

A Study on English Majors' Writing Anxiety among Chinese College Students

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Most Chinese college students do not attach great importance to English writing, and a small number of students have anxiety, which leads to a fall in grades. Based on this, this study uses interview and literature reading mode to explore the relationship between writing anxiety and English scores and which factors cause anxiety. The results showed that: (1) Anxiety was inversely correlated with grades. The greater the anxiety, the less satisfactory the grades. (2) There are many factors that lead to writing anxiety, the main factors of which are the students' writing foundation, the personalities and the interests to English writing. This study also provides some suggestions for people with writing anxiety to relieve anxiety.

Keywords: English writing anxiety, writing anxiety factors, English grades

1 Introduction

Part One covers the research background, significance and outline of the thesis.

1.1 Research Background

Listening, speaking, reading and writing are the basic skills of learning English. In fact, listening, speaking, reading is the input part, and writing is the output part. English writing reflects a student's practical ability to use the language. In the process of Writing in English, students are not only able to reflect what they have learned, but also consolidate their knowledge. Studies in recent years have shown that emotional anxiety in middle school students has a large impact on English writing. Therefore, it is extremely important to look for factors of anxiety.

1.2 Research Significance

Since there are few researches at home and abroad on the relationship between writing anxiety and grades of British college students, the significance of this study is as follows: this study will propose the causes of writing anxiety of English students and give corresponding strategies to reduce anxiety, which will be conducive to teaching and improving students' abilities.

1.3 Thesis Statement

There is a certain relationship between English Majors' Writing Anxiety and grades. From my perspective, the more anxiety you have, the lower grades you get.

1.4 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis discusses on the relationship between English-majors' writing anxiety and grades.

The first part presents introduction with an analysis of the research background, research purpose and significance.

The second part presents literature review with an illustration of previous researches on the relationship between English-majors' writing anxiety and grades at home and abroad.

The third part reports the research design of the study, which includes the research questions, participants, research methods, and the data collection and analysis of the investigation

The fourth part analyzes the results of the survey based on data analysis.

The last part contains major findings, limitations and suggestions for the future research.

2 Literature Review

For decades, the negative emotion of anxiety has attracted much attention and has become the most studied emotion in the field of SLA. And D. Spielberger (1972) defined anxiety as an emotional state that is a subjective feeling of tension, fear, and worry associated with the excitement of the autonomic nervous system that can have a profound effect on language learning. Scovel (1978) argues that anxiety is an emotional state of worry and fear, characterized by the individual's perceived insecurity, fear, worry, and restlessness. Anxiety is a common emotional state of contemporary college students, according to the actual study and life conditions of college students.

The causes of anxiety among college students come mainly from individuals, schools and societies: (1) Some students lack a healthy mentality, overestimate difficulties, often voluntarily blame themselves, and often be overly suspicious; (2) The inability to adapt to the new environment of the university, independence and personality defects are not easy to fit in, so students have a strong sense of loss; and (3) Employment pressure is difficult to dispel.

Daly & Miller (1975) first proposed the concept of writing anxiety, pointing out that writing anxiety is an anxious behavior produced by learners in the process of writing.

Bai (2017) said that English writing anxiety refers to the poor performance or some degree of defects in the teaching or training of English writing skills, resulting in the writer's nervousness, and then the quality of his English writing ability and English writing proficiency have a certain impact.

Fan (2012) research shows that the causes of English writing anxiety and the student's life and learning environment, learning stress, students' English foundation, self-confidence and attitude towards English writing, etc. may all cause writing anxiety. Studies by Zhou (2014) showed that students with different levels of anxiety differed in their choice of writing strategies.

According to the prior studies, Xu and Kou (2015) designed an English Learning Anxiety Self-regulation scale which revealed that there were four self-regulation learning strategies used by students to reduce anxiety, which are self-efficacy enhancement, escaping problems, solving problems and diverting attention.

3 Research Method

Part Three mainly covers the research methodology, which contains research questions, research participants, research instrument and data collection and analysis.

3.1 Research Questions

1. What is the general situation of English-major students' English writing anxiety?
2. What factors cause the anxiety of the English-major students?
3. What is the relationship between English writing anxiety and grades in English college students?
4. How to manage writing anxiety?

3.2 Research Participants

The research takes 8 students from Ningbo University of Financial & Economics as research participants. These participants were undergraduate students of Ningbo University of Financial & Economics. Participants in the interview are from 3 various English-major classes.

3.3 Research Instrument

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore the interview pattern of face-to-face communication with students. The interview consists of several instructional questions that focus on students' anxiety to explore the authoring anxiety and its relationship to grades. The interview questions are as follows: (1) Do you feel anxious, nervous, or scared in English quiz writing? Have these feelings ever been felt in a normal writing practice? (2) What factors are causing you to be anxious? (3) Before and after anxiety, what were your grades?

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Eight students from 3 different English-major classes of Ningbo University of Financial & Economics were interviewed. Before doing the interview, they were told that their choices would be used only for academic purpose and be kept secretly. Data are all based on the participants' real thoughts.

4 Results & Discussion

Part Four contains the current situation for students' English writing, the reasons for students' English writing, the relationship between English writing anxiety and grades in English-major students and the Strategy to manage writing anxiety.

4.1 The Current Situation for Students' English Writing

Through the words of 8 students, it was inferred that students had widespread anxiety in writing. Most students have moderate writing anxiety, only a few have lower levels of writing anxiety, while the number of students with heavy writing anxiety is slightly higher. Anxiety manifestations are divided into the following forms: (1) physical anxiety. Generally manifested as in the process of English writing, students are prone to physiological phenomena such as trembling, rapid heartbeat, and cold sweat; (2) Cognitive anxiety. It is mainly manifested as a psychological state of worry, fear and other psychological states in the face of teachers making evaluations of their works; (3) Avoidant anxiety. It is generally manifested as students procrastinating and avoiding writing (Guo & Qin, 2009). According to the results of the interview, most students have physical anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and avoidance anxiety in the process of English writing.

4.2 The Causes of English Writing for English-majors

What cause it? The reasons for this mainly include the following aspects: (1) Students' interest in English writing, it is understood that students rarely have the opportunity to read English books and participate in English activities. Usually just follow the teacher to learn, they feel that this way of education is boring, cannot stimulate their enthusiasm; (2) The student's personality is divided into introvert and extrovert according to the leisure of mental activity. Extroverts are confident, positive and enthusiastic, and like to challenge, while introverts are sensitive, cautious, shy, and care about what others say. Interviews revealed that introverts who don't like to express themselves are more anxious than extroverts. In the interview, one of my classmates mentioned that "when I read English compositions in front of the class, I was anxious. Especially when the teacher asks me questions, I am so nervous that I forget my answers." (3) Basics of Writing. The interview learned that students usually memorize sample texts to improve their writing skills. But in the process of memorization, because they did not have a good grasp of the grammar rules, they spent a lot of time, but achieved relatively small results.

Table 1
The Result of Survey

Student name	genesis
Student 1	Writing classes are boring and the way of education is too traditional.
Student 2	
Student 3	
Student 4	I didn't dare to speak in class (shyness).
Student 5	
Student 6	
Student 7	Memorize the text to deepen the memory, but sometimes not understand the grammar.
Student 8	

4.3 The Relationship between English Writing Anxiety and Grades in English-major Students

Therefore, it is extremely important to improve the level of writing. Besides, in the process of the study, one student said he was particularly afraid of exams. Whenever the exam is taken, his palms usually break out in a cold sweat and his heart beats faster. This leads to his grades being at the lower and middle levels every time. Once, his parents suddenly changed the way of education—it was no longer pressure before the exam, but a casual mentality. He could relax as much as possible, no matter whether the result was good or bad, as long as he tried his best. That time the results improved obviously. Several other students also stated that they also had such experiences. Therefore, the study found that the higher the anxiety of students is, the worse their state and the lower their grades are.

4.4 The Strategy to Manage Writing Anxiety

The first strategy is developing essay outline. This strategy was used to help in developing and sequencing the ideas because the outline could give the frame of the essay and it could ease the whole process of essay writing. Outline could also help the students to have a firm format of their idea development and to stay focused.

The second strategy is finding supporting references. This strategy was done usually within the process of writing when the students were stuck with their essay development. Actually, they had already decided the scope of their essay but were slowed down because of the shortage of supporting references. The main material that they looked for could be from any written sources but mainly from unpublished theses.

The third strategy is making some pauses during the writing process. To cope with writing anxiety during the composition process, students stated that taking a few pauses for a few minutes really helped them to lessen their anxiety. These pauses also helped them to feel refreshed. The students added that after the pauses they were energized and could continue their writing. The students did not do something special during the pauses; they usually just took deep breath, looked outside, stretched their body, or simply did nothing.

Last but not least, you are supposed to stay focused and calm. This strategy was sort of accompanying strategy to the other strategy and was done simultaneously with the strategies above. Although the students found that time-restricted assignment was very demanding and mind-draining, they still tried to be focused and calm because it could help them to concentrate on their essay writing.

5 Conclusion

Part Five includes major Findings, limitations and suggestions for the future research.

5.1 Major Findings

Most English students face English anxiety, but they have no way to start and lack guidance. English writing anxiety and writing grades as a whole showed a significant negative correlation. The higher the writing anxiety of English students is, the lower the writing scores are.

5.2 Limitations

This study explores the correlation between high school English writing anxiety and writing performance, but due to subjective and objective conditions (epidemic prevention and control), this study has certain limitations: First of all, the subjects of this study are all first-year students from the same university, and the sample size of the study is small. Secondly, this study mainly uses the research method of interview surveys, which is not rich enough.

5.3 Suggestions for the Future Research

Based on the research results of this study, the following three prospects are proposed: (1) Future research on English writing anxiety and writing performance can expand the sample size and enrich the variety of study subjects; (2) In the future, research on English writing anxiety and writing performance can try a variety of research methods to make the research results more abundant; (3) This study only explores the correlation between English writing anxiety and writing performance in college students, and hopes that scholars will explore more about the factors that affect English writing performance in the future.

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