

# Analysis of English Writing Anxiety and Relieving Ways

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## Abstract

For students, writing is the most difficult skill to master, but it is also an important skill that we should learn. Anxiety, as one of the emotional factors, has an increasing impact on foreign language writing. However, in actual teaching, students generally lack confidence or are afraid of receiving negative evaluations from teachers, which can lead to inefficient writing. In order to enhance students' interest in English writing, this article starts with the definition of writing anxiety, lists different researchers' definitions of writing anxiety, analyzes the causes and sources of English writing anxiety, and proposes several countermeasures on how to reduce English writing anxiety among college students, thereby reducing their writing anxiety.

## Keywords

Anxiety, Writing English Writing, Anxiety, Relieving Ways, English.

## 1. Introduction

Writing anxiety refers to the anxiety behavior of learners in the process of writing, such as avoiding writing tasks, and worrying about the composition to be read or reviewed by others. Writing anxiety will hinder the smooth progress of the writing process, lead to writing difficulties, make learners have painful and negative emotional experience of writing tasks and activities, and reduce their expectations for writing success. English writing anxiety is a kind of anxiety trait arising from a specific foreign language writing learning situation, which is an important factor affecting English writing performance. With the change of educational concept from "how to teach" to "how to learn", people begin to realize the importance of individual differences among learners. During the epidemic period, online learning gradually became the mainstream, and various online courses emerged in one after another, but the learning effect was not very ideal, so students' anxiety gradually increased. Writing is a very important learning skill. As a college student, we should pay more attention to the cultivation of English writing ability. Even English major students will feel overwhelmed when they encounter unfamiliar, unfamiliar or highly professional materials. As a result, they can only use a limited number of words, cannot understand the depth of the topic, and can only mechanically copy the so-called "writing template". However, in this process, if they can use the list outline to develop a good replacement thinking, and can carefully modify after completing the composition, they can avoid some anxiety. This study tries to explore the causes and self-mitigation of the anxiety in English writing among Chinese college students, in order to provide some reference for the teaching.

## 2. Literature Review

Writing anxiety and writing strategies are defined and classified from various aspects both at home and abroad. Cheng believes that writing anxiety involves the imbalance and bad behavior of various mental functions. Petric Writing teaching strategy is defined as "the author is a psychological problem behavior adopted to make writing more effective". Reading relevant

literature shows that researchers have done a lot of research on the writing anxiety and self-relief ways of college students through questionnaires or interviews. Gao Caiyun and Li Congzhu explore the relationship between the two, but whether it is quantitative research, qualitative research, or mixed research, the research objects are relatively monotonous. The class of English major college students is mainly English, involving all aspects of listening, speaking, reading and writing, which is very different from non-English major undergraduate students. Therefore, this study mainly explores the basic situation of writing anxiety and self-relief by issuing online questionnaires to college students.

Young (1991) summarized the reasons for his anxiety in foreign language writing as six points: (1) the effective competition and self-awareness of foreign language writing learners. If foreign language writing learners overemphasize their image and status in the eyes of others, anxiety will arise spontaneously. (2) The tolerance of foreign language writing learners for mistakes in writing. Some foreign language learners believe that if they practice hard, they will become foreign language writing experts in the short term. They feel frustrated and anxious when they fail to achieve the perfect goal they set. (3) Foreign language teachers' views and attitudes towards foreign language writing. If foreign language writing teachers think their role is to correct students' mistakes, the language form is more important than the content of the article, and the writing class should seriously correct mistakes rather than start various forms of discussion, then these teachers may make students feel nervous in class, thus improving their writing anxiety. (4) Communication between foreign language writing teachers and foreign language writing learners. If teachers often correct or even excessively correct students' mistakes, students' anxiety will be enhanced. (5) The specific arrangement of the foreign language writing class procedures. If the teacher shows the poor writing to the whole class, and severely criticizes or even openly ridicule the article, students will have anxiety about foreign language writing. (6) Test and evaluation of foreign language writing. Anxiety can increase significantly if the format and content of the test are very unfamiliar to foreign language writing learners, or if the tests and assessments are particularly important for students.

### **3. A Review of Research on Writing Anxiety at Home and Abroad**

#### **3.1. Measures of Anxiety in Foreign-Language Writing**

In the measurement of anxiety in foreign language writing, some studies have focused on the measurement of overall anxiety in foreign language writing and its factor analysis. Guo Yan and Qin Xiaoqing (2010) found that the foreign language writing anxiety among non-English major students was in a medium stage Degree, overall writing anxiety and four anxiety factors, such as classroom teaching anxiety, conception anxiety, avoidance behavior and confidence anxiety, were significantly negatively correlated with writing performance, and one of the factors - avoidance behavior reached a high anxiety level. Some scholars analyze the effect of students on anxiety measures from classroom teaching mode: peer feedback, cooperative learning, AAWP mode and CLIL mode help students reduce English writing anxiety. Peer feedback can effectively reduce the negative impact of college students' writing anxiety on the writing process and grades. Peer feedback can also help learners significantly improve the quality of writing output.

Students' feedback and teachers' feedback complement each other in the writing process, which will jointly promote the improvement of writing level. AAWP mode and cooperative learning can effectively reduce the overall anxiety, evaluation anxiety and physical anxiety of non-English major college students (Wu & Gu, 2011; Guo Shixiang, 2017); Zhong Hanchun and Fan Wuqiu (2018) found that CLIL mode has the most significant impact on classroom teaching anxiety and conception anxiety, and CLIL mode has a significant impact on the writing anxiety of students with different writing levels, which has a greater impact on middle and low level

students. For gifted learners, they can also cause writing anxiety. Although they may not be too anxious, if they are not noticed or not mentioned, they will produce terrible results and lack the ability to express themselves clearly. Olanzhad (2015) aims to detect writing anxiety among three groups of English majors who majored in translation, pedagogy and literature and write in English in academic courses. These three groups of students were located within the medium writing anxiety range, but at different levels. Using peer feedback in writing sessions reduces learners' cognitive anxiety, physical anxiety, and avoidance behavior. Compared to the two types of writing anxiety categories, participants from private universities were 1% higher than those from public universities. In the low-level writing anxiety category, participants from public universities were 1% more than participants from private universities. Participants from both private and public universities have an average level of writing anxiety (Dar & Kha, 2015).

### **3.2. The Influence of Foreign Language Writing Anxiety on Writing Performance**

In terms of the influence of foreign language writing anxiety on writing performance, at first, many researchers generally found that writing anxiety is negatively associated with writing performance; with the deepening of research, researchers found that the relationship between foreign language writing anxiety and writing performance is very complicated. Woodrow (2011) found that the writing anxiety variable was not directly related to writing performance, but was related to self-efficacy, which was predictive of writing performance. Writing self-concept and writing self-efficacy do not have a direct and significant impact on writing performance, but have an indirect positive impact on writing performance through the mediation of writing anxiety. This will help them to reduce their writing anxiety and improve their writing performance. Guo Jidong (2018) examined the interrelationship between variables such as self-concept, self-efficacy, writing anxiety and writing performance in English writing. The results showed that self-concept and self-efficacy in English writing were significantly positively associated with writing performance, and writing anxiety.

### **3.3. Factors associated with anxiety in foreign-language writing**

In the related factors of foreign language writing anxiety, the study is basically analyzed from the internal factors and external factors. From the point of internal factors, Zhou, Tang (2010) using the method of sound thinking, to a certain extent reveals the anxiety the emotional factors on the influence of Chinese students in writing, and the influence and students to complete the task of the relationship between mother tongue intervention, and found that writing anxiety and native tongue usage in the process of sound thinking positively correlated. After analyzing the six causes of anxiety in writing, the author provides some suggestions to the teacher. One is to improve students' practical writing ability and reduce their writing anxiety in class. The second is to enhance the confidence and fun of writing through the interesting classroom activities. The third is to dilute the role of writing evaluation and improve students' fear of bilingual writing. Rezaei and Jafari (2014) studied the degree, types and causes of writing anxiety among Iranian foreign language students. The results of this mixed methods design study indicated that they had high levels of writing anxiety with cognitive anxiety as the main type, mainly due to excessive attention and high expectations of grades, fear of negative feedback from teachers, low confidence and poor language knowledge. In fact, this suggests that students are stressed in the pursuit of perfect work and that the writing goals are not compatible with what the students expect. Liu and Ni (2015) pointed out that there are three main factors that affect writing: low confidence in writing, dislike of writing, and fear of English writing evaluation.

Therefore, the authors suggest that students can adopt strategies such as comforting themselves, repeatedly revising the article repeatedly, continuing writing despite anxiety, reading other students' articles, and seeking help from the dictionary. When the task

requirement is uncertain, they should reanalyze the topic and list the main points. When students don't know what to write, they can brainstorm what to outline them. Because making the outline and then filling out the content makes the writing easier. When students can't think of a suitable way of expression, they can use the dictionary to find synonyms as substitutes. In addition to these internal factors, Kara (2013) found that the causes of writing anxiety are also related to teachers and textbooks. Learners indicated that teachers discouraged them, gave no feedback, and were not interested in the problems arising in their writing. Teachers' teaching styles may also cause problems, such as not giving examples in class or teaching in a boring way. Moreover, the textbook does not give students enough examples and exercises, nor is there a sufficient explanation. Therefore, when encountering learners with writing anxiety in the writing class, teachers can consider these reasons and take relevant measures to prevent the generation of writing anxiety. With the deepening of task-based teaching methods, more and more scholars are focusing on the relationship between task complexity and foreign language learners. Yan Rong and Zhang Lei (2015) tried to put forward the view of cognition and social cognition from the perspective of subject-object interaction. This paper explored the influence of task complexity, task difficulty and self-efficacy on foreign language writing, and self-efficacy on foreign language writing accuracy. The high self-efficacy level group had significantly higher accuracy of language expression in high complexity writing tasks.

#### **4. Teaching Revelation**

From the above studies, we can find that most researchers find that writing anxiety has a negative impact on students' writing performance. The anxiety of writing is multifaceted, such as students avoiding writing, low confidence, lack of fun in writing, lack of love of writing and pressure from parents. Therefore, finding the right teaching method is beneficial for both teachers and students. Making students like writing and be happy to write is very important to reduce writing anxiety. Therefore, in the teaching process, teachers should make some changes and adjust their teaching strategies and methods. According to the above research, teachers should improve from the following aspects: change the composition review mode, enrich the writing materials, and create a harmonious writing environment.

Here are several ways to ease your anxiety about English writing:

##### **4.1. Change the Composition Review Mode**

Many studies have found that students are afraid of the teacher's feedback to their writing, worried that they will not get high marks, afraid that they are laughed at by other students for the full red modification of their composition, afraid of reading their articles in class, so they feel anxious and nervous about the teacher's review. This traditional error correction review mode and scoring review mode also tells us that this situation urgently needs to change. Teachers should not be authoritative raters who fear students, but rather be instructors, participants, organizers, coordinators, and readers who can communicate with students equally. After the teachers correct the students' compositions, they should communicate and discuss with the students as a friend, in order to better improve the students' writing situation. The intermediary role of teachers should be to guide students to open their thinking, active thinking, give students positive feedback and positive evaluation, help students enhance self-confidence and take the initiative of responsibility for writing tasks, so as to reduce the experience of writing anxiety. For students with low English writing ability, low self-evaluation of overall language ability and lack of self-confidence, teachers should take a tolerant attitude, give them personalized encouragement, and appreciate their outstanding places in their writing. Teachers can extract from each student composition a flash sentence, let the self-perception of low students also can feel the teacher's evaluation is not necessarily negative, so that their attention from the fear of mistakes and worries, let the students realize their



strengths, further play, mining such highlights, promote the improvement of composition quality and performance.

#### **4.2. Enrich writing materials**

Many students avoid writing because of their lack of writing ability and lack of writing materials. Teachers should pay attention to adding comprehensible input in the comprehensive language skills training to enrich students' language knowledge and improve their language output skills. At the same time, with certain language skills as the guarantee, we strive to provide students with rich themes and interesting writing materials, so that students can walk into life, into the society, understand the information around them, can have their own ideas, and can bring rich ideas for their own writing. Therefore, the teacher can provide rich writing materials in class, collect more materials and articles for the students to read; after class, the teacher can also let the students write diary in English form, extract celebrity inspirational stories to enrich their writing content, can write their own characteristics and style in the writing class. In addition, the teacher also changed different types of writing tasks, let the students try different forms of writing, so as to ensure enough writing output frequency and improve the quality of written English output. The lack of writing materials shows that students write less frequently since childhood, so teachers should cultivate students' writing ability from an early age, accumulate writing materials, so that students can no longer avoid writing, so as to reduce writing anxiety.

#### **4.3. Create a Harmonious Writing Environment**

Teachers should provide a harmonious writing atmosphere in order to stimulate students' interest in writing. Therefore, creating an equal and harmonious writing environment is an important measure to reduce the anxiety of English writing. For students, writing is a long period of patience.

Cheng, this not only requires students to write unremittingly, but also needs teachers to actively guide, help students actively deal with the writing task, establish confidence in writing, so as to effectively reduce students' writing anxiety. In class, teachers can create a relaxed and interesting learning atmosphere through the interaction between teachers and students, and between students and students, and improve students' enthusiasm and confidence in writing. Teachers should provide students with a more relaxed writing environment, so that students can communicate face to face and make suggestions for their classmates. Students can question the opinions of their peers, discuss countermeasures and come up with solutions. Only by creating such a favorable learning environment can students stimulate their enthusiasm for writing, improve their confidence, enhance their awareness and expression, so as to reduce their psychological pressure and anxiety about writing. In such a cooperative learning atmosphere, students will be more active in writing, and peer support and affirmation will make them internalize their acquired knowledge, and ultimately improve their writing quality.

### **5. Conclusion**

This article mainly introduces the previous research on writing anxiety at home and abroad. Firstly, the purpose of this article is introduced, and then the research of domestic and foreign scholars is specifically introduced. Finally, the previous research puts forward three kinds of teaching change strategies for teachers.

A little advice. For the research of domestic and foreign scholars on writing anxiety, it is specifically divided into three aspects: the measurement of writing anxiety, the influence of writing anxiety on writing performance, and the causes of writing anxiety. In general, most learners will have a high anxiety writing state during the writing process. This kind of writing anxiety has a negative effect and a negative effect on the writing performance. And writing anxiety causes is various, most of the researchers from the learner internal factors research,

such as students' confidence is not high, students accumulate writing material, their English ability is not enough, students sometimes receive pressure from parents, etc., these will cause pressure to students, thus lead to writing high anxiety. A few scholars from the task difficulty, time limit and other external factors to analyze. Through the analysis of previous studies, I hope to bring teaching enlightenment to teachers, change their teaching strategies and writing review mode, treat students as a participant and with an equal attitude, and discuss with students, so that students can actively face writing in a harmonious atmosphere. The combination of class and after class makes students accumulate rich writing materials, so that students can have content to write, be interested in writing, improve students' writing confidence, enhance their writing ability, so as to reduce writing anxiety.

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