The Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Writing Anxiety in Foreign Languages: A Case Study of Non-English Majors at a Chinese Institution

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Abstract:

Self-efficacy and writing anxiety are two important psychological characteristics of writing. This study investigates the relationship between self-efficacy and anxiety when writing in a foreign language. Writing anxiety is significantly negatively associated with self-efficacy, which is reflected in writing performance, according to empirical data analysis, and these two variables interact. The higher the anxiety in foreign language writing, the lower the self-efficacy. Therefore, this paper concludes that improving writers' self-efficacy can help reduce writing anxiety, promote higher-quality writing performance, and improve writing ability. Based on the above, this article puts forward suggestions on how to alleviate writing anxiety by improving self-efficacy. This paper argues that college students can improve their self-efficacy by accumulating writing strategies, completing writing tasks in sections, and improving their writing skills. In addition, educators can help learners overcome anxiety through appropriate teaching methods, writing strategies, and interventions, as well as encouraging attitudes and positive feedback.

Keywords: Self-efficacy; college students; foreign language writing anxiety

1. Introduction

Currently, English writing ability is an important foundational skill in exam-taking and self-improvement. However, many learners often feel anxious during foreign language writing, which affects their writing performance and may lead to doubts about their writing abilities. One of the key emotional elements influencing language acquisition is anxiety, which is frequently seen as a bad emotion during the process and can have a detrimental effect on the outcome. Many foreign language learners in the study felt negative anxiety about the outcome of English writing and their motivation and confidence in learning a foreign language [1]. Self-efficacy is a significant aspect that also affects writing effectiveness. It describes a person's confidence to carry out particular tasks successfully [2]. Several studies have found that, while worry can impair writing performance, self-efficacy improves it. Writing self-efficacy and anxiety are negatively related; the better the writing performance, the higher the writing self-efficacy [3]. The higher the anxiety level, the poorer the writing performance. Therefore, the relationship between writing anxiety and self-efficacy in foreign languages must be examined to improve students' writing and further their overall development. Nonetheless, the relationship between writing anxiety in a foreign language and self-efficacy has been the subject of comparatively few particular, pertinent studies. This research will concentrate on filling this gap. This essay begins with a brief discussion of the causes, symptoms, and importance of self-efficacy concerning writing anxiety. Following that, a summary of the relationship and mutual impacts of writing anxiety and self-efficacy is presented based on the previous discussion and the data analysis of the retrieved literature. The article's conclusion offers recommendations on how the two are related to assist students in overcoming their nervousness to write in a foreign language and improving their self-efficacy as teachers.

2. Writing Anxiety and Self-Efficacy

2.1 Manifestations and Effects of Writing Anxiety

Written language is a medium through which language

can be used for various purposes and clearly impacts the development of an individual or culture [4]. Nugroho argues that communication in writing is the fundamental purpose of writing. Written form requires the writer to be well-organized, correct, and meaningful to the reader, which is not easy for students, even those who need to write in a second language [5]. Writing is quite complex, which leads to anxiety in both L1 and L2 [6]. Anxiety is one of the key emotional variables impacting language acquisition, and it is typically considered a negative feeling in the human body in the feeling which generally leads to negative feedback on the results. And a large number of SL/FL learners have negative anxiety in listening, speaking, reading, and writing [1].

Among them, Sabti defined writing anxiety as the physical and psychological discomfort (explained as lack of confidence) when a learner writes at a specific time and place, leading to the withdrawal of efforts and the avoidance of challenges, which ultimately reduces the quality of learning and destroys the outcome [3]. Some scholars have also recognized anxiety about writing as a unique sort of anxiety that comes right before a writing activity, which often brings different degrees of emotional discomfort to student writers, such as pain and fear, and believes that writing anxiety is not conducive to students' successful written communication. Zhang also believes that learners' lack of confidence in writing is the reason for high anxiety levels [7]. A large body of inquiry suggests that there is an adverse link between students' anxiety and their writing accomplishments. The more writing anxiety there is, the lower the performance. For instance, in a survey of 100 ESL/EFL students from Iraqi public colleges, the qualitative analysis of the questionnaire found that anxiety hindered Enhanced writing performance, Self-efficacy, and achievement motivation can improve writing performance [7]. The negative effects of writing anxiety are immeasurable; summarizes the five adverse writing anxiety and their Impact on Writing, the quality of information encoding, the individual's actual writing behavior, the individual's writing performance, willingness to write or attend advanced writing classes, and job choice, which also proves that writing anxiety should be taken seriously [8].

2.2 Self-Efficacy

Bandura's self-efficacy is a belief in one's competence in dealing with problems. He claims that self-efficacy is primarily based on direct experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional experiences [2]. Self-efficacy is the ability to feel, think, motivate, and behave through four main processes: cognitive motivation, emotion, and choice process [9].

In addition, the learning of EFL learners greatly depends on their self-confidence and self-efficacy. Their level of self-efficacy influences people's perseverance and determination to overcome difficulties, and the level of self-efficacy plays a role in people's perseverance and determination to overcome difficulties. Conversely, low self-efficacy is the opposite [10]. In his proposal, he proposed that self-efficacy is a crucial factor in learning foreign languages, which is worth studying.

3. Relationships and Influences

In conclusion, writing performance, self-efficacy, and anxiety in foreign languages are closely related. Whether there is a certain correlation between writing anxiety and writing self-efficacy requires further investigation. Based on the intermediary factor of writing performance, this thesis predicts that students' writing self-efficacy can be improved by lowering their writing anxiety and, at the same time, promoting an improvement in their writing scores.

3.1 Correlation

Writing self-efficacy and writing anxiety do connect, and their correlation is negative, according to several empirical investigations [11]. A study showed that writing anxiety and various subdimensions of writing self-efficacy were negatively correlated to different extents. Specifically, the writing self-efficacy subdimension of "planning," which has a moderately negative link with "punctuation" and "accuracy," showed a strong negative correlation where writing fear was concerned and a lower negative correlation with "content" [12]. From this study, it is reasonable to assume that the presence of writing anxiety is somewhat indicative of a lesser degree of writing self-efficacy. Furthermore, self-efficacy, as a crucial predictive factor, is reflected through the external manifestation of writing anxiety when writing in a foreign language. Woodrow analyzed students from four universities in China using writing self-efficacy and writing anxiety as latent variables. He linked them to the writing performance variable, also resulting in a significant negative correlation [13]. Applying the standards for the magnitude of effect sizes between things proposed by Cohen, the strength of the relationship between these two variables can be observed, demonstrating a substantial association between writing self-efficacy and writing anxiety and a considerable impact size [14]. Based on the above empirical studies, the anticipated outcome of this study can be confirmed: The self-efficacy of writers and writing anxiety are strongly correlated negatively. To put it another way, pupils who experience high levels of anxiety are less confident while writing in a foreign language, viewing it as a burden. Therefore, they find it difficult to overcome challenges encountered in writing, making it hard to improve their writing performance.

Therefore, when educators effectively regulate students' self-efficacy, the emotional impact of writing anxiety usually decreases. In other words, negative evaluations, time pressure, and a lack of sufficient foreign language writing practice lead to lower self-efficacy in students and generate intense anxiety. This suggests that as writing anxiety decreases, self-efficacy strengthens, and this subtle interaction is reflected in writing performance, manifesting as positive feedback. This also subtly demonstrates the possibility that students who struggle with writing and have low self-efficacy may need more support and guidance. Individuals with low self-efficacy may believe that completing a task is more complicated than it is, which can foster their negative emotions, leading to decreased task completion rates [15]. Therefore, educators should avoid inducing such negative emotions in students and instead cultivate positive emotions like self-efficacy to enhance their foreign language writing skills.

3.2 Influence

Writing belongs to the activity of cognition and psychology in a common effort, which is the process of cognizing and solving problems and a skill that students should learn in the academic process. However, when students continue learning writing skills, their writing ability will gradually improve. Meanwhile, various factors can change their cognitive level and psychological activities [16]. Foreign writing anxiety and self-efficacy are principal emotions affecting foreign writing activities. Meanwhile, they have a direct impact on each other. Based on the above content and relevant research data, it is found that second-language writing anxiety hurts self-efficacy [13,17]. From the research data, writing anxiety influences writing self-efficacy to achieve the influence of writing performance among college students, so self-efficacy is a medium between them [17]. The main reason is that excessive anxiety among students leads to excessive negative emotions, resulting in procrastination or avoidance of writing-related behaviors. Their writing performance is also relatively low, leading to self-doubt and reduced self-efficacy. Therefore, regardless of the learner's second language writing ability, they believe they can complete this task and may be more proactive in responding to the challenges that arise in writing activities [18]. Thus, it can alleviate the anxiety of language learners in writing, for instance, negatively taking writing tasks and worrying about their compositions being read and evaluated by others. Secondly, by analyzing the sample data of 100 EFL students in Iraq, it can be concluded that second language learners exhibit L2 writing anxiety and L2 self-efficacy in cognitive writing activities. Specifically, high writing anxiety leads to poor writing motivation. Meanwhile, self-efficacy has a positive relationship between writing performance

and writing motivation. In other words, high anxiety can be inferred to have a mutual influence between L2 writing anxiety and L2 self-efficacy. Second language learners can establish strong writing motivation to improve self-efficacy, reduce anxiety, and lay a good emotional foundation for improving writing performance. However, high second-language writing anxiety can easily lead to poor performance of students in second-language writing, and students will not work hard at learning English writing [19]. Based on the correlation between self-efficacy and writing anxiety, low L2 writing self-efficacy may lead to cognitive deficiencies in students, making it difficult to complete second-language writing-related activities [20]. Based on the above research, it can be found that Chinese college students still lack confidence and understanding in their skills and understanding of English writing. Because writing and self-efficacy have a strong correlation with each other, it can be concluded that reducing avoidance anxiety compared to other dimensions of anxiety is crucial in reducing overall anxiety and also plays an important role in improving self-efficacy [21].

4. Discussion

The study's findings show that writing anxiety and self-efficacy have a high negative correlation and mutual influence. In other words, learners' self-efficacy declines as their anxiety level rises when writing in a foreign language. This relationship has a substantial impact on learners' ability to write in other languages, as well as their overall academic success. College students can thus freely learn more writing techniques and approaches to enhance their English writing proficiency and self-efficacy. They can set small goals for themselves in their daily learning, complete the writing tasks in segments, gain self-efficacy after completing the tasks, and reflect and adjust more after completing the writing tasks to improve themselves and promote a virtuous cycle. Educators can enhance students' self-efficacy in foreign language teaching through appropriate teaching methods and writing strategy interventions to promote students' writing ability. To reduce writing anxiety and increase self-efficacy, teachers might incorporate additional writing skills into the classroom, organize peer feedback activities, and involve students in mutual assessment. Teachers can also assign specific and specialized writing projects, activities, and competitions for students with low self-efficacy to perform effectively and boost their self-efficacy. Teachers can provide targeted guidance and assistance to different students according to their characteristics. Teachers should adopt a positive and encouraging attitude towards learners, objectively face students' deficiencies, give positive feedback and evaluation, and create a relaxing and enjoyable writing environment to help them overcome anxiety and enhance

their confidence and motivation in writing.

5. Conclusion

The current study's extensive and targeted analysis of college students' foreign language writing anxiety and self-efficacy levels led to the following findings. First, there is a varying degree of negative connection between various subdimensions of writing self-efficacy and writing anxiety. Self-efficacy and writing performance are directly related, with a significant negative association. Second, there is a clear relationship between self-efficacy and writing anxiety. Writing anxiety can directly reduce self-efficacy. Educators and college students can grasp these emotional factors and use appropriate methods to reduce students' anxiety about foreign language writing and improve the effectiveness of foreign language teaching. On the one hand, college students can enhance their self-efficacy by spontaneously accumulating writing skills and methods and completing writing tasks and writing adjustments in segments. On the other hand, educators can help learners overcome anxiety through teaching methods and writing strategy interventions and enhance students' self-efficacy by organizing more personalized writing activities in the classroom, tailoring the teaching to the needs of individual students, adopting encouraging attitudes, and giving positive evaluations to enhance their confidence in writing, and to alleviate their writing anxiety.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally, and their names were listed alphabetically.

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