

Level of Writing Apprehension and Factors Affecting the Writing Performance: Perspectives of the English Major Students



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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the level of writing apprehension among Bachelor of Secondary Education English freshmen students. The results of the demographic profile of the respondents showed that most of them were aged between 15-19 years old, had graduated from public schools, had at least 2 varieties of reading materials at home, and their parents had educational attainment of high school. Moreover, the results of the WAT revealed that showing one's writing to others was ranked first among the factors of writing apprehension. However, the results of the WAT also demonstrated that students did not experience a significantly unusual level of writing apprehension. The demographic profile of the respondents (age, type of school last attended, variety of reading materials at home, and educational attainment of the parents) also had no significant effect on their level of writing apprehension. These results are in line with the literature and discussions. Therefore, the study recommends some strategies to reduce students' writing apprehension and enhance their writing performance.

Keywords: Writing apprehension, Freshmen students, Educational attainment, Essential macro-skill

10 Introduction

Writing is an essential macro-skill used in multiple areas of life, including communication and art. In the academic context, it is the activity of writing coherent words on paper to compose text. This activity is vital for academic success and enables one to explain complex topics to waders and even to better understand the information themselves. Nowacek (2005) explains the importance of writing in communication and academic success. The ability to write well is not a natural talent. It is a skill that must be learned and practiced in formal instruction settings or other environments. Writing involves more than just putting words onto paper; it also involves composition. This entails the ability to express information in the form of a narrative or description or to take existing information and transform it into a new text, such as an argumentative essay. To hone one must

practice and acquire experience, Myles (2002). In a field of second language acquisition, English students are expected to have higher command of English writing ability. For English language learners, developing strong writing abilities is regarded as being crucial. Writing is an active and productive skill, so it can be challenging for students to express themselves competently in a foreign language. To do this, they must understand certain thinking strategies, as well as possess knowledge of linguistics, writing conventions, vocabulary, and grammar. It is also important for students to practice their writing skills regularly in order to gain proficiency. The methods used to teach writing have undergone various alterations in recent decades. Philip (1992) noted that there have only been a few studies that are focused on second lan-

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guage writing apprehension, despite the fact that it can be a serious problem for both native and non-native learners. This writing-related component was described as "a subjective complex of attitudinal, emotional, and behavioral interaction that reinforces each other" by Daly and Miller (1975). Writing apprehension is also known by other terms, such as anxiety and blocking (Rose, 1980 & 1983; Gungle and Taylor, 1989 & Al-Ahmad, 2003). According to Yavuz and Genç's action research study at Cukurova University, students generally had unfavorable views toward writing, independent of the teaching strategies employed (Yavuz & Genç, 1998). Thus, researchers have sought out practical and engaging methods to improve student writing. Students' experiences with writing anxiety differ depending on their own past and present educational experiences, behavior, and self-esteem. Factors are evident in this scenario because of this. According to Kean, Glynn, and Briton, students experience pressure because of the amount of time allotted for writing assignments, which makes it difficult for them to complete (1987). The same writing issues were experienced by even pupils who excelled in other language abilities, such as reading, speaking, listening, and grammar. The reasons highlighted in the research of writers include their fear of making writing mistakes, their lack of self-efficacy in writing, their unfavorable perceptions of their writing abilities, their enjoyment of writing, their fear of evaluation, and their exposure of their writing to others. Students who are taking writing courses frequently experience increased levels of anxiety due to the complexity of the writing work. This anxiety may discourage the students, which could result in unfavorable attitudes toward writing (Gere, 1987 & Sharples, 1993). This type of student finds it difficult to communicate, avoids writing as much as they can, and dislikes these types of classes. The fear of writing acts as a barrier to attaining the potential for writing and for learning the target language. Students' proficiency in the second language is thought to be low, according to the method. Writing assignments can make students more anxious since they might make them lose interest in writing, which can result in unfavorable attitudes about it. Daly and Miller (1975) established three lev-

els of writing anxiety, from strong to moderate to low. Additionally, Hanna (2010) discovered that students with high levels of writing anxiety tended to put off tasks, avoid them whenever possible, and create papers of lesser quality than those with lower levels of anxiety. According to the study, writing anxiety is a difficult concept and a serious issue that can affect English language learners of all backgrounds. The learners' learning process will eventually be impacted by writing anxiety. As a result, the researcher intended to find out how nervous BSED English freshmen were about writing. This study served as the foundation for developing writing practice exercises that would minimize the emotional factors that have a significant impact on these students' writing skills.

The present study aimed to investigate the demographic profile and writing performance of BSED English freshmen students in Biliran Province State University-Main Campus. Specifically, this sought answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of BSED English freshmen of Biliran Province State University-Main Campus in terms of:
 - 1.1 age.
 - 1.2 type of school last attended,
 - 1.3 variety of reading materials at home, and
 - 1.4 educational attainment of parents?
2. What is the rank of the factors that affect writing performance based on their perspective?
3. What is the level of writing apprehension among English freshman students?
4. Is there a relationship between the demographic profile and their level of writing apprehension?
5. What could be the possible remedy to lessen the writing apprehension among these students?

2.0 Theoretical Framework

Two theories formed the foundation of this work. The Social Cognitive Theory of Bandura (1986) asserted that people's beliefs about their abilities influence their behavior. According to Daly and Miller's (1975) "Writing Apprehension Theory," writing anxiety is a complex subjective condition including interactions among attitudes, emotions, and behaviors that support one another. The social cognitive theory developed by Bandura sheds

light on why individuals with similar knowledge and abilities can behave in remarkably different ways. They can foresee successful outcomes, whereas those who have poor self-confidence will be more likely to expect failure. The writer's opinions about their talents are frequently more reliable predictors of success than measures of what they are actually capable of producing. Due to the complexity of the writing process, Daly and Miller (1975) thought of writing apprehension as a difficult phrase. Because anxiety can make students unmotivated to write, which can result in bad attitudes toward writing, writing assignments tend to make students more anxious. This concept takes an individual's past experiences into account when determining whether or not behavioral action will occur. A person's likelihood of engaging in a certain activity as well as the reasons why they do so are both influenced by their prior experiences, effects, reinforcements, expectations, and expectancies. This notion can be used to explain why people experience writing anxiety. This propensity of the writers' behavior, which is founded on their expectations and beliefs, determines whether the outcome will be a good performance or a reason to induce writing anxiety. In fact, McLeod (1987) claimed that he thought writing involved both emotional and cognitive engagement. He added that in writing, apprehension is often understood to refer to unfavorable, uneasy emotions that interfere with some aspect of the writing process. Writing apprehension is nervousness about writing that is caused by past failure experiences or it could just be a general fear of failing. The term "writing anxiety" refers to the fear of writing that outweighs the anticipated benefit of being able to write, as used by Thompson (1980). To understand the connection between writing anxiety and human qualities, Daly (1975) argues that it is an essential topic. According to Spielberger (1983), apprehension is the feeling of tension, anxiety, nervousness, or a similar emotion. According to Freud (1895), apprehension is a felt emotion that includes sensations of tension, anxiety, uneasiness, and worry, together with physiological arousal. Freud noted that strong apprehension was common in most mental diseases and that it was adaptive in inspiring behavior that helped people cope with frightening situations, which is

consistent with Darwin's evolutionary viewpoint. Writing apprehension was defined by Daly & Miller (1975) as a person's propensities to approach or avoid situations that they perceive as being evaluated. According to Horwitz (1986), it is a form of performance anxiety brought on by a dread of failing. Every educational setting is permeated by the anxiety of failing a test, which is the main reason why L2 writers experience writing anxiety. Additionally, Daly (1978) found that writing anxiety is a situation- and subject-specific person difference. Highly anxious writers also prefer to avoid the writing-related activities that are necessary for success, such as writing. Writing practice and receiving writing-related feedback. According to Faigley, Daly, and Witte (1981), authors who are highly worried tend to write shorter and less fluidly than writers who are less anxious. Cattell (1966) stressed the significance of distinguishing between individual differences in apprehension as a personality attribute and apprehension as an emotional state in order to comprehend writing apprehension or the so-called writing blocks. The University of North Carolina at North Chapel emphasized that "writer's block" and "writing apprehension" are colloquial phrases covering a range of both positive and negative writing-related emotions. This suggests that writing anxiety is a situation- or context-dependent phenomenon. The complexity of language, as a whole, and the capacity of writing, in particular, are to blame for writing anxiety (as cited in Bruning & Hom, 2000 and Schweiker-Marra & Marra, 2000). The majority of students, both high scorers and low achievers, find writing to be challenging and believe that they must fight through it in order to pass various exams (Yavuz & Genç, 1998). This might be connected to affective components, including student attitudes, writing anxiety, and writing self-efficacy. Hjortshoj (2000) discussed how writers who are working on lengthy projects unrelated to schoolwork can suffer from loneliness. He advised such students to organize or join a writing group, which serves in a manner similar to that of a writing buddy, in addition to making connections with encouraging people. Ismail, Elias, Albakri, Perumal, and Muthusamy (2010) conducted a study that was primarily concerned with the instructor's level of writing anxiety and attitudes toward academic

writing. The study made various recommendations for how to address the issues, including putting more emphasis on the writing process, prioritizing fluency over accuracy, encouraging engaging and enjoyable writing activities, and online writing. Students exhibit a significant amount of apprehension when performing tasks that call for the use of productive skills, according to Hilleson (1996) and Zhang (2001). Studies have also suggested that being anxious will result in poor writing performance. For instance, Krashen (1997) and Lee (2002) used Taiwanese university students as their subjects and discovered a substantial association between writing anxiety and actual EFL writing performance. Sparts, Ganschow, and Javorsky (2000), however, suggested that it is the learners' linguistic lack that leads to poor performance, which in turn prompts their fear, by examining the relationship between the apprehension component student's real achievements. Even though there are few studies on writing anxiety, it is an important piece of research to identify the likely causes of worry. For instance, Lee (2001) argued that finding a suitable link between writing anxiety and learning to write would be beneficial for students. Probable aspects were positioned as causes that influence the students' writing anxiety as collected theories regarding writing apprehension were explained. It is conceivably due to a lack of cultural and social experiences with the English language, the desire to share one's writing with others, the anxiety associated with receiving feedback, the aptitude for writing, the negative perception of writing, the limited linguistic knowledge, the complexity of the writing, the demographic profile, and the pressure of time. These would typically prevent students from producing and performing well in their writing assignments. Now, this might prevent individuals from writing well.

Methods and Design

A descriptive-correlational survey research design was used for this investigation. This design combines two types of research: descriptive and correlational. The behavioral aspects influencing respondents' writing anxiety were discovered and described using a descriptive study. A correlational study was performed to investigate the association between the sociodemo-

graphic characteristics of BSED English freshman students and their level of writing anxiety. The BSED English freshmen of Biliran Province State University-Main Campus who were officially enrolled in the school year 2017-2018 were chosen as respondents for this study. In order to determine their level of writing apprehension, the participants were made to answer a questionnaire. The questionnaire comprises three parts. Part I contains questions that seek to gather the demographic profile of the respondents. This includes their age, the type of school they last attended, the educational attainment of their parents and the kinds of reading materials available at home. Part II consists of the Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) adopted by Daly & Miller (1975). In Part III of the survey, the respondents were asked to rank the factors that affect their writing capability. Additionally, they were given a range from 1-6 to indicate the variety of reading materials available at home, as well as different levels of writing apprehension. The ranges for writing apprehension were defined as follows: Range 26-59: high level of writing apprehension; Range 60- 96: not experiencing a significantly unusual level of writing apprehension; and Range 97-130: low level of writing apprehension. In analyzing the data, various statistical techniques were used. Mean and frequency was used to measure the central tendency and distribution of the data. Averaging was used to measure the average of a set of values. Using the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, the statistical dependence between two variables was evaluated.

Results and Discussion

Discussions of the findings of this study are provided in this section. These include a cross-tabulation of the students' demographic profiles (respondents), ranked factors of writing apprehension and the relation of level of writing apprehension to the demographic variables.

A. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The table shows the respondents' type of school they graduated from in relation to their age. In general, most respondents belonged to the age bracket of 15-19 years old, and they graduated from public schools. This shows that the majority of respondents had completed their elementary educa-

Type of School	Age			
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34
Public	50	10	3	1
Semi-Private	3	0	0	0
Private	5	3	1	1

Table 1. Type of School Age Cross Tabulation

tion. and moved on to secondary education, which starts at the age of 13 and runs until the age of 16. For many decades, Filipino students have been completing four years of secondary education before continuing to higher education. According to World Education News and Reviews (2004), the Philippines has one of the shortest formal schooling systems in the world, lacking mandated kindergarten and extended years in high school. This six-plus-four-plus-four structure means that students typically start school at the age of six or eight and finish high school at ages sixteen to eighteen. According to the Philippines Core USAID Education

Profile (2012), 63 percent of youth ages twelve to fifteen attended secondary school at the appropriate age, with 56 percent of males and 70 percent of females. Additionally, Clark (2009) noted that the typical age range of a freshman student in the Philippines is seventeen to twenty years old. Many of these students come from public schools.

Table 2 illustrates the respondents' type of school last attended in relation to their parent's educational attainment. In general, most of the students graduated from public schools and their parent's educational attainment typically belonged to high

Students' last school Graduate attended	Educational Attainment of Parents				
	Elementary Graduate	High School Graduate	College (Undergrad)	College Graduate	Total
Type of School					
Public	12	29	12	11	64
Semi-Private	0	3	0	0	3
Private	1	1	3	5	10
Total	13	33	15	16	77

Table 2. Type of School last Attended* Educational Attainment of the Parents Cross Tabulation

school graduates. Parental educational attainment was a significant predictor of the academic and behavioral results of children (Davis-Kean, 2005).

Parents who have low educational attainment would usually send their children to cheaper institutions, specifically public schools, simply because they could not provide better schools due to their lack of degrees. In addition, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (1995), in 1993, 11% of students in grades 3 through 12 attended a public school chosen by their parents who did not participate in tertiary education, while 20% of children attended schools that their families chose. Stevenson and Baker (1987) argued that the educational status of the mother is not a determining factor in the degree of parental involvement in schooling, contrary to popular belief. Sclafani (2004) supported this finding, noting that the extent of parental involvement was not linked to the educational attainment of the mother, but rather to other factors such as the parents' values and beliefs. Therefore, although parents who have completed high school are more likely to be interested in their children's education, this does not necessarily mean that they are more involved than parents who have not completed high school. Nowadays, there are too many students in one

classroom in our country due to financial constraints. To assist in enhancing their writing abilities, we as teachers must help them feel less anxious about writing. To do this, we should be patient and encouraging when it comes to their writing. We should also make sure that we provide enough materials and activities that are appropriate for their level. This will make them feel more comfortable and confident in writing. Additionally, we should also make sure that we provide enough feedback and guidance in order for them to improve. Finally, we can also create a writing environment that is conducive and enjoyable for them, this will help them to become more engaged in their writing.

Table 3 illustrates the variety of reading materials owned by students in relation to the school they graduated from. Most of the students graduated from public schools and had access to at least two reading materials at home. According to Educational Testing Service (1999), students are more likely to display higher reading competency when there are more different types of reading resources available in the home. This was supported by Evan (2010), an associate professor of sociology and resource economics, who said that regardless of their socioeconomic circumstances, students' levels of education are

Students' last attended	Variety of Reading Materials						Total
	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	
Type of School							
Public	9	17	15	14	7	2	64
Semi-Private	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
Private	1	2	1	1	4	1	10
Total	10	2	20	4	10	16	77

Legend: 1-6 indicates the variety of reading materials available at home.

Table 3. Type of School last attended Variety of Reading Materials Cross tabulation

directly correlated with the availability of books in their households. Needleman et al. (1991) asserted that the absence of books and sufficient reading materials is the biggest barrier to literacy. This assertion is supported by a research foundation that revealed that in 2011, the Philippine public school system was found to lack 95 million books. Moreover, there are many homes where there is simply a dearth of books, magazines, or newspapers that are appropriate for young children. Higher reading proficiency students were more likely to have four different types of reading resources in their households, including encyclopedias, magazines, newspapers, and at least 25 books, according to the NAEP Reading Report Card (1998), which was reported in Raising Readers (1999).

The growth of students' writing abilities may be negatively impacted by a lack of reading materials. As teachers, we should do our best to provide students with as many reading resources as possible to ensure that their writing skills are able to develop and that any writing apprehension they may experience is diminished. We should motivate and encourage students to take advantage of the resources available to them in order to practice their reading skills. Table 4 indicates the educational attainment of the parents of the respondents in relation to the variety of reading materials present in

their homes. The vast majority of the respondents had access to two different types of reading materials, and the parents of the majority of these respondents had high school degrees. Access to Books (2009) noted that even a small number of books in the home can be beneficial for students. Numerous studies have backed up this claim, such as Goldenbery et al. (1992) and Koskinen et al. (1995), which have demonstrated the advantages of increasing students' exposure to literacy materials in their homes. However, this is heavily linked to the parents' educational attainment. Douglas and Chau (2007) showed that there is an evident correlation between higher educational attainment and higher earnings, with those with less education becoming increasingly disadvantaged financially. Parents in low-income families typically have a high school diploma but no college degree. Douglas and Chau deduced from this that children of middle-class families had numerous possibilities to buy books (about 13 titles per child), while children of low-class families had relatively few (about one title every 300 children). The availability of books in the household is crucial in influencing a child's educational level (Science Daily, 2010). According to a 2016 study by Book Harvest, there is a considerable difference between students who grow up without access to books and those who do so

Students' last attended	Variety of Reading Materials					
	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00
Educational Attainment						
Elementary	2	4	5	2	0	0
High School	5	9	6	7	5	1
College (Undergrad)	3	2	3	5	2	0
College Graduate	0	2	3	5	4	2

Legend: 1-6 indicates the variety of reading materials available at home.

Table 4. Educational Attainment of the Parents* Variety of Reading Materials Cross Tabulation

in homes with 500-book libraries. The study found that having parents who are barely literate (three years of education) compared to having parents who have a university education (15 or 16 years of education) can propel a child to 3.2 years further in education, on average. It has been proven that people who lack reading materials at home are more likely to develop writing apprehensions. As teachers, it is our responsibility to help our students by providing them with a variety of reading materials to immerse themselves in. The family's financial situation and the parents' educational backgrounds are just a couple of the variables that may play a role in the lack of reading materials in the home. This presents a challenge to both teachers and students, as they must work together to overcome the issue. To help ease the apprehension towards writing,

to the respondents' perspectives. The factor that affects the writing performance of the respondents is 'Showing One's Writing to Others'.

According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory of 1986, a person's beliefs can significantly affect their conduct. Cheng (2004) added that the cognitive components of writing anxiety, such as unfavorable expectations, performance obsession, and worry about how others will perceive their work when it is shared, can have an effect. Williams (2003) continues by stating that inconsistent or ambiguous feedback from judges or raters can have a significant detrimental impact on students' work, causing them to become confused, passive, or frustrated. Krashen and Lee (1997) proposed that extensive reading can help improve writing and that decreasing

Factor of Writing Apprehension	Average Rating	Rank
Demographic Profile	6.34	2
Time Pressure	4.97	8
Writing Complexity	5.05	7
Limited Linguistic Knowledge	4.23	10
Lack of Cultural and Social Experiences of English language	4.65	9
Negative Perceptions on Writing	5.40	6
Enjoyment of Writing	6.19	3
Fear of Evaluation	5.61	5
Showing one's Writing to Others	6.37	1
Writing Aptitude	6.12	4

Table 5. Factors of Writing Apprehension

teachers should provide exposure to reading materials in school, as well as writing reinforcements.

B. Factors that Affect Writing Apprehension

This table shows the list of factors of writing apprehension that were ranked according

to the associated pressure can help reduce anxiety. Mangelsdorf (1992) conducted a study on peer review in ESL composition classrooms and found that a small percentage of students saw this process as beneficial in terms of content and organization. However, the majority of students viewed

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean/ Average
Writing Apprehension Test	51.00	91.00	72.4026

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of the Level of Writing Apprehension

the process as adversative and unproductive. Students may feel ashamed to show their written outputs to their fellow classmates due to a fear of receiving negative feedback and being bullied. As teachers, it is our responsibility to mediate and administer to student's needs. This can be done through collaboration with peer groups, based on Harris' Model (1992), where students can feel more comfortable with sharing their work. Additionally, teachers should help to boost student's self-esteem through writing reinforcement activities.

C. Level of Writing Apprehension

Legend:

Range 26-59: have a high level of writing apprehension.

Range 60-96: do not experience a significantly unusual level of writing apprehension

Range 97-130: have a low level of writing apprehension

Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics results of the Writing Apprehension Test taken by BSED English freshman students. The results indicate that the students' writing apprehension fall on the range of 60 to 96, with a description of "not experiencing a significantly unusual level of writing apprehension". Davida Charney, Marcy Newman, and Amy Palmquist (1995) explored students' various learning styles and attitudes toward writing. They found that active learners are more inclined to think of writing as a skill that can be developed, whereas passive learners are more prone to think of writing as a fixed capacity. Furthermore, Popovich and Masse (2003) discovered that students with a more optimistic outlook are usually more suc-

cessful in their writing assignments than those with a pessimistic outlook. As educators, it is important to nurture the present writing capacities of students and offer positive writing reinforcements to help them reach their full potential.

D. Relationship between WAT and Demographic Profile

The table depicts how the respondents' demographic profile and WAT are related. The table clearly shows that there is no correlation between the results of the Writing Apprehension Test taken by respondents and their demographic characteristics. The results of this study supported earlier studies in showing that there is no statistically significant difference in students' academic performance based on their demographic profile. Ugoji (2008) found that gender, age, and finance are not reliable predictors of academic performance. Okoh (2010) also supported these findings, suggesting that age does not influence students' scholastic activity. Additionally, Oduiko and Adeyemo (1999) demonstrated that there is no evidence showing a connection between academic performance and some of the students' demographic profiles. The results of this study further confirm that demographic factors have no direct impact on students' academic performance.

3.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The BSED English freshmen students of Biliran Province State University Main Campus belong to the average level of writing apprehension, which could potentially have an impact on their writing performance. To combat this, the teacher should be flexible in addressing the student's writing

Demographic Variables Coefficient	Correlation	p-value	Interpretation
Age	.013	.913	There is no significant relationship.
Type of School	-.099	.923	There is no significant relationship.
Variety of Reading Materials	.071	.542	There is no significant relationship.
Educational Attainment	.050	.668	There is no significant relationship.

Note: Relationship is significant if p-value <0.05

Table7. Relationship between Writing Apprehension and Demographic Variables

needs and interests. They can do this by immersing the students in writing activities to reduce their apprehension, mobilizing and motivating them to practice their reading skills through various reading materials, creating a low-anxiety classroom environment, making writing more productive, structuring peer collaborations, encouraging them to compose, facilitating them in writing activities, tactfully identifying and correcting errors, and aiding in the improvement of their writing abilities.

The students, as respondents, should show their interest in relation to the enhancement of their writing performance so that apprehensions will eventually be lowered. In order to do this, the teacher can provide a conducive learning environment that allows the students to participate in the writing activity. This could be done by engaging them in different kinds of writing activities and widely accepting errors. Showing peer collaboration and establishing an open-minded attitude towards the writing process can also help in reducing writing apprehension. Furthermore, teacher should encourage students to exercise their writing skills and provide them with resources, such as a booklet entitled 'Reducing Writing Apprehension: A Structured Group', which could provide writing reinforcement activities that would lessen the effect of writing apprehensions. Additionally, it is recommended that a replication of the study is done in order to find out the level of writing apprehension the entire students have in BIPSU.

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