

## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WRITING PROCESSES AND WRITING APPREHENSION AMONG ARAB STUDENTS**

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### **Abstract :**

Writing in English language considers one of the most important sources to express thoughts. Furthermore, it needs from the second language speaker to be excellent either in vocabularies or how to make sentences grammatically and meaningfully correct. From long experience in teaching field, it is approved that Arab students of high studies from University Utara Malaysia faces problems in how to transfer student's ideas in written words. And from this research, it is checked out by using a questionnaire that depends on first; Are all the three main writing processes which are before writing an essay (planning), when writing in English (composing), after writing (revising) applied in writing. Second; Are the three main writing processes have a relationship with writing apprehension. As the results approved that the three writing processes are not followed by the ELPT Arab students during the examination and this case makes the students more apprehensive. In addition to that there are no statistical differences between the writing processes and writing

apprehension. The findings of this study have further implication in order to seek for ways to improve the writing of the students by following the writing processes and are trying to reduce the size of writing apprehension during the test.

## العلاقة بين عمليات الكتابة و التخوف من الكتابة بين الطلاب العرب

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المستخلص :

تعتبر الكتابة في اللغة الانكليزية من أهم مصادر التعبير عن الافكار حيث تحتاج من متحدث اللغة الثانية وهي اللغة الانكليزية ان يكون متقن للمفردات و كيفية تكوين الجملة قواعديا و معنى صحيح . ومن خلال سنوات التدريس ، حيث تم اكتشاف ان طلاب الدراسات العليا العرب من جامعة اوتارا ماليزيا يواجهون مشاكل في كيفية نقل افكار الطلاب الى كلمات مكتوبة. ومن هذا البحث ، تم التحقق من ذلك عبر استخدام استبيان يعتمد على اولاً: هل عمليات الكتابة الرئيسية الثلاثة وهي قبل كتابة المقالة (التخطيط)، عند كتابة في اللغة الانكليزية (التركيب)، و بعد الكتابة (المراجعة) يتم تطبيقها عند الكتابة. ثانياً: هل تطبيق عمليات الكتابة الرئيسية الثلاثة لها علاقة مع التخوف من الكتابة. ومن هنا اظهرت النتائج ان عمليات الكتابة الثلاثة لم يتم اتباعها من خلال الطلاب اثناء الامتحان حيث ان هذه الحالة تجعل الطلاب اكثر خوفاً. اضافة الى ذلك، لا يوجد فروقات احصائية بين عمليات الكتابة و التخوف من الكتابة و نتائج هذه الدراسة تتطلع الى الاكثر من اجل البحث عن كيفية تحسين كتابة الطلاب باتباع عمليات كتابه ومحاولة التقليل من حجم التخوف من الكتابة اثناء الامتحان.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكتابة ، عمليات الكتابة

## **1.0 Introduction**

Writing is not an easy task as it is compared with other skills (Abu Shawish, 2009:1). It concentrates on transferring a person's thought into a language either in written or spoken way. Researchers have found that learners seem to have difficulties when they are writing especially Foreign or second Arabic language learners have difficulties in acquiring English language. Writing in English includes different stages such as before writing in English, while writing in English, and after writing (Hughey et al., 1983). Most of the Arabic learners must be responsible about their weaknesses in their writing (Ezza, 2010). Arab learners face problems in writing as well as organizing their ideas in systematic way because of the lack of practice. Students need to have language learning environment in order to succeed in English language especially in writing skill. Arab society misses the opportunities of the use of the foreign language in their daily life as well as practices it because they rarely write in English.

Supporting this opinion in the Malaysian context, Nor Shidrah, Nuraihan & Noor Lide (2006) also stated that, writing is a very challengeable activity especially the learners of a second or foreign language and it concentrates on the ability of learning the second or foreign language that they must master in order to express their thoughts in the content of the writing courses and be understandable. Hence, besides talking about all these considerations, writing activity may cause anxiety or apprehension feelings in many ESL learners.

The researchers believe that writing apprehension is a critical problem which is being faced by majority of ESL students. Furthermore, writing apprehension problems if left unchecked may lead to poor proficiency in speaking, writing and also other aspects of language use. In the past, Atay and Kurt (2006) claimed that apprehension or anxiety has located as a particular interest in the field of language acquisition and learning.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Generally, writing skill is not an easy task if it is compared with the other skills; listening, reading, and speaking (Abu Shawish 2009: 1). Actually, writing concentrated more on transferring student's thoughts and ideas into written words. In order for students to perform well in their writing, students need to think, create, as well as compose their ideas, and organize the ideas according to the main ideas. In addition, students should when they are writing link their ideas together. Basically, teaching writing has emphasized on the product of writing skill. Writing represents a kind of evaluating the process that's why causing a high level of writing apprehension for most of the students. As a result, this case served some problems in writing quantity as well as high writing apprehension. The lacks in student's ideas apprehend students in their writing tasks.

In University Utara Malaysia, Arabic students in ELPT exam are facing difficulty specifically in writing skill. Thus, they feel worry during the test. The reasons are firstly; the students are weak in writing because their background of writing skill lack many factors such as grammar, punctuation, spelling and capitalization as well as organizing the ideas and revising the writing process before submit it. Secondly; Thompson (1989: 21) defines writing apprehension as a kind of fear of writing that needs to practice in order to have the ability to write. Student's feelings of apprehension increased when students are asked to submit their writing assignment. Students feel that they will be negatively rated by the teacher so they avoid writing when possible. When students are forced to write, their level of apprehension would increase. Cave (1972:62) claimed that "achieve proficiency in writing through unrestricted practice". The way to criticize the student's evaluation makes students worry towards their writing process. The way to criticize the student's paper lacks the techniques to develop writing process. Harris

(1975:305) identified that "the teacher is engaged in a form of testing rather than teaching".

Thus, the aim of this study is to see whether the students follow the processes of writing or not; explore that writing apprehension is the reason behind writing process and how it can be solved after concluding whether writing apprehension is the cause or the effect. This research hopes to find a solution for the issue of writing apprehension that stops flawing the ideas and make students write freely as they can recall the rules of writing.

### **1.3 Research Objective**

The main aim of the study is to identify the issue of writing apprehension, especially for ELPT Arabic students and the three processes of writing. The objectives of the study are as follows;

1. To identify the writing processes that the ELPT student's undergo throughout the writing process.
2. To investigate the relationship between ELPT Arabic student's writing process and writing apprehension.
3. To determine whether writing apprehension is the cause or an effect for bad writing.

### **1.4 Research Question**

1. What are the writing processes that the ELPT student's undergo throughout the writing process?
2. What is the relationship between ELPT student's writing processes and writing apprehension?
3. Is writing apprehension a cause or an effect for bad writing?

### **3.0 Methodology**

In every study, research methodology is a way to find out the result of a given problem that is referred as research problem (Industrial Research Institute, 2010). In order to achieve the success of this study, the methodology issues will focus on the main points to try to solve both research problem and answering

the research questions throughout this chapter. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the ELPT Arab student's writing processes and its relationship with writing apprehension, the experimental study that involves the quantitative approach also aimed to identify whether students follow the three writing processes which are before writing (planning), while writing (composing), and after writing (revising) or not, and whether the three main writing processes have a relationship with writing apprehension as well as whether writing apprehension is the cause or an effect for bad writing. The quantitative approach consists of a questionnaire survey administered to postgraduates ELPT Arab students to investigate the writing process and its relationship with writing apprehension. So, the questionnaire was used to answer the second question (what is the relationship between ELPT Arab student's writing processes and writing apprehension) and the third question (Is writing apprehension a cause or an effect for bad writing). Polit and Hungler (1999:278) distinguish the target population and the accessible population includes all the cases and which the researcher would like to make generalizations. The accessible population comprises all the cases that conform to the designated criteria and are accessible to the researcher as a pool of subjects for a study. In this study the target population comprised the ELPT Arab students at University Utara Malaysia who tested and evaluated their English language in order to pass to complete their master program or PHD. The accessible population comprised 85 students and all of them Arab students. A questionnaire is designed by Al- Sawalha, Abdulla Musa Salem and Chow, Thomas Voon Foo (2012) on investigating the writing processes and writing apprehension was adopted and used in this study. Hence, the lists of postgraduate ELPT Arab students were collected. All the students were Arab from different countries

aged between 23 to 50 years. The sampling consisted of females and males. 10 students were used in pilot study.

#### **4.0 Findings and Discussion**

This study aims to investigate the writing processes and its relationship with writing apprehension in learning English at University Utara Malaysia, Malaysia. In order to seek the answers of the three research questions, a questionnaire consisting of two appendix; appendix 1 based on the processes of writing which are before writing an essay in English (planning) contains 8 items, while writing in English (composing) contains 12 items, after writing (revising) contains 13 items. Appendix 2 is about writing apprehension which consists 26 items. To answer first, second, and third questions, descriptive statistics were performed by using SPSS. The students answered the items by using a 5 point-likert scale as proposed by Flower and Hayes (1981) in their Framework (see No.2).

#### **4.1 Descriptive Statistics on writing processes and writing apprehension**

Research Question 1:

What are the writing processes that the ELPT Arab students undergo throughout the writing processes?

The answer is that there are three main writing processes:

- i. Before writing an essay in English (planning)
- ii. When writing in English (composing)
- iii. When revising (revising)

Descriptive statistics was performed to analyze the responses of 85 students to 33 items in the questionnaire based on 5-likert scale (1=always, 2=often, 3=sometimes, 4=seldom, 5=never). Items 1 to 8 on the questionnaire focused on before writing an essay in English. Table 4.1 summarizes the findings.

**Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Findings about Before Writing Essay in English (Planning)**

No	Items	5 Never (N) Frequency/ Percentage	4 Seldom (S) Frequency/ Percentage	Mostly	Less Frequent (N+S) Percentage
2	Before I start writing I revise the requirements.	1	1.2%	6	7.2% 8.4%
4	I start written without having a write or mental plan.	18	21.7%	25	30.1% 51.6%
8	I write notes or an outline in Arabic.	16	19.3%	21	15.3% 44.6%

\*\* Highest percentage

\* Second Highest percentage

Table 4.1 above shows that our right items falls under this process, the findings for Mostly frequent category item number 4 had the highest percentage (51.8%) that is based on ( I start written without having a writer or a mental plan) followed by item number 8 (I write notes or an outline in Arabic) which are (44.6%). The least percentage was obtained for item number 2 (Before I start writing I revise the requirements) and the percentage is (8.4%). The findings indicate that majority of the students agreed that they do not plan before writing an essay in English.



**Table. 4.2**  
**Descriptive statistics of findings about when writing in English (composing)**

No	Items	4 Never (N) Frequency/ Percentage	5 Seldom (S) Frequency/ Percentage	Mostly Frequent (N+S) Percentage
4	I reread what I have written to get ideas how to continue.	2 2.4%	4 4.5%	7.2%
6	I write bits of the text in Arabic and then translate them into English.	20 24.1%	21 25.3%	49.4%
9	I don't know a word in English,	11 13.3%	7 15.7%	29.0%

Table 4.2 above shows that the findings of mostly frequent category shows that item number 6 ( I write bits of the text in Arabic and then translate them into English) is referred when students are writing and represented the highest percentage of (49.4%) followed by item number 9 ( I don't know a word in English, I write it in Arabic and later try) with a ( 29.0%). Hence, item number 4 ( I reread what I have written to get ideas how to continue) emerged the least percentage with (7.2%). The highest percentage represented in item number 6 which shows that students have a problem in writing. This is due to the lack of vocabulary in English writing

**Table 4.3**  
**Descriptive Statistics of Findings about when Revising**  
**(Revising)**

No	Items	4 Never (N) Frequency Percentage	5 Seldom (S) Frequency/ Percentage	Mostly Frequent (N+S) Percentage
2	When I have written my paper, I hand it without reading it.	38 45.8%	16 19.3%	65.1%
8.	I drop my first draft and start Writing again.	15 18.1%	18 21.7%	39.8%
13	I check my mistake after I get back the paper with feedback from the teachers and try to learn from them.	2 2.4%	5 6.0%	8.4%

\*Highest percentage

\*\* Second Highest percentage

Based on the findings in table 4.3, the highest percentage is represented in item number 2 (when I have written my paper, I hand it without reading it) which is (65.1%) followed by item number 8 ( I drop my first draft and start writing again) that is (39.8%). The least percentage was obtained for item number 13 ( I check my mistake after I get back the paper with feedback from teachers, try to learn from them) that is (8.4%). According to the highest percentage (65.1%) for item number 2 is very necessary to pay attention to because the rule of revising is very important to ensure the correct writing planning and composing. Hence, this case leads to writing apprehension which is the main problem in this study.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

This study was carried out in order to determine the relationship between writing processes and writing apprehension which is applied on postgraduates the ELPT postgraduate Arab students in learning English as a second language. Previous studies have been carried out in order to support the idea the writing processes play an important role in English writing as well as its influence on writing apprehension such as Hassan (2001), Al-Ahmad (2003), Salem (2007), and Latif (2007). This study agreed with Williams (1998, P.54) who points out, "the process model proposes that a finished paper is the result of the complex interaction of activities that include several stages of development: prewriting, drafting, and pausing, reading, revising, editing, publishing". Regarding the first research question "what are the writing processes that the ELPT Arab students undergo throughout the writing process?", the answer is, that there are three writing processes which is before writing an essay (planning), when writing in English (composing), when revising (revising). The finding showed that although participated in this study indicated that they had not sufficient time to write and finish their writing in time, those students in the present study, planned less, but they demonstrated a more concern for the aspects of organization and style, composing process, most of the students have the ability to write but the ability disappeared because the lack of vocabulary in English writing, revising process. This study agrees with Salem (2007) in which it is found out that most of the students felt uncomfortable when they required to write on a certain topic. They did not know how to start, how to develop their ideas or how to conclude the essay and Tribble's (1996) by focusing on just the three main writing processes who claimed those four stage models are rather typical: prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. However, if the students did not follow the writing processes, their writing would

be random and it would increase the level of apprehension for the students. For the second research question, "what is the relationship between ELPT student's writing processes and writing apprehension?" the answer is that there is a relationship between apprehension and writing processes. The findings found out that students have a kind of apprehensive when they write. The descriptive statistics proved that ELPT Arab students do not follow the writing processes exactly and this is the reason why the apprehension of the students is high. As the study that is conducted by Betancourt and Phinney (1988) and Skibniewski and Skibniewska (1988) who found out that more writing apprehension was felt by less skilled writers than more skilled writers and graduate students. As referring to third research question on " Is writing apprehension is a cause or an effect of a bad writing" the result of this study indicated that it is found that writing apprehension is an effect because the students did not follow the writing processes so that this would result in apprehension. As Abdel Latif (2007:60) in his study reached the conclusion that writing apprehension is an effect; it is the result of lack of linguistic competence and writing skill as well as Clark (2005:8) also concluded that it is the result of the lacking knowledge or understanding necessary to complete the writing task and the students believe that writing is a hard work.

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