany is one of the famous holiday.
