

# ESL Writing Apprehension: Level, Causes and Strategies to Overcome It

Nurul Nadia Muhammad<sup>1</sup>, Siti Norzaimalina Abd Majid<sup>1\*</sup>, Rosnani Ismail<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Centre for Modern Languages, Universiti Malaysia Pahang Al-Sultan Abdullah, Pekan, Malaysia

\*Corresponding Author: [norzaimalina@umpisa.edu.my](mailto:norzaimalina@umpisa.edu.my)

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**Abstract:** *Writing, whether in the first or second language, is often regarded as a challenging process. On top of that, the feelings of fear, anxiety and worry would make the learning process more difficult as these negative feelings will affect the learners' focus. Hence, this study aims to explore Diploma Engineering students' level and causes of writing apprehension, as well as their preferred learning strategies to reduce writing apprehension. A total of 125 Diploma students from 4 engineering faculties at a local public Malaysian technical university were involved in this study and the data was collected through an online questionnaire that consists of 22 items adopted from the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI), 10 items on the Causes of Writing Anxiety Inventory (CWAI), and another 10 items on strategies to reduce writing apprehension. The findings revealed that 44% of the students experienced a high level of writing apprehension, while 36.8% experienced moderate level of writing apprehension, and only 19.2% were reported to have low level of writing apprehension. In addition, it was discovered that fear of the teacher's negative comments, linguistic difficulties and pressure for perfect work are the top 3 factors contributing to the students' writing anxiety. As for the strategies to reduce writing apprehension, it was revealed that interactive pedagogy, scaffolding students' writing skills and clear instructions were crucial in helping the students to overcome their fear of writing. The findings of this study may alert English language instructors of the negative effects of writing anxiety, and the need for differential instructional methods and materials to support highly anxious writers to gradually improve their writing skill performance.*

**Keywords:** Writing Apprehension, ESL Classroom, Learning Strategies, Diploma Engineering Students

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## 1. Introduction

Writing is a fundamental skill that students must master to succeed in their tertiary education. It is also an important productive activity that is commonly held in classrooms which requires students to express their thoughts and ideas effectively in written form. However, writing is frequently perceived as more challenging and complex compared to other language skills. It requires the integration of linguistic accuracy, coherence, and the ability to deliver ideas effectively in an academic context. Diploma Engineering students require a high level of writing skill for technical report completion, project reports, and other academic assignments. Despite its importance, many of them find it hard to reach this level due to an implicit fear of making mistakes while writing. This fear acts as a mighty wall obstructing their progress in

learning. This difficulty is compounded by various factors, including a lack of confidence, limited practice in writing and an insufficient system for providing corrective feedback (Zakaria & Sulaiman, 2024).

Writing apprehension or sometimes known as writing anxiety can be understood as a condition where the individuals would generally avoid any activity or situation that would require them to write especially when they know that their writing is to be evaluated (Daly & Miller, 1975). Writing anxiety is a state of mind that carries feelings of worry, fear, and avoidance of writing tasks, especially when evaluation is involved. It interrupts the flow of writing, as students become overwhelmed by negative thoughts, nervousness, and self-doubt. These problems are amplified in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts, where learners must steer through additional challenges such as limited vocabulary, grammatical mistakes, and complex sentence structures (Cheng, 2004; Rezaei & Jafari, 2014). Observations in the classroom revealed that many Diploma Engineering students take an unusually long time to finish writing tasks, they lack enthusiasm in writing activities, or avoid them altogether, indicating the pervasive influence of writing anxiety on their learning outcomes. This anxiety has the capacity to hinder their writing performance and overall language acquisition.

Several studies highlighted key factors contributing to writing anxiety, including fear of negative feedback from instructors, pressure to meet high expectations, and linguistic ability self-doubts (Wahyuni & Umam, 2017; Quvanch & Kew, 2022). Despite these points, there is a research gap relating to writing anxiety among engineering students in Malaysian technical universities. These learners often put more emphasis on mastering technical aspects at the expense of language skills. Consequently, they find it challenging to handle their academic and professional writing requirements. Writing anxiety can have a domino effect. It can not only compromise the quality of students' written outputs but also undermine their academic performance, self-confidence and their motivation to learn. Humari and Al-Shboul (2023) strongly believe that such fear is likely to push up anxiety levels amongst students by creating tense learning atmospheres. Similarly, Fareed et al., (2021) echo this by confirming that both learners and teachers in Pakistan agree on the pressure of feedback as a significant contributor to writing anxiety.

Additionally, some researches have also reported that cognitive anxiety is the most prevalent type of writing anxiety among students, followed by somatic anxiety and avoidance behavior, with learners experiencing significant concern over evaluations, physical symptoms under time constraints, and a tendency to avoid writing tasks (Cheng, 2004; Wahyuni & Umam, 2017; Toh & Rahmat, 2021; Muhammad et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding students' learning preferences to mitigate writing anxiety is essential for educators to develop effective instructional strategies. Instructors may encounter difficulties catering to the diverse needs of apprehensive learners without a clear understanding of levels and root causes of writing anxiety, and also the strategies or learning preference to minimise their anxiety in this context. It is not just about teaching methods though. To truly help ESL learners grappling with writing anxiety, the psychological dimensions of such anxiety are critical to understanding too. Toh and Rahmat (2021) pointed out how feelings of fear and worry can disrupt the writing process, making it particularly challenging for ESL students. This is consistent with Nor and Yunus (2022), who found cognitive anxiety to be the most popular one among their respondents. Such concerns emerge as self-questioning intermingled with looming thoughts of possible downfall, which can certainly stall writing progress and trip up students on their academic journey.

To address this research gap, the current study seeks to explore the prevalence of writing anxiety amongst students of Diploma Engineering. Further, it seeks out the roots of these anxieties and investigates students' learning strategies to overcome their writing apprehensions. By gaining a deeper understanding of these issues, this research aims to provide valuable insights for English language educators to develop appropriate approaches specifically designed to diminish the apprehensions related to writing. Ultimately, this study aspires to enhance students' writing abilities and create a more supportive and effective learning environment in ESL classrooms. Accordingly, the study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the level of writing anxiety of the students?
- ii. What are the primary causes of the students' writing anxiety?
- iii. What are students' learning preferences or strategies to alleviate writing anxiety?

## **2. Literature Review**

Writing anxiety is one of the common challenges faced by ESL learners. This anxiety affected how well they performed in writing and overall language acquisition. As students, writing is essential for demonstrating an understanding of knowledge, enhancing their critical thinking skills and preparing them for professional communication in the future. Many factors contribute to this anxiety, such as negative self-evaluation and worry about criticism from peers and instructors, which result in being reluctant to engage in a task and create barriers to successful interaction (Cheng, 2004; Solangi et al., 2021). In addition, ESL learners often experience high levels of writing anxiety due to poor instructional strategies and demanding writing standards that students need to achieve (Fareed et al., 2016; Pratiwi, 2021).

In the context of Diploma engineering students, understanding writing anxiety is important as it influences students' academic success as well as how they will prepare for future careers. Since diploma students are usually students who have just finished high school, the transition in the way they learn from high school to university can also contribute to writing anxiety. Some factors that affect students' inability to produce quality written work are a lack of linguistic knowledge, time pressure and inadequate writing techniques (Pratiwi, 2021). In the engineering discipline, where effective communication is critical for academic and professional contexts (Howard et al., 2016), it is imperative that we understand the causes and level of writing anxiety so that we can provide solutions to minimise students' writing anxiety as well as identifying preferred learning strategies that can facilitate their writing.

### **Theoretical Framework of Writing Apprehension**

Writing anxiety encompasses cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions significantly influence students writing processes and outcomes. The cognitive dimension refers to the mental perceptions that affect students' approach in writing. This perception involves fear of making mistakes and having doubts about their writing abilities. As ESL learners, this dimension is relevant to them because students may overly think about the reader's evaluation or judgement of their grammatical accuracy and presentation of ideas, which can hamper the process of writing (Sulfiana et al., 2022). Another dimension is the affective dimension. This includes the emotional responses that students have during the writing process. Students may feel increasing fear, frustration and apprehension when they write (Sulfiana et al., 2022). These feelings can trigger negative emotional feelings in them because they perceive writing as a high-stakes activity, and the performance is closely tied to overall grades. The last aspect of writing anxiety is behavioural dimension. Students who have anxiety may manifest it by demonstrating avoidance behaviours and delaying completing the task given. In a study by

Sulfiana et al. (2022), avoidance behaviours are not only common among low-proficient learners but also among students who are in English and Education fields. This avoidance will make students lack practice, which can lead to poor writing skills. By understanding the causes and levels of writing anxiety, suitable interventions can be designed for the students to prevent them from demonstrating these behaviours.

### **Learning Preferences and Writing Apprehension**

Some factors influence the relationship between learning preferences and writing anxiety. One of the factors is a cognitive factor, in which students fear making mistakes, especially if the target language is not their first language. Lena et al. (2019) stated that apprehension could hinder students from expressing their thoughts while writing. Studies are showing that learning styles, such as visual, auditory, read/write and kinesthetics, can influence writing anxiety as well as overall writing performance (Sabarun et al., 2023)

Writing activities require high cognitive skills, where students need to brainstorm ideas, find connections between ideas and construct sentences to ensure readers can capture their thoughts. Students showed different competency levels and preferences when tackling this writing activity. For instance, students who prefer to work cooperatively with their peers and prefer a hands-on approach have lower writing anxiety levels (Jiang, 2015). Meanwhile, an individual's endeavour to write heightened the students' stress, and they experienced a higher level of apprehension (Jiang, 2015). To mitigate this anxiety, Xiao (2024) suggested that teachers should focus on improving the process of writing among students. It includes showing the structure of a good writing, provide adequate time for students to copy, rewrite their written assignments using the model essay and focus to master the basic writing skills before moving to advanced writing. These strategies can facilitate students to become more proficient and make them less anxious to write.

Moreover, writing anxiety happened when students are expected to perform at high level of proficiency or because of examination pressure (Liu & Ni, 2015). Students who are a good test taker and familiar with the test structure may have lower levels of writing apprehension than students who are not. The mismatch between learning preference and instructional methods leads to self-doubt towards writing task (Demircivi, 2020). For instance, if the method of teaching writing is based on the test format, students only learn writing because of examination. They will constantly feel pressured because there are consequences for not performing in writing test. Instead of focusing to perform for a test, Stewart et al. (2015) promotes using metacognitive writing strategies to reduce the anxiety. In their study, there is a significant association between writing anxiety and students' perceptions of the use of metacognitive strategies. By supporting critical reflections about their metacognition, it can empower students to recognise strategies that fit with their learning style, which can help in positive learning process (Balta, 2018).

To conclude, the relationship between writing anxiety and learning preferences differ between students. By understanding this relationship, educators can design their teaching writing methods to be more inclusive to adapt these individual differences. This endeavour will reduce the writing apprehension and fosters the students to become a competent writer.

### **The Instruments to Study Writing Anxiety**

For this study, there are two instruments used to identify students' writing anxiety. The first instrument is the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) by Cheng (2002) and the second is Causes of Writing Anxiety (CWAI) that was developed by Rezaei and Jafari

(2014). These instruments are selected to answer the first two research questions because they are widely used as tools to recognise the level and causes of writing anxiety among ESL learners. The SLWAI categorised writing anxiety into cognitive, somatic and avoidance behaviours, which are deemed suitable to evaluate students' anxiety in relation to their writing experiences. The SLWAI consists of 22 items that permit researchers to quantify the levels of anxiety by students, which can facilitate interventions suitable to their needs. Several studies (Fareed et al., 2021; Quvanch & Kew, 2022; Wahyuni & Umam, 2017; Zakaria & Sulaiman, 2023) have used SLWAI to identify the types of writing anxiety experienced by ESL learners.

The next instrument is Causes of Writing Anxiety (CWAI) by Rezaei and Jafari (2014). This instrument is useful to identify the factors that contribute to writing anxiety among students. This instrument consists of 10 items that outline the main causes of writing anxiety including fear of the teacher's negative comment, fear of writing tests, insufficient writing practice, insufficient writing technique, problems with topic choice, linguistic difficulties, pressure for perfect work, high frequency of writing assignments, time pressure, and low self-confidence in writing. This instrument has been used in several studies to explore various factors that contribute to writing anxiety. For example, in a study by Husnaini et al. (2023), they reported that the main factors among high school students who learned Science in English language, are lack of writing technique, inadequate linguistic knowledge, not enough practice and limited time to complete writing task. In addition, Wahyuni et al., (2019) reported that causes such as linguistic difficulties and fear of negative evaluation are the common factors of writing anxieties among college students. Fareed et al., (2021) also reported that among the common factors in Pakistani students include fear of teacher evaluation and high expectations for perfect writing. Based on these studies, the CWAI is an effective tool to identify the causes of writing anxiety among ESL learners in various educational contexts.

In conclusion, understanding the theoretical frameworks that contribute to writing anxiety is vital to designing an effective intervention, especially for ESL learners, in technical and engineering disciplines. Identifying the main factors associated with writing anxiety that affect their writing process can help students improve their writing skills, reduce anxiety, and eventually enhance their academic success.

### **Challenges Faced by Engineering Students in ESL Contexts**

Engineering students in ESL contexts encounter many challenges especially in writing tasks. These challenges stem from the discipline itself, which requires specific technical vocabulary to explain ideas and also adherence to a specific format in report writing. For ESL learners learning engineering, this is a twofold challenge as they must grasp technical concepts and understand jargon and simultaneously improve their competency in English to communicate better. This challenge has heightened their writing anxiety, creating a challenging learning environment.

In a study by Goldsmith and Wiley (2018), they investigated how undergraduate engineering students practice writing within their curricula. The study found that these students experienced a high level of writing anxiety due to the demands of technical writing. This is also supported by Deli (2018) that writing technical reports and laboratory assignments increased engineering students' levels of writing anxiety. The need to meet the writing requirement is difficult for ESL learners since they are still learning about technical terms and lack of familiarity to use them appropriately. As future engineers, accuracy is essential in their discipline, and the inability to write clearly can lead to errors or even fatality, which further exacerbates their writing anxiety. Because of these circumstances, a comprehensive integration of writing

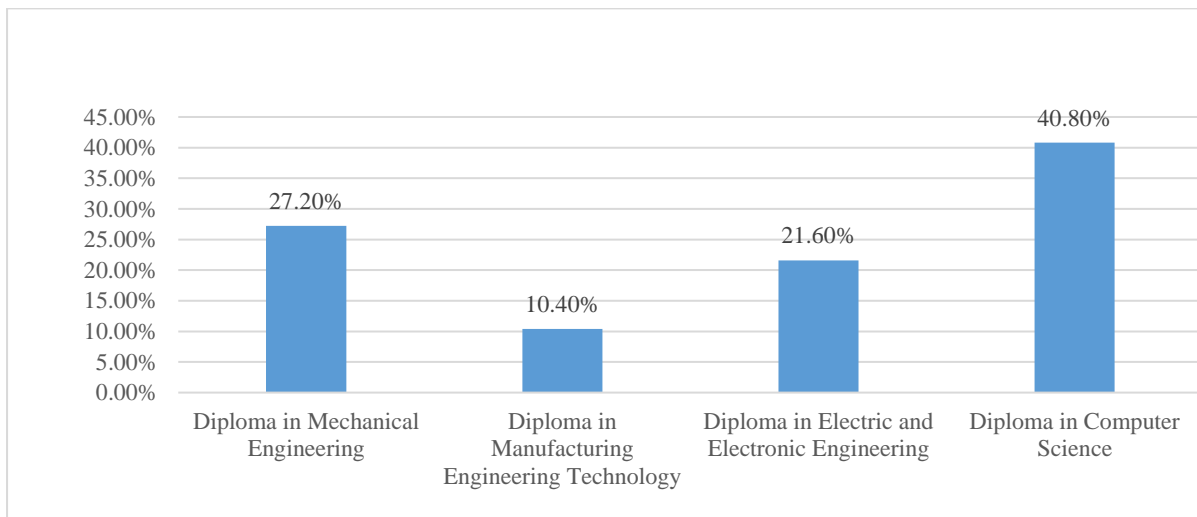
instruction into engineering programs is needed, and hopefully, it can alleviate some of this anxiety.

Despite the existing studies, there remain some notable gaps in the ESL writing anxiety among Diploma engineering students. In this study context, Diploma students are students who are high school leavers and age around 18 to 19 years old. The way they learn writing in school that is more exam-oriented is different from learning writing in higher education institutions. The lack of targeted studies addressing the unique challenges experienced by diploma-level learners in the engineering field represents the research gap in this study. Thus, this gap indicates there is a need to explore the specific factors that lead to writing anxiety for this demographic background. Furthermore, given the unique pressures faced by Diploma engineering students, the use of SLWAI will facilitate a deeper understanding of their experiences and inform strategies to enhance their writing skills in technical contexts.

### 3. Methodology

#### Research Design and Sample

The study employed a quantitative approach where survey design was adopted. The respondents were identified through purposive sampling where all of them were first year Diploma students enrolling in various Diploma programmes at Universiti Malaysia Pahang Al-Sultan Abdullah (UMPSA) in Pekan campus. These students were taking compulsory English courses offered by the Centre for Modern Languages as part of their graduation requirements. A total of 125 respondents involved in this study, and majority of them were male (68.80%), while only 31.20% were female. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the respondents of this study by their Diploma programmes. Most of them (40.80%) were students in Diploma in Computer Science, while 27.20% were students in Diploma in Mechanical Engineering, 21.60% Diploma in Electric and Electronic Engineering students, and only 10.40% were students in Diploma in Manufacturing Engineering Technology.



**Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Diploma Programmes**

#### Research Instruments

This study used an online questionnaire that consisted of four (4) sections. Section A elicited demographic information of the participants such as gender and their study programmes. Section B consisted of 22 items of Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) developed by Cheng (2004). This instrument was used to determine the level of writing

apprehension faced by the respondents. It consisted of 8 items under Cognitive, 7 items under Somatic, and 7 items under Avoidance Behavior. Section C contained 10 items of Causes of Writing Anxiety (CWAI) that was developed by Rezaei and Jafari (2014). Lastly, Section D comprised of 10 items related to students' learning strategies to reduce their writing apprehension which were adapted from the items under Solutions to Overcome Writing Anxiety used by Aidit et al (2023) in their study to determine the possible solutions to reduce second language writing anxiety among ESL students. All items in the questionnaire used Likert scale with 5 options - strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), uncertain (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5). These items were included in the Google Form to be distributed to the participants.

### Data Collection

In collecting the data of this study, several steps were taken by the researchers. Firstly, they identified the participants of the study which were Diploma students enrolling in English language courses at the Centre for Modern Languages, UMPSA Pekan. Secondly, they explained the study objectives and sought students' consent to participate in the study. Additionally, the students were briefed about the confidentiality of the personal information provided in which the data was strictly used for this research purposes. Finally, the questionnaire was administered via Google Form and the participants were given 3 days to respond.

### Data Analysis

The data was analysed following the research questions formulated for the study. First of all, to determine the level of writing anxiety, the total score of SLWAI questionnaire for each student was calculated. There are 7 items (1, 4, 7, 17, 18, 21, and 22) in the SLWAI that are negatively worded; therefore, reverse scoring was applied to these items before calculating the total scores. After summing up the total score of each student, the level of anxiety was determined by classifying them into three categories (high, moderate, and low level) based on Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Level of Writing Anxiety**

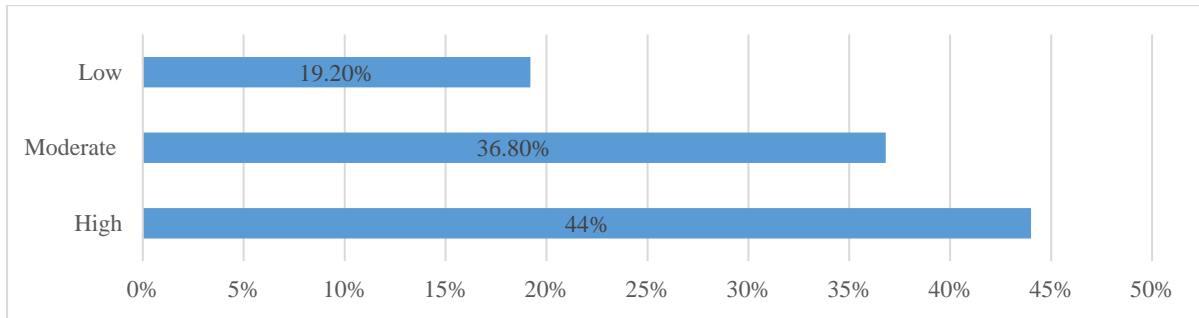
| Score                | Level                  |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Scores above 65      | High-level anxiety     |
| Scores between 50-65 | Moderate-level anxiety |
| Scores below 50      | Low-level anxiety      |

To determine the causes of writing anxiety, the following calculation was applied for the 10 items in CWAI and another 10 items in students' strategies to reduce ESL writing apprehension. The ones constituting the highest percentage would then be identified as the primary contributing factors of writing apprehension, and the most preferred learning strategy to alleviate ESL writing apprehension, respectively.

$$\text{The percentage} = \frac{\text{Total score of each item}}{\text{Total score of all items}} \times 100\%$$

## 4. Findings and Discussion

### Level of Writing Anxiety

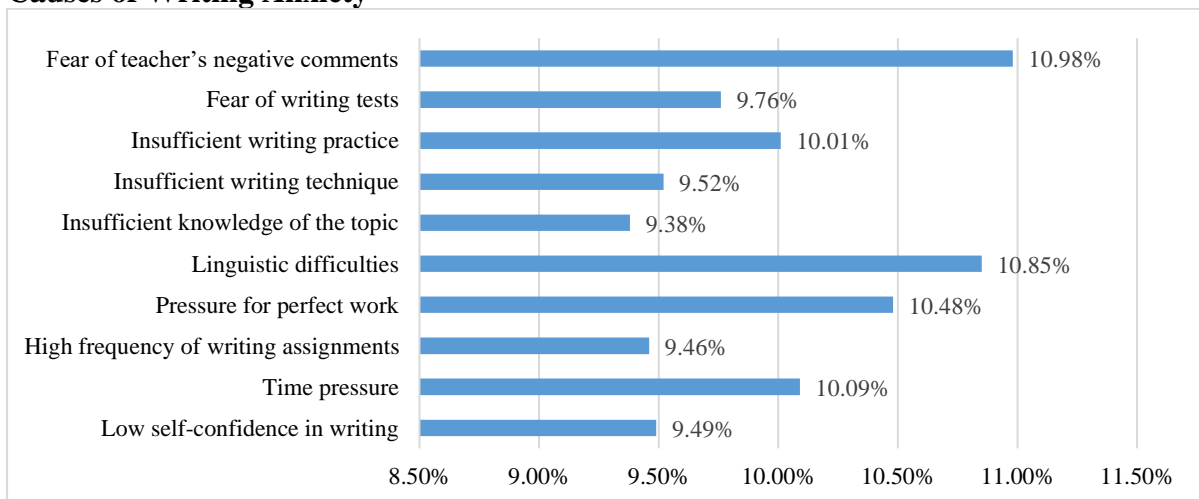


**Figure 2: Level of Writing Anxiety**

Figure 2 shows the level of writing anxiety experienced by the Diploma engineering students. It can be seen that a substantial proportion of the respondents, nearly half (44%), experienced a high level of writing anxiety when engaging in writing tasks. This highlights that writing is viewed as a challenging and stressful task by a considerable number of these students, which may affect their overall writing performance. In addition, 36.8% of the respondents were found to have a moderate writing anxiety level. This suggests that while these students may not find writing overwhelmingly stressful, they still face notable challenges to express their ideas effectively or to write confidently. The remaining 19.2% was reported to experience a low level of writing anxiety. It shows that only a small fraction of the Diploma engineering students are relatively comfortable with writing, suggesting that they have a more positive attitude towards writing task.

This finding is consistent with that of Rezaei and Jafari (2014), Wahyuni and Umam (2017), and Toh and Rahmat (2021) where they reported that majority of their respondents experienced a high level of writing anxiety in both EFL and ESL classrooms. Highly anxious writers could be strongly affected by their negative feelings towards writing tasks, and this will interrupt their ideas development in essay writing (Lena et al, 2019). In addition, intrusive thought about their writing abilities supersedes the focus on the writing task itself (Stewart et al, 2015), which contribute to delaying and avoiding the writing task.

### Causes of Writing Anxiety



**Figure 3: Causes of Writing Anxiety**

Figure 3 demonstrates the percentage of the causes of writing anxiety for Diploma engineering students. As shown in the chart, ‘fear of teacher’s negative comments’ recorded the highest percentage (10.98%), followed by ‘linguistic difficulties’ (10.85%) and ‘pressure for perfect work’ (10.48%). Therefore, it can be claimed that the primary source of writing anxiety was fear of teacher’s negative comments. This finding is supported by Rezaei and Jafari’s (2014) study where the Iranian EFL students were also reported to be intimidated by the teacher’s negative evaluation of their writing, and this can be attributed to their unawareness of the writing purpose in which to reflect their own voices rather than getting good marks or passing the exam. Moreover, the students may receive negative comments when their composition does not meet the criteria given by the teacher. Students who fear negative evaluation will tend to avoid doing things that will cause them to be negatively evaluated. Furthermore, it also refers to worrying about being laughed at by others because of poor performance (Quvanch & Kew, 2022).

Linguistic difficulties are cited as the second dominant cause of writing anxiety. This is not surprising since it requires extra effort and time for the students to master the linguistic knowledge given that English is not their native language. Furthermore, it shows that the students suffered from a lack of experience in writing, poor vocabulary, grammatical errors, and the confusion of sentence structures and spellings. Wahyuni and Umam (2017) stated that a lack of knowledge in linguistic components is a common challenge faced by the learners when they write compositions in English. In fact, linguistic components such as sentence structures, grammar rules, and spellings, have always been the essential instruments in English language teaching and learning (Quvanch & Kew, 2022). ESL learners feel anxious when writing compositions because they are unable to cope with the complex grammar rules to ease the flow of their ideas, and this impedes their writing performance.

Pressure for perfect work is one of the commonly documented causes of writing anxiety among students. In fact, perfectionism has been reported in numerous studies to be the significant contributor to writing anxiety that is manifested in various forms such as fear of failure, excessive self-evaluation and concerns about others’ perceptions. Khezerlou (2023) stated that students who are perfectionists are more likely to have heightened anxiety during writing process, hampering their ability to produce written work effectively.

### Strategies to Reduce Writing Apprehension

**Table 2: Strategies to Reduce Writing Apprehension**

| No | Statement  | Score/statement | Percentage |
|----|--|-----------------|------------|
| 1  | Getting clear instructions from teacher to understand better     | 531             | 10.67%     |
| 2  | Having regular hands-on training on writing English essays       | 469             | 9.42%      |
| 3  | Having more group works for writing practices                    | 436             | 8.76%      |
| 4  | Preparing the writing outline before writing essays              | 464             | 9.32%      |
| 5  | Reading books or related articles before doing any writing       | 506             | 10.16%     |
| 6  | Doing the essay in my free time works best for me                | 463             | 9.30%      |
| 7  | Stating the essay form and format clearly before writing essays  | 527             | 10.58%     |
| 8  | Watching related videos that could aid in the writing process    | 508             | 10.20%     |
| 9  | Imagining the situations or environment related to my writing    | 530             | 10.65%     |
| 10 | Making writing English essays class more fun, current and trendy | 545             | 10.94%     |
|    | Total score  | 4979            | 100%       |

Table 2 displays the score and percentage of possible strategies to reduce students’ writing apprehension. It can be clearly seen that strategies which involve the input, effort and guidance

from the teacher are top rated. To illustrate, there are six (6) related statements received high percentage which are ‘Making writing English essays class more fun, current and trendy’ (10.94%), ‘Getting clear instructions from teacher to understand better’ (10.67%), ‘Imagining the situations or environment related to my writing’ (10.65%), ‘Stating the essay form and format clearly before writing essays’ (10.58%), ‘Watching related videos that could aid in the writing process’ (10.20%), and ‘Reading books or related articles before doing any writing’ (10.16%). This shows that the students regard interactive pedagogy, scaffolding and clear instructions as very crucial in helping them to overcome their ESL writing apprehension. This finding is in line with the study by Aidit et al (2023) who investigated second language writing anxiety among Diploma students at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Samarahan campus.

On the other hand, the statements that exemplify the strategies which require the students to involve in prewriting activities and write English essays by themselves received a slightly lower percentage. For instance, these three statements were less preferred strategies rated by the students which are ‘Having regular hands-on training on writing English essays’ (9.42%), ‘Preparing the writing outline before writing essays’ (9.32%), and ‘Doing the essay in my free time works best for me’ (9.30%). This is a noteworthy finding, and this situation could be related to students’ high level of writing apprehension that makes them tend to avoid or less prefer activities that require them to write English essays.

Last but not least, the least preferred strategy to overcome writing anxiety is ‘Having more group works for writing practices’ which recorded only 8.76%. The students might not find this strategy as the best to alleviate their writing apprehension probably due to fear of judgement in which they may feel anxious about their writing being evaluated by peers, leading to embarrassment or self-doubt (Xethakis et al, 2024). Moreover, group work can add pressure to perform well which makes some students even more nervous about their writing. Another possible reason could be due to diverging skill levels. For example, if group members have different writing abilities, weaker writers might feel intimidated or hesitant to share their work.

Based on the findings, there is a need for preparing a positive writing environment for students in order to alleviate writing apprehension. Xiao (2024) suggested the positive writing environment can be developed if teacher focused on the idea generation and context instead on excessively highlights the grammatical and spelling mistakes. The teacher can also diversify the types of feedback given to students that is more fun by leveraging the current technology. Giving focused feedback that show opportunity of growth is a recommended practice to build students’ confidence in writing (Santri et. al, 2022). Encouraging positive writing environment can mitigate feelings of anxiety among students.

Furthermore, focusing on behavioural practices is also supported by research (Jiang, 2015; Wahyuni et al., 2019; Xiao, 2024). Writing apprehension can be alleviated if students receive adequate knowledge and practice about writing strategies. Through intensive preparation and many practices, it facilitates students in developing writing skills (Wahyuni et al., 2019). Engaging in prewriting activities like outlining and brainstorming with the support from tutor and peers, can lessen the writing apprehension. Apart from that, the inclusion of technology in the writing process stimulates students’ interest in writing (Xiao, 2024). Thus, teacher can design learning environment that support behavioral practices and consider embedding creative and fun writing activities to reduce writing apprehension.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight that writing anxiety is a prevalent issue among Diploma engineering students, with nearly half of them experience a significant level of writing anxiety. The main reasons that contribute to this predicament are fear of teacher's negative feedback, linguistic difficulties, and the pressure to produce faultless work. Nevertheless, a combination of engaging, structured, and self-directed learning approaches such as making writing enjoyable, providing clear instructions, using multimedia resources, and incorporating collaborative and hands-on practices might effectively help to reduce writing anxiety among these students. The spotlight on these insights illuminates the multi-dimensional aspect of writing anxiety as well as its detrimental effect on students' competence to deliver adequate output in academic writing assignments. Mirroring these insights is consistent with studies underscoring how both are consistent with shaping the writing experiences of learners (Cheng, 2004; Wahyuni & Umam, 2017; Waked et al., 2023).

The implications of this study are twofold. Firstly, it points to the crucial necessity that educators cannot ignore, which is the existence of writing anxiety in the ESL classrooms. It also propels them to develop strategies that address its root causes. Educators are capable of utilising a myriad of methods to support students, for instance, providing constructive and encouraging feedback (Han et al., 2021), creating a positive classroom environment (LaCosse et al., 2020) and putting forth clear guidance on linguistic components including grammar, vocabulary and syntax arrangement as well as integrate technical content with language learning activities (Majid & Ismail, 2024). These efforts are compulsory for forging an embracing learning space where students are fortified to boost their writing skills. On the other end of the implication spectrum, the study underlines the need for enhancing students' self-awareness about their own writing anxiety. As they become conscious about what precisely escalates their apprehension, they become more proactive in tackling these issues head-on.

Peering into the future, future research should take a closer look at the effectiveness of various strategies designed in lessening feelings of writing anxiety. By carrying out studies that track the influence of these techniques on students' academic progress over a certain period, crucial insights on organising and dealing with unease methodically in learning environments could be gained. Moreover, it will be advantageous to investigate different teaching methodologies, such as task-based or process-oriented writing practices, impacts students' levels of anxiety and their writing outcomes. These investigations would add to the expanding collection of studies focused on writing apprehensions among ESL learners. It serves as a reminder of the significant function that educators and higher institutions play in tackling this widespread problem. By embracing a holistic and student-centred approach, key individuals can cultivate a supportive atmosphere not only reducing anxiety but also improving students' writing abilities and enriching their learning journey.

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