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Investigating Writing Anxiety of Iraqi EFL Senior Secondary School Students

A B S T R U C T

The research aims to determine the level of writing anxiety among Iraqi EFL senior secondary school students and whether there is a statistically significant difference between male and female students experiencing writing anxiety. Furthermore, the research aims to identify if there is a significant difference between low and high-proficient students in terms of writing anxiety, as well as to identify the type of correlation between students' proficiency and writing anxiety. A group of (160) male and female sixth-grade students were selected randomly from four public secondary schools as the study sample. A 3-point Likert scale of (20) items designed by Cheng (2004) ranging from "true of me" to never true of me" was employed as an instrument to collect the required data. S.P.S.S. software version (23) was used to analyze the collected data: One-Sample Test, An independent sample t-test, and a Pearson product-moment correlation. The findings of the study revealed that Iraqi EFL senior secondary school students experience writing anxiety positively with a moderate level through the process of learning English. There is no statistically significant difference between male and female students in experiencing writing anxiety. There is no significant difference between low and high-proficient students in terms of writing anxiety. Finally, the findings disclosed a negative correlation (r= -.012-) between students' proficiency and writing anxiety; it implies that the less proficiency a student has in a foreign language, the more writing anxiety a student experiences

دراسة قلق الكتابة لدى طلاب المرحلة الثانوية في مادة اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية

الباحث : قصي مهدي مطر / جامعة بغداد/ مركز البحوث التربوية

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المستخلص :

يهدف البحث إلى تحديد مستوى الشعور بقلق الكتابة لدى طلاب المرحلة الثانوية في مادة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وما إذا كان هناك فرق ذو دلالة إحصائية بين الطلاب والطالبات في الشعور بقلق الكتابة. علاوة على ذلك يهدف البحث إلى التعرف على ما إذا كان هناك فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الطلاب ذوي الكفاءة المنخفضة والعالية من حيث قلق الكتابة، وكذلك التعرف على نوع العلاقة الارتباطية بين كفاءة الطلبة وقلق الكتابة. تم اختيار مجموعة مكونة من (160) طالب وطالبة من طلاب الصف السادس بشكل عشوائي من أربع مدارس ثانوية حكومية كعينة للدراسة. تم استعمال مقياس ليكرت المكون من 3 بدائل والذي يتكون من (20) فقرة صممها تشينغ (2004) وتتراوح من "ينطبق تماماً" إلى "لا ينطبق أبداً " كأداة لجمع البيانات المطلوبة. تم استعمال إصدار (23) SPSS لتحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها والتي تضمنت: اختبار (ت) العينة الواحدة، اختبار (ت) للعينة المستقلة، ومعامل ارتباط بيرسون . كشفت نتائج الدراسة أن طلبة المدارس الثانوية العراقية يعانون من قلق الكتابة بشكل إيجابي بمستوى متوسط في عملية تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. لا توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الطلاب والطالبات في متغير قلق الكتابة. لا توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الطلاب ذوي الكفاءة المنخفضة والعالية من حيث قلق الكتابة. أخيرًا، كشفت النتائج عن وجود علاقة سلبية (-012.- =r) بين كفاءة الطلبة وقلق الكتابة، وهذا يعني أنه كلما قل إتقان الطالب للغة أجنبية، زاد قلقه من الكتابة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: قلق الكتابة، طلبة السادس، مادة اللغة الانكليزية, كفاءة اللغة الإنجليزية

Chapter One

1.1. Introduction

Language learning is a complex procedure for an individual who faces challenges in learning a second language in surroundings where that language is only applied to specific contexts. Exposure to language is considerably restricted to academic life, including educational settings. According to Hamp and Heasly (2006), from the four essential language expertise in language learning procedures, competency in writing is mostly considered the least prioritized language expertise for native

speakers and foreign/second language learners. Bailey (2003) stated that writing is generally more challenging than writing in one's native language. Thus, it is regarded as acquiring the most complicated and challenging expertise.

Moreover, it has been regarded as a procedure of reinforcing the spoken patterns of the target language and testing the extent of the learners' use of accurate grammatical rules (Rivers, 1968). Its process follows a linguistic standardized system, in which the writer should maintain the prescribed linguistics standards that include syntactic and socio-linguistic protocols of the community discourse. Writing is an important skill, as it should be learned by following the prescribed instructions. Notably, writing correctly is essential for any individual who aims to be an educated and cultural participant in society.

There are various definitions of writing; it is considered a multidimensional expertise that involves the exchange of knowledge, skillfulness, experience, expertise, culture, and the writer's identity with the standards and cognitive requirements of the task (Archibald & Jeffery, 2000; Cumming, 1998). Writing, which necessitates learning, practice, initiative, time, and the instruction of teachers, has been conceptualized as a highly complicated procedure in first and second languages or foreign languages. The complexity of writing as a task is also attributed to its development, caused by the changes impacting the strategic conduct, knowledge, and writer's drive (Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2005). Meyers (2005) highlighted writing as the expertise in arranging ideas, presenting them on paper, modifying, and revising them. Additionally, writing was described as communicating to others on paper or through a computer screen.

Writing is crucial for both native and foreign language speakers. Despite the exposure experienced by students in a foreign language space to the same language teachings, every learner may digest the lessons in varying ways, which results in

varying experiences of language learning and the uniqueness of every learner (Garret & Young, 2009, p. 209). According to Underhill (1989, as cited in Arnold, 2011, p.14), a development in a teacher's attitude that appears insignificant may contribute to a major difference. Therefore, affective elements strongly impact students' achievement in the second language learning procedure, given that unfavourable attitudes may weaken the learners' motivation and lead to a challenging learning procedure. On the other hand, favourable attitudes may bring a different influence (Tasnimi, 2009, p. 117). Humanistic methods have impacted language learning due to the priority placed on the affective elements in learning a language (Oxford, 1990, p. 140) and language education progress following the redefinition of the roles of teachers and students. In this case, the learners' necessities are prioritized, and language pedagogy is placed through important adjustments (Khatib et al., 2013, p. 46). Chastain (1988) and Yule (2006) added that affective elements are more significant in the cultivation of foreign language expertise compared to the cognitive field due to the incentive it could offer to cognitive tasks by enabling or preventing them (as cited in Kara, 2013, p.7-8).

According to Ellis (2008), the learner's affective state is impacted by several elements, such as anxiety, which was primarily focused in this research. This is followed by the drive to be involved in competition and whether the learners perceive the learning progress or vice versa. It may also impact the degree of L2 acquisition and, subsequently, the degree of success. Furthermore, affective elements comprise numerous factors, which may comprise various subcategories depending on the researcher. To illustrate, Ehrman, Leaver, and Oxford (2003) stated that affective elements consist of motivation, confidence, toleration of ambiguity, and anxiety. Specifically, Chastain (1988) described anxiety as an uncomfortable feeling or emotion due to an aggressive factor related to nervousness, excessive emotional reactions, apprehension, and low confidence

(Vitasari, Wahab, Othman, Herawan & Sinnadurai, 2010). Anxiety is one of the elements leading to challenges faced by language learners in learning a second or foreign language. While the impacts of anxiety may differ across different individuals, they are crucial in influencing a language learner's performance in the target language, which is the English language in the context of this study.

Daly (1978), who suggested the conception of writing apprehension or anxiety, described writing apprehension as a construct related to an individual's inclination to address or avert conditions that require writing and the same degree of assessment (p. 10). This apprehension was also defined as "writing anxiety" by other researchers. Furthermore, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994: 284) defined second language anxiety as pressure and anxiety, particularly in the second language contexts, which include speaking, listening, and writing. Bloom (1985) believed writing anxiety is remarkably situation-specific, appears to restrict people, is considerably apparent, and may be easily solved through rational instruction (p. 6). It could also be described as a common prevention of writing and conditions sensed by people to obtain a specific amount of writing, including a possible assessment of the writing (Hassan, 2001, p. 4). Krashen (1982) highlighted that anxious students are afraid of showing low competence compared to other students or negative assessments by their colleagues. He added that the apprehension of unfavourable assessment may lead to their higher inclination to skip classes. Anxious learners commonly fear receiving negative criticism from the readers of their works in line with writing performance. In this case, Oxford (1990) & Lee (2097) highlighted that this apprehension pressures students to abide by writing rules, preventing them from taking risks to increase their creativity in the writing procedure (as cited in Hussein, 2013, p. 39).

A sequence of decisions in writing is crucial regarding content, form, syntax, punctuation, and style. When writers face challenges in decision-making, they may

experience anxiety about writing and be inclined to regard writing as the most difficult skill to acquire. In line with this, Erkan and Saban (2011, p. 165) stated that writing involves thinking approaches that enable a person's competent expression in other languages. It is also a complicated process requiring a specific degree of linguistics knowledge, vocabulary, writing conventions, and grammar. Subsequently, the complexity of writing tasks may increase anxiety among students who need to enrol in writing courses (Erkan & Saban, 2011, p. 166). Following that, English writing is also challenging for nearly all foreign language learners. To illustrate, students face some obstacles in writing L2 English. Chamot (2005) specified that beginning-level students need help in identifying the words they require and memorizing grammatical conventions, while advanced-level students need help in coherently connecting their ideas and conducting a suitable target language discourse. In addition, ideas blockage that both novice and professional writers go through is significant in identifying the factors leading to difficulties in writing. Grabe and Kaplan (1996:143) added that limitation in vocabulary, language structure, and content disrupts writers' performance, which strongly justifies the inadequate language skills among students and graduates. Learners' need for more proficiency in the second language may also be attributed to their low exposure to written materials at the beginning of L2 development. Thus, L2 learners should receive exposure to numerous reading materials to gain vocabulary and linguistic proficiency.

According to Wahyuni, D. W. D., Oktavia, W. O. W. and Marlina, L. M. L. (2019), inadequate topical knowledge, language issues, and insufficient writing practices are the primary factors leading to writing anxiety among students of all academic degrees. Since anxiety remains a critical issue in writing, teaching, and learning procedures, writing instructors should highlight several factors in developing their writing class. First, writing instructors should assist students in

gaining familiarity with the writing topics presented to them through several reading activities. Second, the writing class must be conducted with lessons on language features associated with the texts learnt. Third, students should be allowed to write on subjects that hold significance to them to encourage them to write. Accordingly, this research aims to determine the degree of writing anxiety in English that senior secondary school students go through and determine whether a notable distinction is present between male and female students.

1.2.　The Objectives of the Study

1- To determine writing anxiety level and the type of affection (positive, negative) among Iraqi EFL senior secondary school students.

2- To examine the difference between males and females in experiencing writing anxiety.

3- To examine the difference between low-proficient students and high-proficient students in terms of writing anxiety.

4- To examine the correlation between students' proficiency and writing anxiety.

1.3.　Research Questions and Hypotheses

1- What is the level of writing anxiety and the type of affection (positive, negative) among Iraqi EFL senior secondary school students?

2- Is there a statistically significant difference between male and female students in experiencing writing anxiety?

3- Is there a significant difference between low and high-proficient students in terms of writing anxiety?

4- What is the relationship between students' proficiency and writing anxiety?

1.4.　Regarding Hypotheses:

Ha: Students generally experience writing anxiety positively, regardless of gender and proficiency level.

H0: There is no significant difference between males and females in experiencing writing anxiety.

Ha: There is a significant difference between low and high-proficient students in terms of writing anxiety.

Ha: There is a positive correlation between students' proficiency and writing anxiety.

Chapter Two

2.1. English Language

English is an international language. Therefore, proficiency in English is regarded as an essential requirement for individuals who aim to participate in regional and global academic and professional communities. A higher education degree requires a high mastery of English, particularly for productive skills, including speaking and writing, where individuals can clarify themselves. Specifically, writing is where proficiency is required as it allows one to keep pace with world standards (Tapinta, 2006, p. 1), enables communication, solidifies the relationship between community members and nations, and encourages self-expression and personal development (Graham, Harris, & Olinghouse, 2007). Writing involves a sequence of decisions regarding the content, form, syntax, punctuation, and style. However, when writers struggle with decision-making, they may face anxiety in writing and be inclined to regard writing as the most difficult skill to master.

2.2. Foreign Language Anxiety

Foreign language anxiety denotes the pressure and anxiety related to language expertise, including speaking, listening, writing, and learning. While anxiety about

a foreign or second language can normally be seen through foreign language learners and is regarded as common, F.L.A. has been identified as one of the primary challenges learners face in learning foreign languages. Furthermore, anxiety consistently leads to a negative effect on language achievement (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Young (1991, p. 429) argued that the most critical factor leading to anxiety among students in the classroom includes face-to-face exchange and assessment by peers and instructors. It was also added that language anxiety may be associated with the learner, lecturer, and instructional practice.

According to Tallon (2009), the result of the learning procedure is determined through numerous elements, which include individual distinctions such as cognitive capabilities, personal attributes, learning styles, meta-cognitive distinctions, social contexts, and affective factors. He also highlighted foreign language anxiety as among the most crucial affective aspects of learning a foreign language. Furthermore, extensive report has been made on the effects of anxiety on foreign language learning in speech communication, social psychology, and educational psychology. Krashen (1982) added that emotional factors, including anxiety, motivation, uncertainty, and self-esteem in learners' language learning procedure may impact their acquirement of the language. The "affective filter" denotes an obstacle that may deter learners from obtaining and digesting the input even though it can be comprehended.

2.3. Types of Foreign Language Anxiety

2.3.1 The Anxiety of Trait of and State Anxiety

Spielberg (1983) described trait anxiety as a balanced predisposition to gain nervousness in various conditions and the common inclination to regard a condition as harmful (1983, p. 1). Given that individuals with trait anxiety are expected to be anxious about various matters, this type of anxiety is perceived as

one of their characteristics (Spielberg, 1983; as cited in Cassady, 2010). In line with this, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) argued that in terms of the students, trait anxiety intensifies anxiety in general, which hurts their learning process in comparison to students who do not face trait anxiety (p. 86). It can also be said that a person with significant trait anxiety has a higher possibility of gaining anxiety in various conditions compared to other individuals (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a, p. 87).

State anxiety likewise denotes the anxiety of moment-to-moment and temporary conditions of nervousness that may also become inconsistent (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 28). Being a social category of anxiety, state anxiety takes place upon an individual's assumption that a specific condition may pose harm to him (Schlesinger, 1995, p. 23). Therefore, it is perceived as a short-term personal trait that only occurs in particular situations. Spielberg (1983) highlighted that people with strong trait anxiety are inclined to face this anxiety in social-evaluative conditions compared to people with low trait anxiety. However, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a, p. 90) defined the anxiety of the state as a successful determinant for language achievement because they believe that identifying the real source of the anxiety is not possible in particular conditions. Besides, defining and measuring trait anxiety is challenging.

2.3.2 Situation-Specific Anxiety

Spielberger (1983) described the anxiety of a specific situation as the concern regarding a specific period of reaction to a particular condition (as cited in Cassady, 2010). In situation anxiety approaches that are limited to a specific context, the contributors' anxiety responses undergo a distinct condition, which includes public speaking, writing assessments, mathematics, or participation in a foreign language classroom (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a, p. 91). According to

Cassady (2010, p. 96), situation-specific anxiety is akin to trait anxiety until it is implemented solely in a single context or condition. Thus, he highlighted that despite its balance, it does not constantly show consistency across the situations (2010, p. 96). Several situation-specific anxiety categories are present despite the differences in contexts and situations, which include stage fright, math anxiety, test anxiety, public speaking anxiety, and the use of a second language or library anxiety (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a). Subsequently, it is clearly understood that a specific condition may lead to an individual's anxiety, although it may not apply in other contexts. To elaborate, Onwuegbuzie (1997) stated that composition anxiety is regarded as another category of situation-specific anxiety, which also occurs when a learner perceives a negative emotion in his writing. Additionally, Chan and Wu's (2004) research stated that performing math anxiety, public speaking anxiety, and writing examination anxiety are commonly perceived as situation-specific anxiety.

In the case of foreign language education, Brown (2007, p. 151) found that most of the current studies on language anxiety moved their emphasis on the situational characteristic of state anxiety compared to the anxiety of trait. Brown (2007, p. 151) highlighted the necessity of determining whether a language learner's anxiety is attributed to a deeper character trait or is rooted in a specific condition at a particular time. Therefore, it is suggested that the teachers supervise the learners to identify their varying degrees of situation-specific anxiety in various conditions.

2.3.3 Debilitative Versus Facilitative Anxiety

Considering the positive and negative roles of anxiety in language learning, language anxiety may fall under debilitating and facilitating anxieties (Scovel, 1978). Furthermore, the adverse impact of anxiety denotes damaging anxiety, while the positive impact of anxiety is defined as beneficial anxiety (Scovel, 1978).

In contrast to trait anxiety, Brown (2000) highlighted that with the state and situation-specific anxieties being based on the elements of characteristics and conditions as their foundation, simplifying and incapacitating anxieties are present in the impacts of anxiety on people's achievement in learning language (as cited in Wang, 2005, p. 45). Oxford (1999) specified that debilitative anxiety impacts the performance of language learners directly through reduced participation and overt avoidance of the language, while its indirect impact takes place through apprehension and uncertainty (p. 60). Moreover, Gardner, Day, & MacIntyre (1992) stated that significantly anxious language students show adverse perceptions toward learning a foreign language, which disrupts their language learning performance. Thus, anxiety in language is commonly considered debilitating anxiety. Subsequently, students may face depression and be inclined to avoid classes or be dropped out of school (Chao, 2003).

Even though anxiety is commonly regarded as an undesirable element (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a; Tanveer, 2007; Demirdaş, 2012), several researchers, including Scovel (1978); Young (1992); and Ehrman & Oxford (1995) highlighted that facilitating anxiety and certain level of concern positively impacted language learning due to the perception of facilitative anxiety as facilitating element, which encourages people to improve (as cited in MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). These scholars believed that facilitating anxiety encourages language learners to confront different challenges and maintain their alertness. To illustrate, Brown (2007) suggested that nervousness before a public performance is commonly an indication of facilitating anxiety and an indication of adequate pressure to carry out the task (p. 152). Overall, facilitating anxiety encourages learners to face a new learning duty, while debilitating anxiety encourages them to prevent this task (Scovel, 1991).

2.4. Need Paraphrase-Problems Faced by Students

Scardamalia and Bereiter (1986) determined five factors of essay composition which may be challenging for students. These factors include (a) the generation of ideas, (b) the development and arrangement of essay, (c) establishing goals to carry out outstanding writing expertise, (d) incorporation of the mechanical factors of writing, and (e) revision of writing and reformulation of the goals. Specifically, generating ideas for an essay is an element of the rewriting phase, which commonly includes brainstorming, where writers contemplate the subject for a considerable time, consider the audience, and develop ideas through approaches including grouping, listing, or free writing. The effectiveness of the writing is based on a student's capability of planning before the pre-writing phase. However, numerous students need to be made aware of the importance of planning before writing due to their inclination to write with minimum or no planning immediately after they finish the assignments. Besides, this practice does not encourage planning or goal setting (Chalk, Hagan-Burke, & Burke, 2005), which is crucial for self-regulation in writing. These less outstanding writers are inclined to employ an approach identified as knowledge telling, in which they write about any matters that emerge in their minds (Graham, 1990).

The development and arrangement of the essay is the second factor strongly associated with the first factor (developing or designing ideas). Less outstanding writers are inclined to write with poor arrangement and insufficiently cultivated ideas (Graham, 1990), possibly due to poor execution of the approaches for information acquirement and their view of writing assignments as question-and-answer duties (Chalk, Hagan-Burke, & Burke, 2005; Graham, 1990). Therefore, there is low initiative in assessing or amending the data employed in terms of their 'rhetorical goals', provided that these writers rarely practise metacognition and apply the 'retrieve and write' method of writing, which is based on memory with low self-regulation (MacArthur & Graham, 1987). Graham's (1990) research on

composing conduct among 93 students with L.D.L.D. recorded that they were inclined to write opinion essays with missing components and without a conclusion. This condition is attributed to their perception that they have presented an answer to the question with a 'yes' or 'no' and several reasons.

Flower and Hayes (1980) found that writers with experience are inclined to establish objectives and plans at the outset of a writing task, making them execute higher-degree writing expertise in the writing procedures. It is followed by evaluating these objectives and plans and their redefinition in writing. Besides, skilled writers are inclined to initiate various approaches to generate, organize, evaluate, and reformulate their plans while considering their audience and objectives (Sexton, Harris, & Graham, 1998, p. 296). These objectives and plans function as a point of reference, providing them with emphasis and guidance in their writing. However, these writing factors, particularly planning, composition, assessment, and revision, are challenging even for expert writers (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997), particularly E.S.L. students. Scardamalia and Bereiter (1986) stated that numerous students need to be made aware of the skilful revision methods as mechanical and word-level adjustments restrict their effort in this action. Sommers (1980, cited in Graham, MacArthur, & Schwartz, 1995) found that 94 revision by writers without experience involves identifying errors and substituting or removing words. Therefore, the viewpoint of revision impacts the goal setting for revision due to the emphasis on the changes associated with the type of text instead of those associated with a substance (Graham, MacArthur, & Schwartz, 1995).

Moreover, E.S.L. writers are required to face higher-degree writing expertise, highlighted as a challenge for students with L.D.L.D.D. (Graham, Harris, MacArthur, & Schwartz, 1991). Writing is perceived as a problem-solving process involving establishing goals for writing and identifying the methods of fulfilling

them. This is followed by an assessment of these objectives during and after the writing procedure to decide whether a student must redefine the objectives or initiate the writing procedure (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1986).

2.5. Types of Writing Anxiety

In line with foreign language anxiety and anxiety from particular expertise as language, writing anxiety is also classified into several types, as specified by Cheng (2004).

Cognitive Anxiety

Cognitive anxiety denotes the cognitive factor of anxiety experience, which includes negative expectations and preoccupation that strongly impact their writing through expectations from other students or teachers. To illustrate, the teacher holds high expectations that the students should fulfil.

Somatic Anxiety

This anxiety denotes the impacts of anxiety experience, which includes nervousness and tension. Students sometimes experience nervousness and strong tension due to time constraints and the inability to find inspiration. An instance is when students are instructed to complete a one-page writing within 10 minutes in a class. In this case, they may face nervousness in the first phase of their writing, particularly when they cannot finish the writing while their peers can.

Avoidance Anxiety

Avoidance anxiety occurs upon the students' avoidance of writing, which is also a behavioural factor of the anxiety experience. To illustrate, the students do not attend writing classes nor fulfil their writing tasks. Notably, this condition is the

most damaging category of writing anxiety due to the students' avoidance of writing or performing any action in the writing class. As a result, the students cannot gain any outcomes from their writing. (Cheng, Y. S., 2004).

Factors Leading to Writing Anxiety

Writing anxiety is attributed to several factors, as highlighted in past studies. These factors will be elaborated in the next sections.

Fear of Unfavorable Test and Evaluation

Most students experience anxiety during the assessment of their writing. At the same time, fear of tests is highly prevalent due to the perception that writing tests is a productive activity significantly impacted by time pressure (Zhang, 2011). In this case, the students would experience anxiety when they receive a negative assessment from their teachers about their writing.

Time Pressure

Rezai and Jafari described time pressure as one of the primary influencing factors of writing (Rezai & Jafari, 2014b). English writing for students is more time-consuming than writing in their native language. In this case, the students require more time for planning, writing, and revising to ensure their English is at the same level as their native language. However, the students would experience anxiety when they need to face time pressure while they write as they are not able to focus on their writing due to the time constraint.

Low Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is highly crucial in identifying the students' reactions towards writing tasks. For this reason, skilled students would be anxious when they believe they will perform poorly (Hassan, 2001). Despite the assumption by students with

strong capability of a second language that they do not have the competency to write as instructed, they are not able to prevent writing anxiety (Cheng, 2004).

Inadequate Writing Approach

Good writing skill indicates the students' considerably good comprehension of the composing procedure and positive skill cultivation (Hassan, 2001). Students who go through writing anxiety are equipped with poor expertise growth and inadequate comprehension of the composing procedure, indicating that these students do not have writing skills.

Language Difficulties

Foreign language learners commonly experience language difficulty in English writing. This difficulty leads to their reluctance towards English writing due to the challenges in conveying ideas through accurate and diverse clauses where the writing should be in line with the grammatical rule. Besides, the student's vocabulary needs to be improved, which causes challenges in English writing (Zhang, 2011).

Inadequate Topical Knowledge

The low-degree topical knowledge leads to anxiety among the students. To illustrate, when the lecturer directs the learners to write an essay about politics, they experience nervousness and fear of writing down their ideas despite their low understanding of the matter. Besides, being required to think would be a peculiar and challenging situation for the students, indicating that inadequate knowledge strongly influences the frequency of writing anxiety among them.

Inadequate Experience or Writing Practice

Students experience anxiety in English writing due to inadequate practice in making expressions in English. This condition would cause the students' excessive focus on the forms being written rather than the essay content while writing apprehension would increase. Notably, writing practice is crucial in developing writing ability, allowing students to improve their writing.

Urgency for Excellent Performance

Anxiety may occur following the pressure for an excellent performance faced by learners who believe that perfect writing requires work and involves a higher standard (Bloom, 1985). This self-imposed urgency for an excellent performance commonly leads to writing anxiety among students, leading to their reluctance to write. To illustrate, being required to place writing on high standards results in the students' writing anxiety.

High Assignment Frequency

Another primary factor leading to writing anxiety includes the highly frequent assignments. Specifically, Rezeai and Jafari (2014) stated that this factor is among the factors leading to writing anxiety. However, a low percentage of respondents in this research stated that this factor led to writing anxiety, making it the least selected factor.

2.6. Writing Process Methods

The writing process methods are marked by four phases: cognitive, expressive, social, and discourse community (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). One of the notable methods is the cognitive model of Flower and Hayes (1981), which was explained by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1986). However, this method has received criticism due to various factors. The first factor is the significant emphasis on the writer while overlooking the extent to which language is crucial, although the audience or

community needs to be considered. Furthermore, this method highlights a non-linear and dynamic procedure where writers consistently shift between pre-writing, writing, and revising tasks (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996, p. 19). In these sub-procedures, writers identify and demonstrate meaning despite their inadequate attention to form (Silva, 1990, p. 16). The third method is the social-context method, which produces numerous viewpoints (e.g., educational ethnography, sociolinguistics, discourse communities, and sociology of science) (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996).

With the adoption of the expressive phase, students or writers should have the freedom to write for self-expression. This phase also indicates that a writer holds adequate knowledge and writing skills to be demonstrated on paper. However, several areas for improvement are present in this phase; it receives criticism due to the low distinctions between novice and expert writers. The criticism is also due to its inadequate theoretical foundation (Dujsik, 2008). Furthermore, the second process method is the psychologically-based cognitive method, which started in the early 1970s. In this method, composing is perceived as a procedure that follows established goals, through which the varying writing procedures interact with each other, are combined, and may be simultaneous. Experienced writers employ different writing methods than beginner writers (Flower & Hayes, 1981).

The fourth phase is the discourse community phase, which further focuses on the communications between writers, readers, texts, and social contexts (Rafoth, 1988). Overall, these factors represent the viewpoints of social and cognitive writing methods. A discourse community method is represented by shared common public goals. In this case, it applies the concept that the availability of a platform for discourse is crucial for providing responses and information to the community members and building expectations and genre for the discussion. The discourse community members apply a set of terminologies and vocabularies focused on assisting the learners in overcoming any writing challenges. The

members commonly comprise people who can discuss crucial subjects regarding the writers' community (Swales, 1990). The community stage is relevant to this research as it also features cognitive and social cognitive insights.

2.7. The Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (S.L.W.A.I.)

Established by Cheng (2004), S.L.W.A.I. aims to examine three main sub-scales of writing anxiety: physiological, behavioural, and cognitive. The S.L.W.A.I. comprises 22 items where the respondent's rate is based on a five-point Likert scale. It was used for the measurement of writing anxiety for this research and was subsequently considered a compelling and dependable measure of E.S.L. writing anxiety. Furthermore, S.L.W.A.I. addresses writing anxiety from a multidimensional perspective, which features the components of the somatic, cognitive, and behavioural aspects of anxiety (Cheng, 2004). Specifically, cognitive anxiety denotes the emotional viewpoint of the anxiety experience that involves unfavourable predictions, concentration on performance, and apprehension regarding others' views (Cheng, 2004, p. 316). On the other hand, somatic anxiety is described as a person's viewpoint of the physical impacts of the anxiety experience, as indicated through the strengthened autonomic arousal and negative emotional conditions manifested through fast heart rate, hyperventilation, tension, nervousness, and shakiness. Finally, avoidance behaviour is related to a person's avoidance of writing in the target language or inclination to procrastinate (Cheng, 2004, p. 316).

2.8. Previous Studies

Qadir et al. (2021) investigated the level of writing apprehension of postgraduate students about age, academic level, and gender. The study sample included (17) male and (20) female students enrolled in the English language teaching postgraduate program at a private university in North Cyprus. The study adopted

the Writing Apprehension Test (W.A.T.)to collect the needed data developed by Daly and Miller (1975) to measure the writing apprehension level of native speakers. It originally consisted of (63) items, later reduced to a five-point Likert scale of (26). The data was analyzed by Pearson correlation, chi-square, and independent samples t-test. Hence, the results showed that most students experience moderate writing apprehension. There are no significant correlations between writing apprehension and age, academic level, and gender.

Soleimani et al. (2020) examined the relationship between L2 writing anxiety, writing self-efficacy, and writing motivation as they investigated how these variables could affect students' writing performance. To achieve these aims, the researcher developed a five-point Likert questionnaire of (40) items based on extant literature to measure students' L2 writing anxiety, writing self-efficacy, and writing motivation. In addition, the participants were requested to write an essay of (300) words within (95) minutes, which was rated to identify their writing performance. The study sample included (125) male and female students in the Department of English at the University of Halabja. To analyze the data, the researchers utilized Spearman correlation and linear regression analysis to examine the relationship between variables. The results showed that writing self-efficacy and motivation positively and significantly correlate with L2 writing performance. L2 writing anxiety indicated a significant but negative correlation with L2 writing performance.

Similarly, Aljafen (2013) conducted a study to answer these two questions: to what extent do Saudi EFL undergraduate students experience writing anxiety in the College of Engineering, pharmacy, and Preparatory? In which college do students experience more writing anxiety? Twenty-nine-six students were collected randomly from three science colleges at Qassim University. The English Writing Apprehension Attitude Test (E.W.A.T.) by Daly and Miller (1975c) was used to

measure the level of writing anxiety, which consists of (26) items. The results revealed that the three groups share almost the same moderate feeling of English writing anxiety. The engineering students scored higher anxiety conversely to the college of pharmacy, who recorded the lowest level of anxiety.

Ekmekçi (2018) carried out the study to identify the Foreign Language Writing Anxiety (F.L.W.A.) level of prospective future teachers. Besides, it aims to examine if there is a significant difference between first- and fourth-year students regarding their level and writing anxiety. Hence, the researcher chose (22) males and (104) females attending an E.L.T. department at a state university in Turkey. The sample consisted of (71) freshman and (55) senior students. To collect the needed data, the researcher used two instruments: The Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (S.L.W.A.I.) developed by Cheng (2004) consists of (22) items with three subscales.

Additionally, he used four open-ended questions to make students write sincerely about what they thought about foreign language writing. Independent samples, t-test content analysis, and pattern coding analyzed data. The results indicated that 60% of the study sample has moderate writing anxiety. There is a statistically significant difference between the two groups in the level levels of anxiety in general and somatic anxiety levels in particular. However, there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups in terms of avoidance behaviour and cognitive anxiety.

Wahyuni et al. (2017) worked on analyzing writing anxiety in English by identifying the levels, dominant type, and main factors of anxiety in writing English among a sample of (50) undergraduate students in the Islamic College in East Java, Indonesia. Two questionnaires were used to collect data: the Writing Anxiety Inventory of Second Language by Cheng (2004) and the Writing Anxiety

Causes Inventory by Rezaei &Jafari (2014a). The results demonstrated that fifty-four per cent of the students experienced a high level of anxiety. On the other hand, %44 of the study sample experienced a moderate level of writing anxiety. Cognitive writing anxiety recorded the highest mean among the two other types of writing anxiety. Then, linguistic difficulties, fear of teachers' negative comments, insufficient writing practice, and time pressure were the four main factors that caused writing anxiety.

Chapter Three

3. Methodology

3.1Participants

The current study was conducted during the academic year 2021-2022. The population included the sixth-grade preparatory students at the Al-Karkh side of Baghdad city. A group of (160) male and female sixth-grade students were selected randomly from four- public secondary schools as the study sample. The study sample was divided into homogenous groups based on their high and low proficiency level. The average age of participants is (18) years old. The final examination scores were considered to define the proficiency level. Those who attained more than 90% were regarded as high-proficient students, while those who obtained 65% or less were deemed low-proficient. It is worth mentioning that the entire study sample has been learning English as a foreign language for at least eight years.

3.2 Instrument

A descriptive-quantitative approach was used to investigate the objectives of the study. A 5-point Likert scale of (26) items designed by Cheng (2004) was employed as an instrument to collect the required data. The Second Language

Writing Anxiety Inventory (S.L.W.A.I.) by Cheng (2004) was developed to measure writing anxiety; it was conceived as a reliable and extensive scale in research studies over the past years. Hence, a newly modified Arabic version, with some minor changes, has been generated to be more appropriate and comprehended for the study sample. It was exposed to a group of experts specialized in educational and psychological sciences to modify and give their opinions about each item. The revised scale version has been tabulated to (20) items on a 3-point Likert scale ranging from "true of me" to never true of me." The results of the final English course test, a national-standardized test utilized to determine students' proficiency in the English language for the academic year 2021-2022, were considered a second instrument to collect the needed data.**3. 3 Data Analysis**

The researcher employed S.P.S.S. software version .22 to analyze the collected data. The Normality test was used to examine the distribution of the study sample in terms of writing anxiety, and a Reliability Statistic was run to test the internal consistency of the questionnaire. One sample t-test was used to identify if the mean of the sample in terms of experiencing writing anxiety is different from the test value. An independent sample t-test was used to figure out if there is a significant difference between males and females in terms of experience of writing anxiety generally. To determine if there is a significant difference in experience writing anxiety according to their proficiency level, an independent sample t-test was applied. Furthermore, Pearson product-moment correlation was computed to identify the correlation between students' proficiency in the English language and writing anxiety.

3.4. Tests of Normality

To examine the distribution of the study sample in terms of writing anxiety, which is necessary to decide on the accurate tests for analyzing the collected data, the result of the normality test came to be, as shown in Table (1).
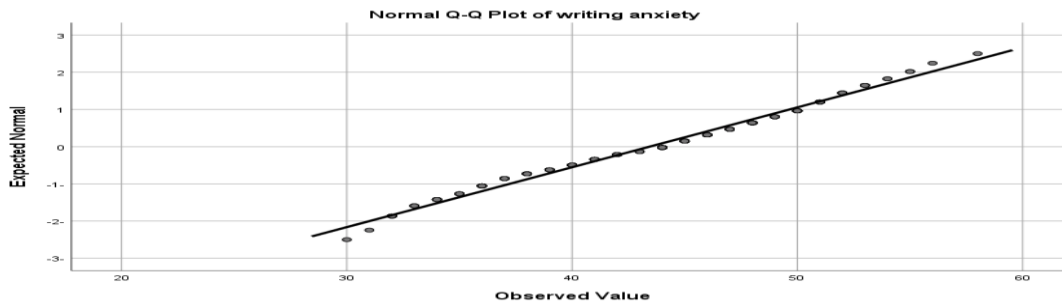
Table (1) Normality test

Table (1) shows the normal distribution of the study sample.

3.5. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's alpha test was run using S.P.S.S. software v. (23) to examine the internal consistency of the questionnaire.

Table (2) Reliability statistic

Cronbach's alpha	N of Items
0.721	20

Table (2) displays the reliability value of the questionnaire's items, which was a= 0.72. It means that the questionnaire has an acceptable reliability index of inter-correlations among items. (Bland & Altman, 1997)

Chapter Four

This section embraces the answers to the raised questions.

4.1. What is the level of writing anxiety and the type of affection (positive, negative) among Iraqi EFL senior secondary school students?

Descriptive statistics of the scale were run in addition to the one-sample t-test to answer this question.

Table (3) Descriptive statistics of the scale

Total	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
High Anxiety	92	30	80	5.75
Moderate anxiety		35	73	5.0
Low anxiety		36	84	5.2
Total				5.316

Table (3) presents the descriptive statistics of the writing anxiety. Ninety-two students (57%) were found to have moderate levels of anxiety. It shows that the mean score of anxiety is (5.316) among Iraqi EFL senior secondary school students, which reflects a moderate level of anxiety compared to the other levels.

T-Test

Table (4) One-Sample Test

Test Value = 40

	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
writing anxiety	43.4375	6.21288	6.999	159	.000	3.43750	2.4674	4.4076

The results in Table (4) reveal the mean score of students writing anxiety is (M=43.4375, SD= 6.21288), which is greater than the test value = 40, and the calculated (t) = 6.999 is higher than the tabulated (t) (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. Meanwhile, the p-value is (0.000), which is less than (0.05); this implies a significant difference between the writing anxiety mean score and test value, approving that Iraqi EFL senior secondary school students experience writing anxiety positively through learning the English language. Accordingly, the alternative hypothesis proposed by the researcher, "Students generally experience writing anxiety positively irrespective of their gender and proficiency level", is accepted.

4.2 Is there a statistically significant difference between male and female students in experiencing writing anxiety?

T-Test

Table (5) Group Statistics

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
writing anxiety	male	80	43.8625	5.74069	.64183
	female	80	43.0125	6.66085	.74471

Table (6) Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
writing anxiet	Equal variances assumed	1.714	.192	.865	158	.389	.85000	.98312	-1.09176 -	2.79176

y	Equal variances are not assumed.		.865	154.632	.389	.85000	.98312	1.09208	-2.79208
								-	-

To investigate the significant difference between male and female students in terms of the experience of writing anxiety generally, the researcher utilized the independent sample t-test. As shown in Table (5), the output displays there is no difference between male-students' mean (M=43.8625, SD=5.74069) and female-students' mean (M = 43.0125, SD = 6.66085). Thus, since the p-value is 0 .389, which is greater than (0.05) and the calculated (t) value = .865 was lower than the tabulated value (1.98) at 0.05 level of significance, it concludes there is no statistically significant difference between male and female students in experiencing writing anxiety. Consequently, the null hypothesis is accepted.

4.3 Is there a significant difference between low and high-proficient students in terms of writing anxiety?

T-Test

Table (7) Group Statistics

proficiency		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
writing anxiety	high	80	43.5125	6.88236	.76947
	low	80	43.3625	5.50545	.61553

Table (8) Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
writing anxiety	Equal variances assumed	6.031	.015	.152	158	.879	.15000	.98537	-1.79620-	2.09620
	Equal variances are not assumed.			.152	150.732	.879	.15000	.98537	-1.79693-	2.09693

The independent sample t-test was employed to reveal if there is a significant difference between high and low-proficient students undergoing writing anxiety in the English language. The output of the t-test, as shown in Table (7), points to there is no difference between students' mean with high proficiency (M=43.5125, SD=6.88236) and the mean of low proficient students (M=43.3625, SD=5.50545). Since the p-value (.879) is higher than (0.05) and the calculated (t) value= .152 was lower than the tabulated value (1.98) at 0.05 level of significance, it implies that there is no significant difference between low and high proficient students in term

of writing anxiety. In brief, students with low proficiency experience the same level of writing anxiety in the English language compared to students with high proficiency. Thus, it leads to reject the alternative hypothesis.

4.4 What is the relationship between students' proficiency and writing anxiety?

Correlations

Table (9) Correlations

		proficiency	writing anxiety
proficiency	**Pearson Correlation**	1	-.012-
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.879
	N	160	160
writing anxiety	**Pearson Correlation**	-.012-	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.879	
	N	160	160

To answer question four, which seeks the statistical relationship between students' proficiency and writing anxiety in the English language, the researcher applied Pearson's correlation coefficient test. The achieved result, as displayed in Table (8), indicated a negative correlation (r= -.012-) between students' proficiency and writing anxiety, which means they move in opposite directions. If the student has

less proficiency in a foreign language, the more writing anxiety a student experiences, and vice versa. Thus, the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

5. Discussion

Writing has been singled out as a complex and challenging skill to be mastered by EFL learners, not only because of the development and organization of thought but also because of the challenge of controlling one's feelings through the writing process, negatively reflecting students' productivity. Thus, the current research aims to investigate writing anxiety among Iraqi EFL senior secondary school students. The research raised four basic questions: the result of the first question congruent with the findings of studies conducted by (Aljafen, 2013; Ekmekçi, 2018 Quvanch, Z., & Si Na, K., 2022), which revealed that the research sample had experienced a moderate level of writing anxiety in learning English. However, the result is incompatible with similar studies (Zhang, 2011; Hidayanti, I., & Anggraini, 2023; Wahyuni et al., 2017; Jebreil et al., 2015) that examined the level of writing anxiety among a sample of males and female students who are studying English as a foreign language. The result came to be that the writing anxiety level is dominantly high. As for question two, looking for the difference between male and female students in experiencing writing anxiety, the findings disclosed that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female students in terms of experiencing writing anxiety. This finding is consistent with the results of studies (Aljafen, 2013; Salem and Al Dyiar, 2014; Salikin, 2019; Quvanch & Si Na, 2022; Hidayanti & Anggraini, 2023). It means that the skill of writing has a common feature that negatively impacts students' learning of English, irrespective of their gender. Concerning the difference between low and high-proficient students in terms of writing anxiety, the result unveiled that there is no significant

difference between low and high-proficient students in terms of writing anxiety. This result is inconsistent with the results of research implemented by (Young, 1991; Hongxia Zhang 2011; Jebreil et al., 2015; Quvanch, Z., & Si Na, 2022) found a significant difference among learners at the level of proficiency. Regarding question four which seeks the statistical relationship between students' proficiency and writing anxiety in the English language, many previous research studies concerned with studying writing anxiety (Septiantama, 2022; Sabti et al., 2019; Fitrinada et al., 2018; Khelalfa, 2018; Zhang, 2011; Erkan and Saban, 2010; Cheng, 2004; Cheng et al., 1999) the current research reached that there is a non-significant negative correlation (r= -.012-) between students' proficiency and writing anxiety of the study sample. This implies that the less proficiency a student has in a foreign language, the more writing anxiety a student experiences.

6. **Conclusion**

The research intended to determine the level of experiencing writing anxiety among Iraqi EFL senior secondary school students and whether there is a statistically significant difference between male and female students in experiencing writing anxiety. The research aims to identify if there is a significant difference between low and high-proficient students in terms of writing anxiety and identify the type of correlation between students' proficiency and writing anxiety. The findings of the study revealed that Iraqi EFL senior secondary school students experience writing anxiety positively with a moderate level through the process of learning English. There is no statistically significant difference between male and female students in experiencing writing anxiety. There is no significant difference between low and high-proficient students in terms of writing anxiety. Finally, the findings disclosed a negative correlation (r= -.012-) between students'

proficiency and writing anxiety. It implies that the less proficiency a student has in a foreign language, the more writing anxiety a student experiences.

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