Exploring the Relationship between Writing Apprehension and Writing Performance: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Writing skill is seen as a cornerstone of university students' success in both academic and career life. This qualitative study was conducted to further explore the teachers' and students' perceptions on the relationship between writing apprehension and writing performance, contributing factors of writing apprehension, and strategies to reduce writing apprehension. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to get more in-depth information from two respondents: one experienced instructor of teaching writing at the Centre for Languages and Pre-University Academic Development (CELPAD), International Islamic University Malaysia, and another, a graduate student who was reported to having a high level of writing apprehension using Daly and Miller's (1975) questionnaire on writing apprehension. Thematic analysis approach was used for data analysis. Both respondents were convinced that writing apprehension has a negative influence on students' writing performance; the sources of contributing factors could be students, instructors, and teaching learning setting; and writing apprehension could be reduced through suggested strategies. It is recommended that instructors should be more aware of students' problems in the writing skill.

Keywords: CELPAD, qualitative study, writing apprehension

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

English Language has four basic skills: comprehension skills, reading and listening, and production skills, speaking and writing. Typically, the writing skill is seen as the cornerstone of success for university students in different fields of studies (N. S. Daud, N. M. Daud, & Kassim, 2005; Onwuegbuzie, 1997), and it is difficult to find a profession which does not require writing (Daly & Miller, 1975b). Students' ability to present information and express their own ideas through writing plays an essential role in their academic and professional success (Hammann, 2005). However, university students often complain when they want to write pieces of writings in English (Al-Shboul & Huwari, 2015; Erkan & Saban, 2011). A condition that may make them avoid tasks, academic courses and majors as well as jobs that need writing (Faigley, Daly, & Witte, 1981; Hammann, 2005); and they always display negative remarks about writing in terms of writing utility and their feeling about this skill (Buley-Meissner, 1989; Hammann, 2005). One of the problems that might affect their ability and their attitude towards writing is 'writing apprehension' or anxiety (Daly & Miller, 1975a; Faigley et al., 1981; Onwuegbuzie, 1997). This should be a concern that needs to be addressed by students, instructors and researchers.

Writing apprehension is first defined as "the general avoidance of writing and situations perceived by the individuals to potentially require some amount of writing accompanied by the potential for evaluation of that writing" (Daly, 1979, p. 37). According to Thompson cited in Öztürk and Çeçen (2007, p. 3) it refers to "the fear of the writing process that outweighs the projected gain from ability to write." Other researchers called it "writing anxiety" or "writing block" as cited in Onwuegbuzie (1997). In short, writing apprehension is generally understood to mean "negative, anxious feelings (about oneself as a writer, one's writing situation, or one's writing task) that disrupt some part of the writing process" (Rankin-Brown, 2006, p. 2).

Literature has suggested that there is a negative relationship between writing apprehension and writing performance in English as a native language (Daly & Miller, 1975a; Faigley et al., 1981); English as a Second

Language ESL (Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999; Ismail, Elias, Albakri, Perumal, & Muthusamy, 2010; Masny & Foxall, 1992); and English as Foreign Language EFL (Abu Shawish & Abdelraheem, 2010; Al-Shboul & Huwari, 2015; Al Asmari, 2013; Erkan & Saban, 2011; Hassan, 2001; Kara, 2013; Lin & Ho, 2009). For instance, the widely used study conducted by Daly and Miller (1975), found that students with low apprehension level produced different and better compositions than those students with high levels of apprehension. The high writing apprehensive also scored lower than low apprehensive on given writing tasks, and wrote significantly shorter and less syntactically mature essays than did low apprehensive (Faigley et al., 1981). Furthermore, Masny and Foxall (1992) investigated links between writing apprehension, preferred writing process, and academic achievement in 28 adults ESL learners. Results indicated that high achievers had lower apprehension scores. They also found that the high apprehension correlated with unwillingness to take more writing classes. Onwuegbuzie (1997, p. 27) found that writing anxiety is related to the quality of writing research proposals; writing anxious students tended to submit research proposals that were "underdeveloped, shorter, less clearly written and that contained more grammatical errors;" and writing anxiety "undermined the students' ability to think cohesively enough to write effectively." Hassan (2001) concluded that high apprehension students were not able to produce quality compositions compared to their low apprehension counterparts. He added that low apprehension students had higher self-esteem than high apprehension students. It is important to add that students' attitudes towards writing skill affect their writing performance regardless of their capability in writing skill. Holladay (1981) cited in (Hassan, 2001, p. 5) pointed out that

> "no matter how skilled or capable individuals are in writing, if they believe they will do poorly or if they don't want to take courses that steers writing, then their skills or capabilities matter little. Attitudes definitely influence growth in writing; when actual writing samples are examined, analyses suggested that highly apprehensive individuals, when compared with less anxious people, write less, use fewer qualifications, and opt for lower levels of language intensity."

Researchers have identified characteristics of writing apprehensive (Al-Shboul & Huwari, 2015; Cornwell & McKay, 1999; Daly & Miller, 1975a; Kara, 2013; Onwuegbuzie, 1997; Öztürk & Çeçen, 2007; Reeves, 1997) and others. Generally, writing apprehensive are frightened by a demand of writing; they fear evaluation of their writing; they usually avoid writing; their writing tasks or assignments are late or non-existent and their anxiety of writing is often reflected in their written products and their behaviors and attitudes about writing situations. In this respect, literature has also suggested ways or strategies to reduce or minimize writing apprehension among students as (Clark, 2005; Kara, 2013; Öztürk & Çeçen, 2007; Rankin-Brown, 2006; Reeves, 1997).

In essence, it seems that there is a general agreement among many researchers that writing apprehension or anxiety affects writing performance negatively, and hinders students' academic achievement. However, there is no consensus on how writing apprehension affects writing performance; and what best strategies or ways can reduce writing apprehension. It is important to maintain that English writing skill is still necessary and highly demanded for the students' success in education and business fields. Therefore, writing teachers or instructors should try to help their students to control their writing fears so that they are able to produce good pieces of writings. This study provides information on the relationship between writing apprehension and writing performance, contributing factors of writing apprehension, and suggested strategies to reduce apprehension from both instructors' and students' perspectives.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) is one of the many universities and Higher Education Institutions where English language is the medium of instruction. Therefore, students' proficiency in English is necessary for them to be able to continue their education at the university. To ensure that students are able to cope with the English language demands at the faculty, all enrolled students have to sit for the English Placement Test (EPT) conducted by the Centre for Languages and Pre-University Academic Development (CELPAD). Students who pass the exam will go directly to complete their studies in their respective faculties, while students who fail the EPT have to take the English preparatory courses to improve their performance in the English language. The aspiration of this study stemmed from the researchers' observations on the quality of students' writing performance and students' noticeable behaviors in the English writing classes. It has been noticed that students in the CELPAD, mainly those who are taking preparatory writing courses languished and this impeded them from producing or writing quality essays. Consequently, they always show that they dislike writing, and try to avoid this particular skill. They also express a lack of interest in writing in English. Moreover, their fears often intervene with their ability to write effectively. Even after taking the preparatory courses, they still avoid writing. In addition, instructors of the writing skill classes find it difficult to teach writing courses to those students, and they actually want to know how to deal with such situations, and how they can help their learners overcome

these problems. The researchers believe that one of the major factors affecting the students is due to 'writing apprehension or anxiety'. Writing apprehension is a problem for both teachers and learners as mooted in (Hettich, 1994, vii), "writing apprehension is a problem because it has consequences for students learning experiences and for the decisions they make about engaging in productive, fulfilling writing projects. It is also a problem for teachers and writing center specialists who recognize apprehension in the behaviors of the students, but have no practical and reliable means of interaction."

Therefore, this study aims to further explore how writing apprehension affects writing performance of students in the preparatory English program at CELPAD. More specifically, it attempts to explore the teachers' and learners' perception on the relationship between writing apprehension and writing performance through identifying the contributing factors of writing apprehension; and finding out the strategies to reduce or lower writing apprehension. The current study will lend insights into students' apprehension and suggests ways which can help the apprehensive reduce their apprehension. The study implications will benefit the instructors, teachers, students, and curriculum designers.

1.3 Research Questions

This qualitative study seeks to answer the following questions:

1) How do teachers and students perceive the relationship between writing apprehension and writing performance?

2) What are the contributing factors of writing apprehension?

3) How can writing apprehension be reduced?

2. Research Method

This study is qualitative in nature involving data collection through face to face semi-structured interviews. It took place in the Centre for Languages and Pre-University Academic Development (CELPAD) at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). To get more in-depth data (i.e. rich information) the purposive sampling procedure was utilized (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2005). The study sample consisted of two respondents: one experienced instructor of teaching writing in the CELPAD, and one graduate student who could not pass the English Placement Test, mainly the writing skill, and he had to take preparatory courses in writing skill. The student was given a highly reliable (0.94) and valid questionnaire (Daly & Miller, 1975b) to measure his level of writing apprehension. The questionnaire consists of 26 items: 13 positive and 13 negative. The student was reported to having a high level of writing apprehension.

The semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data from the participants (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2005). The researchers prepared the interview questions after studying the problem and questions of the study. They contained three main areas: the teachers' and students' perception on the relationship between writing apprehension and writing performance; the contributing factors of writing apprehension; and the strategies and suggestions to reduce writing apprehension.

The developed semi-structured interview was tested by carrying out two pilot interviews with two respondents: one instructor and a student from the CELPAD. These interviews led to improving the original questions; two questions were deleted and modified because they caused confusion to the interviewees. Prior to the real interview, the researchers obtained permission from the two respondents to conduct the interviews. The researchers interviewed the two respondents (instructor and student) separately. The interviews were conducted at the CELPAD office. The place was very quiet and appropriate. The two respondents were kind, cooperative, and willing to talk to the researchers. To record the interviews, the researchers used electronic instruments, and then they were saved in the computer.

For the data analysis, first, the researchers organized and prepared the data for analysis. The researchers carefully transcribed the two interviews using a special form which shows the discourse units and the scripts of the interviews. The researchers read through all the data to obtain a general sense of the interviews and then reflected on its overall meaning. The researchers jotted down some ideas as they came to the mind. Then they started coding the data process in which the data were organized into chucks (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).The ideas and themes were listed into the special forms. The researchers carefully read the coding formats to recognize the categories of the coming ideas. These categories helped the researchers to decide how to present the analysis. Finally, they started the analysis, interpretations or the meaning of the data and compared the findings with other information gleaned from the literature, and eventually the conclusions and recommendations were generated.

2.1 Validity and Reliability

Validity in the qualitative research is used to determine the accuracy of the account (i.e., findings) from the standpoint of the participants (Creswell, 2013). Thus, the researchers reverted the transcriptions and the codings to the participants and asked them about whether "the description is complete and realistic, if the themes are accurate to be included, and if the interpretations are fair and representative" (Creswell, 2013, p. 259). Meanwhile, in addressing the concern with reliability, the researchers sent the codings to two academic staff at the Faculty of Education-IIUM to identify the main points of some questions of the two interviews. The two co-raters found (26, 25) of main points as against 29 main points identified by the researchers. The inter-raters reliability average percentage was 87.9 % per cent.

2.2 Ethical Issues

The researchers obtained permission from the two interviewees to conduct the interviews. The researchers provided the respondents with certain information about the purpose and need of such study. The researchers kept the identity of the respondents anonymous. The researchers also maintained the relationships with the interviewees after conducting the interviews (Patton, 2005).

3. Findings of the Study

Based on the analysis of the interviews, the researchers organized the findings under major ideas and themes in relation to the research objectives and questions. Part one shows the findings of the first respondent (instructor) coded as # 1 T, and part two shows the findings of the second respondent (student) coded as # 2 S.

3.1 Findings Based on the Analyses of Sample # 1T

3.1.1 Writing Apprehension Concept

The respondents were asked about which language skill caused most fear or anxiety to students. # 1T expressed that writing skill caused the most anxiety and fear among students in the CELPAD. He stated that "O*k. In my opinion I believe that writing is the skill that causes most fear and anxiety to students, especially in the CELPAD.*" He added that writing apprehension referred to the fear of writing which might result from students' inadequate preparation for writing; making mistakes, coming out with wrong ideas and lacking the ability to organize good writing.

> *"Writing apprehension is some kind of fear that students have which, as you know, might be a result of writing inadequacy, or inadequate preparation. It is also fear of making mistakes, fear of coming out with wrong ideas, and fear of not being able to organize good writing"* (#1T).

1T pointed out that writing apprehension was a serious problem that students needed to deal with. It took a lot of time to reduce his students' anxiety before he started his lesson; and it affected the flow of the writing class.

> *"I think it is a problem and students need to take this seriously. Before they (students) go to the real lesson (writing), first I have to tackle this problem and try to minimize their fear; they are taking more time than the others. So I want to organize my time again. They affect the teaching flow of my lesson"* (#1T).

1T mentioned that the apprehensives could not sometimes handle their anxiety; the condition which made them unable to reflect their true writing ability. So, their fear and anxiety hindered their improvement.

> *"They have this kind of anxiety, so their writing I think will not reflect their true ability. They are actually not bad or poor in writing; they have some skills, but they cannot tolerate with this level of anxiety"* (#1T).

3.1.2 Characteristics of Apprehensive and Contributing Factors

1T listed some of the apprehensive' characteristics. They did not want to show their writings to others, and tried to hide them from the teacher. They always felt worried, and they were not able to complete writing and finish within the limited time.

> *"Students who have this kind of problem will somehow try not to show what they are writing to me. They try to hide something, and they don't want to share. They are not able to write within the time limit"* (#1T).

1T further elaborated that they also preferred to write in their rooms at the student hostels rather than in the classroom. They might feel more comfortable there, and got help from other friends outside the class.

> *"They always prefer to do writing homework not in the classroom; probably they feel that outside the*

class the level of anxiety can be lessened, and they may get help from friends… (#1T).

1T clarified that time was one of the factors that might lead to writing apprehension. The apprehensives could not manage their time, mainly in the exams. They also lacked the linguistic ability; they did not have enough vocabulary. Moreover, their English language background (i.e., if they come from a country where English is not much used) made them felt uncomfortable.

> *"I would say the first factor is time, and the second is, of course, their linguistic ability. They lack necessary language skills and then vocabulary. And perhaps their background- if they come from a country or a place where the English language is not much spoken and not much used. Of course, the setting or the place where they have to write, like in the classroom may be a cause… They have people around them writing"* (#1T).

1T stated that when he asked the apprehensives to write, they usually took a long time to start- if they were willing to write. Instead, they kept silent and did not ask questions even if they did not understand the topic. They did not want to write so as to avoid evaluation. They were also worried about what other students would say or think about them as soon as they got back their marked-papers. They might not want to be inferior in front of their peers. They were afraid of failure. Furthermore, they lacked good and mature ideas; and they could not also organize their ideas coherently;

> *"They take long time to start writing. They do not ask questions, and keep silent. They do not want to write in class, they think they may not be evaluated. They may look bad in front of their friends, and then feel inferior. They are also worried about what others will say about or think about them. They lack good mature ideas, vocabulary, and normally they cannot manage to write good writing in a limited time. The fear of failing leads to anxiety or apprehension"* (#1T).

The researchers noticed from # IT responses that he always focused on how to prepare his students for the exam. Since the students had to take the EPT writing test at the end of the semester, the teacher inevitably focused and referred to the examination in their class. This focus may increase the level of anxiety. *"I am teaching writing and the focus of my classes is to prepare them to write especially in the exams"* (#1T). In addition, the apprehensives' negative predisposition toward their ability in writing skill might cause high anxiety. # 1T gave an example of an apprehensive who always thought that he would fail. "*The student still thinks that it is not enough for him to pass writing, and he always feels that he is going to fail*" (#1T). This is another example of how the examination at the end of the semester affected the students' apprehension level.

3.1.3 Suggestion to Reduce Writing Apprehension

1T pointed out that he taught the apprehensive how to save or manage the time by focusing only on the body paragraphs. He provided them with samples of easy ways to be followed in organizing the ideas. Also, he motivated them by telling them that they had the ability to write well and pass the exams easily. Finally, he encouraged them to read and write a lot. # 1T added that the apprehensive should read and write extensively to get vocabulary, ideas, structures, and content.

> *"I tell them how to manage time and how to organize ideas. I give them some samples of easy ways to write important parts of the essay like thesis statements. I always motivate them. I tell them to prepare by doing a lot of readings because reading is the most effective way actually to get content for their writing"* (#1T).

1T assured that these strategies were effective because they were helping the apprehensive to lessen their anxiety and improve their writing. It is evident from the feedback that he always received from his students. "*I think they are effective because I have students who have done it and now in their faculties. Whenever they see me they give their reflection and opinions*" (#1T).

3.2 Findings Based on the Analyses of Sample # 2 S

3.2.1 Writing Apprehension Concept

2 S showed that writing skill made him most anxious. He felt uncomfortable when he wanted to write; and he lost his control. "*Writing makes me uncomfortable; and I feel anxious when I lose my control*" (#2 S). #2S defined writing apprehension as being uncomfortable, upset, fearful and not very well when one wants to write. As a result, one cannot produce good ideas.

> *"It is something that makes you feel not very well and feel upset; I think because I am not feeling comfortable, I cannot come with good ideas; yah, it causes me lost"* (#2 S).

#2S felt that writing apprehension is a problem for students. When one became anxious, he/she would not be

able to come out with good ideas and write what he/she wanted. It also caused fear to him. It negatively affects writing.

> *"When you are upset or you are not comfortable then you are not able to write what you want to write next. It is a problem because if you are having anxiety and feeling not comfortable to write something, then you cannot do it well; and if you cannot deal with it, it will affect negatively"* (#2S).

3.2.2 Characteristics of Apprehensive and Contributing Factors

#2S showed that classroom setting disturbed students, and then they were unable to write. Also, some instructors talked a lot while the students were writing. Therefore, students could not focus on writing and listening at the same time. In addition, they lacked necessary vocabulary and expressions, and so they could not put their ideas in writing.

> *"If I am writing in a noisy place, this can disturb me. Also instructors sometimes talk a lot while you are writing, then you will feel lost as you cannot focus on your writing and listening at the same time. I have ideas to write, but I do not find the vocabulary or expressions to use. These make me anxious"* (#2S).

#2S demonstrated that when the instructor asked him to write, he tried to avoid writing and postponed it. He thought that he made a lot of mistakes when he wrote in the class. But, when he wrote in his room, he had enough time to check his writing.

> *"I like to postpone. I feel when I write in the class- in the same place- I make a lot of mistakes, but if I write in my room, I have time to check"* (#2S).

#2S also feared of his writing being evaluated; he worried about what other friends would say or think when they saw his writings after the evaluation. Indeed, he felt shy, and unwilling to show his writings to them." *If I feel my writing is not good then I am shy to show it to others*" (#2S).

#2S added that when he was anxious, he could not produce and organize good ideas and produce effective writing.

> *"When I am anxious, it is not easy to organize ideas and come out with nice ideas. Writing is to have good ideas; if we do not have good ideas, then writing will not be acceptable or effective"* (#2S).

3.2.3 Suggestion to Reduce Writing Apprehension

#2S read and listened to English a lot to gain more vocabulary and expressions to be used in writing tasks. He felt comfortable when he read and understood**.**

> *"I try to learn more through reading a lot of books, newspapers and articles to have new expressions and vocabulary. I also listen to radio channels or television because I want to improve my English"* (#2 S).

#2S assured that the strategies he followed were effective. He had got more vocabulary. He added that it was boring to repeat the same words in writing.

> *"I think they are effective. I think if you write more vocabulary and nice expressions, your writing will be effective"* (#2 S).

#2S gave several suggestions to the writing instructors. Instructors should know their students' problems; teach the students seriously; summarize the lessons at the end of each class; check the students writing constantly; and teach them more writing strategies to be followed in their writing.

> *"My suggestions are: they (instructors of writing skill) have to know the student problems. They have to teach them seriously. Then they can summarize what they teach about writing. The instructors can show more strategies to write nicely. They have to give a lot of practice to students, and special practices that help students in many ways. They can help students in getting more vocabulary, and check them before writing"* (#2S).

#2S stated that he did not know how to motivate himself. He also liked his instructors to help him overcome his problems. *"I don't know how to motivate myself, but I just read. I like to ask my instructors to give me some advice*" (#2S).

4. Discussion and Implications

Both respondents showed that writing skill caused most anxiety. #1T stated that statistics have shown that a large number of students failed to pass the writing courses in the CELPAD. In addition, # 1T always noticed that some

learners in his class struggled more in writing skill compared to other skills. The researchers believe that writing skill causes most anxiety because it is considered as the key of success in academic life, the matter which always makes the learners feel under pressure. Additionally, the negative washback effect was found as students had to sit for a high stake writing test at the end of the semester. Students tended to be more anxious of completing writing tasks because of the expectation of doing well or passing the EPT writing at the end of the course. Therefore, consistent with other settings of ESL learners, students experienced a considerable amount of anxiety when using the productive skills, namely writing and speaking as cited in (Daud et al., 2005). In terms of the teachers' and students' understanding of writing apprehension and writing performance, #1T stated that he looked at writing apprehension as a kind of fear that the students had to face when they wanted to write. # 1T believed that it might be as a result of the students' inadequate preparation. #2S also showed that writing apprehension was the feeling of being uncomfortable and upset when writing. This understanding is supported by their definitions of writing apprehension. Rankin-Brown (2006, p. 2) pointed out that "writing apprehension is generally understood to mean negative, anxious feeling about oneself as a writer, one's writing situation, or one's writing task." Another researcher defined writing apprehension as "fear of writing process that outweighs the projected gains from ability to write" Thompson cited in (Öztürk & Çeçen, 2007, p. 3).

Furthermore, the two respondents assured that writing apprehension is a problem for both the teachers and the learners. On part of the instructor, dealing with the apprehensive' problems affected the flow of the lessons. #1T needed a lot of time to try to and reduce the level of the apprehensive' anxiety. For #2S, writing apprehension negatively affected his writing performance. #2S was not able to produce or organize his ideas properly. #2S demonstrated that writing apprehension usually hindered his quality of writing. This is in line with other studies which showed that writing apprehension negatively influences or hinders students' quality of writing or performance (Hassan, 2001). It is also a problem for both the students and the instructors (Hettich, 1994).

It is clear that the apprehensive always try to avoid writing in the classroom due to several reasons according to #1T. First, they needed more time than other students to be able to finish their writing within the limited time; when they were anxious and worried, they could not manage their time appropriately. Second, they did not like to share with other students their writings, and tried to hide their writings because they thought that their writing was not complete and well-organized. This is an indication that self-efficacy of the apprehensive is affected by their high anxiety and vice versa. Third, they feared about their writing being evaluated since they were worried about what the teacher and other students would think or say about them after the evaluation. They might not want to feel inferior in front of their peers. Fourth, they preferred to write in their rooms believing that when they did so in their own setting, they could get better pieces of writing. They might get help from other friends; therefore, when they handed in good writings to their teachers, they would get better evaluation. Rankin-Brown (2006, p. 3) determined that her participants reported avoiding writing because of the following main reasons: "frustration stemming from self-evaluation and self-expectations of how well one should write; fear of how the teacher and their peers would evaluate their writing and fear of losing identity when using patterns to write."

It is also found that one of the major factors that led to writing apprehension was that the apprehensive lacked the ability to organize and express their ideas. Anxiety may undermine their ability to think cohesively (Onwuegbuzie, 1997). They mighty lack the needed vocabulary, expressions, and structures; they did not know how to organize or express good ideas; and they might not practice writing extensively. They might not be also interested in writing English because they thought that writing was very difficult. #1T demonstrated that students' negative predisposition toward their ability in writing might cause anxiety. They always thought that they were going to fail in the exam, and they would not be able to improve their writing. Holladay (1981) suggested that an individuals' predisposition towards writing whether positive or negative is extremely important. The apprehensive' negative feeling toward writing may appear as a result of the instructors' practices inside the writing classrooms themselves. It is obvious from the instructor's' responses that instructors at the language center focused more on how to prepare the students for the exam; the issue that made the learners being under pressure all the time. This is the negative washback of examination that instructors may not be aware of. Washback or the impact of tests on teaching and learning in ESL classrooms are commonly observed when language instructions lead to high stakes examinations (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Brown, 2002; Messick, 1996). Therefore, instructors should lessen their learners' apprehension by providing them with secure environment and avoid focusing only on how to prepare the learners for exams. It is very essential for teachers to maintain a positive academic environment (Donlan, 1990; Walsh, 1986). It is important to add that the two respondents showed that the setting where students write may increase the level of anxiety. They need a place where they can find themselves secured and comfortable. The researchers emphasize that the apprehensive will be able to write better if they are in separated classes because they will be free of the anxiety caused by the teachers, friends, and

all the activities in the classroom. Reeves (1997) illustrated that teachers should create a non-threatening atmosphere that makes their students feel free in when they come to write.

#1Tpointed out that students' English background might lead to their writing apprehension. He noticed that students who came from countries where English is used widely had less level of anxiety. They had been exposed to the English language more frequently. This exposure helped them acquired more vocabulary, ideas, and structures than learners who rarely practiced the language in their countries. However, literature has shown that both EFL/ESL learners have had experienced writing apprehension (Al Asmari, 2013; Ismail et al., 2010).

For the strategies and suggestions to reduce writing apprehension, # 1T expressed that he always trained the apprehensive on how to manage the time, mainly in the exams. He believed that they became most anxious when they felt that they would not be able to finish their writing within the stipulated time. In fact, giving further time to the apprehensive helped them lessen their anxiety, and then they might be able to think and produce ideas. Moreover, # 1T usually gave the apprehensive exercises in how to organize their ideas. He told them to focus on the body paragraphs and use the introduction as a guideline for their writing. He also provided them with samples of easy writing to be used when they write. # 1T also constantly encouraged the apprehensive to read a lot to get the needed vocabulary, expressions, and structures. # 2S said that he read books and newspapers, and listened to English news to improve his writing. He also practiced writing to improve his writing skill. # 1T always motivated the apprehensive. He showed them that they possessed the ability to write well, and they had to be patient. He also tried to change their negative attitude towards writing skill. #2S gave some suggestions to his teachers in the CELPAD to be taken into consideration: know the students' problems well; teach seriously in the class; summarize the lessons at the end of the classes; check the students' writings; and teach more writing strategies. These suggestions showed that the student liked his teachers to help him more than they expected.

Although both respondents declared that the aforementioned strategies were effective, the researchers felt that these strategies were not adequate to reduce writing apprehension. Therefore, the researchers collected some useful suggestions that could help the apprehensive deal with their anxiety based on the literature review (Rankin-Brown, 2006; Reeves, 1997) such as discouraging appropriation of voice; listening to fearful writers; finding patterns in students' errors; conferencing during drafting stages; collaborating with students for evaluation criteria; be aware of possible gender; monitoring attitude; talking about writers students like; telling them that writing is a process; assigning a writing journal; giving students the power to choose their own topics; using task oriented questions that are designed to focus students' attention on improving and expanding the content.

5. Conclusion

English writing skill is a cornerstone of university students' success in both academic and career life, and so it is necessary to help them improve their writing skill, and deal with their problems. This qualitative study was conducted to further explore the teachers' and students' perceptions on the relationship between writing apprehension and writing performance; determine the contributing factors of writing apprehension, and identify strategies or ways to reduce writing apprehension. In essence, the respondents explained that writing apprehension referred to the fear that the students had when they wanted to write, and assured that writing apprehension had a negative influence on students' writing performance. The apprehensive tried to avoid writing; took longer time to start writing; lacked vocabulary, expressions and mature ideas; got low marks; worried about their writing being evaluated; afraid of what others would say or think about their writings; preferred writing outside the classroom; not willing to share their writing with other friends; could not organize or express ideas properly; had negative predisposition toward their ability in writing; and kept silent most of the class time. It is recommended that the instructors at the CELPAD should be more aware about writing apprehension as well as other problems related to writing skill; and provide more secure and comfortable learning setting for their students. Both instructors and students should take their own role to reduce writing apprehension. It is also recommended to other researchers to conduct similar studies with more learners and instructors, and with other skills as well.

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