

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE FACTORS THAT
ASSOCIATED WITH WRITING ANXIETY FOR ENGLISH
LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN
UAE UNIVERSITIES**

**تحقيق في العوامل المؤثرة والمصاحبة للقلق والتوتر الكتابي عند متعلمي اللغة
الانجليزية في جامعات اماراتية**

by

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ABSTRACT

Despite increasing interest in investigating the effects of second/foreign language writing anxiety on L2 learners' writing performance and attitudes over the last three decades, the potential sources of that phenomenon have not been widely researched and identified, particularly in Arabic EFL contexts. Hence, the current study with its mixed approach design mainly explores and investigates the potential factors associated with writing anxiety and the strategies for alleviating it among the English language learners in UAE universities. A total of one hundred and ten students in addition to six EFL instructors were the study's participants. Quantitatively, two survey questionnaires and students' writing scores were used to investigate the anxiety levels, effects and sources. For the qualitative phase, ten highly-anxious students and ten low-anxious ones were individually interviewed to deepen understanding about the possible sources of their anxiety and the strategies they use to mitigate its detrimental effects. Additionally, a focus group discussion with the instructors was held to explore their perspectives on the coping strategies they use and suggest to reduce the levels of anxiety in writing classes.

The findings show that the participants encountered high levels of anxiety when writing English compositions and there was a statistically significant negative correlation between students' writing scores and their levels of anxiety. Furthermore, the findings indicate that high levels of writing anxiety could primarily be attributed to writing tests, cognitive and linguistic factors. Some pedagogical practices, feedback, and evaluation factors were also reported by the participants as moderate and weak contributing factors to their writing anxiety. In addition, the findings reveal that various affective, cognitive, linguistic, and pedagogical mitigating strategies and tactics can be used by the low-anxious students and EFL instructors to lower the anxiety levels. The results also demonstrate that computer use in writing classes and tests was perceived as an anxiety provoking factor and had no significant effects in reducing the participants' writing anxiety. Based on these findings, pedagogical implications and recommendations for further studies are provided for educators, policymakers and researchers.

ألملخص

على الرغم من الاهتمام المتزايد بدراسة الآثار المترتبة على القلق المصاحب للكتابة باللغة الثانية/الأجنبية على مستوى الأداء الكتابي لدى متعلمين اللغة الثانية وموقفهم تجاه مهارة الكتابة خلال العقود الثلاث الماضية إلا أن المصادر المحتملة التي تتخلل ظاهرة القلق لم يتم التعرف عليها وبحثها بحثًا وافيًا وبخاصة في سياق تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في العالم العربي. ولتحقيق أهداف هذه الدراسة تم استخدام منهج مختلط يجمع بين المنهج الكمي والنوعي يمكن الباحث في المقام الأول من الكشف والتحقيق في العوامل المحتملة المصاحبة للقلق من الكتابة والإستراتيجيات التي من شأنها التخفيف من هذا القلق بين صفوف متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعات دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. شملت عينة الدراسة مئة وعشرة طلاب بالإضافة إلى ستة مدرسين مختصين بتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. توافقا مع المنهج الكمي تضمنت الدراسة استخدام مسحين استنبائيين ودرجات الطلبة في اختبارات الكتابة بهدف دراسة مستويات القلق من الكتابة باللغة الأجنبية والآثار المترتبة على هذا القلق ومصادره. كما تم إجراء مقابلات فردية مع عشرة طلاب لديهم مستوى عال من القلق وعشرة آخرين سجلوا مستوى منخفض من القلق سعيا لتعميق فهمهم بالمصادر المحتملة للقلق من الكتابة وتسليط الضوء على الاستراتيجيات المتبعة للتخفيف من الآثار الضارة للقلق. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تم عقد مجموعة بؤرية تبادل فيها المدرسون آراءهم ووجهات نظرهم حول الاستراتيجيات التي يقترحونها ويستخدمونها للتكيف والتقليل من مستويات القلق عند الطلبة في حصص الكتابة. وأوضحت نتائج الدراسة ظهور مستويات عالية من القلق لدى المشاركين عند كتابة المواضيع باللغة الإنجليزية، كما ثبت وجود علاقة سلبية ذات دلالة إحصائية بين درجات الطلاب في اختبارات الكتابة وبين مستويات القلق. بينت النتائج أيضا أن إختبارات الكتابة والعوامل المعرفية واللغوية تعد من أهم العوامل المؤثرة التي تساهم في تفاقم ظاهرة القلق من الكتابة عند الطلبة. كما تعد السلوكيات التربوية والعاطفية، والتغذية الإرجاعية، وعوامل التقييم من العوامل التي تساهم في ارتفاع مستويات القلق ولكن بصورة معتدلة وطفيفة. وتكشف النتائج أيضا توظيف الطلبة الذين أبدوا مستويات منخفضة من القلق بالإضافة إلى معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لمجموعة من الاستراتيجيات والتكتيكات الوجدانية والمعرفية واللغوية والتربوية المختلفة التي تساعد على انخفاض مستويات القلق. كما أظهرت النتائج أن استخدام الحاسوب في حصص واختبارات الكتابة يعتبر عاملا محفزا للقلق وليس له آثار تذكر في الحد من القلق الذي يصاحب الطلبة عند الكتابة. وخرجت الدراسة بعدد من المقترحات التربوية والتوصيات لإجراء المزيد من الدراسات التي تخدم أهداف التربويين وواضعي السياسات التربوية والباحثين على حد سواء.

DEDICATION

*With deepest thanks, this dissertation
is dedicated to my mother,
my wife, my children, and
to my siblings for their
everlasting assistance,
encouragement, serenity,
love and support.*

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ABBREVIATIONS

CAW.....	Computer Assisted Writing
EFL.....	English as a Foreign Language
ESL.....	English as a Second Language
EVTA.....	Expectancy Value Theory of Anxiety
FLLs.....	Foreign Language Learners
FLCAS.....	Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale
IELTS.....	International English Language Testing System
L2.....	Foreign/Second Language
LCDH.....	Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis
MMA.....	Mixed Methods Approach
SLA.....	Second Language Acquisition
SLWAI.....	Second Language Writing Apprehension Inventory
SWAQ.....	Sources of Writing Anxiety Questionnaire
TOEFL.....	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UAE.....	United Arab Emirates
WA.....	Writing Anxiety

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Anxiety is quite possibly the affective factor that most pervasively obstructs the learning process”
(Arnold & Brown, 1999, p. 8).

Learning second/foreign languages might be different from learning other subjects and it can be relatively a demanding task. One of the repeatedly raised questions in language acquisition theories and arguments is why some learners are more successful and motivated than others. Similarly, many language practitioners and instructors are still seeking an interpretation for the different output produced by the learners who are given the same input in a given language classroom. The possible answers and interpretations for such inquiries have been attributed to many determining factors which come into play when learning foreign languages such as cognitive abilities, personal characteristics, social contexts, cultural considerations and affective factors as well. Describing affective factors as volatile, Ellis (1994) not only points to their effect on the responses to specific learning daily activities but also on the overall learning process. Affectively, a great deal of research (e.g., Arnold and Brown, 1999; Bandura, 1977, 1991; Dornyei, 2001; Horwitz et al, 1986; Pajares, 2003) has demonstrated that our learning outcomes are correlated with, and affected by emotional factors such as motivation, self-efficacy, and anxiety. With its down spiraling impact, anxiety contributes to poor performance and obstructs successful language acquisition and learning (Arnold & Brown, 1999; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Horwitz et al, 1986). Its interference with many types of learning can be easily detected, but when it gets in the way of learning foreign or second languages, it is termed ‘foreign/second language anxiety’. The alarming levels of language anxiety in classrooms are so high that Campell & Ortiz, (1991) state that about half of language learners experience a startling level of

anxiety. Subsequently, research and interest have dramatically grown to include other types of L2 classroom anxieties and nervousness associated with specific language skills and tasks (e.g., Cheng et al, 1999; Clark, 2005; Sellers, 2000). As one of the main predictors of second language acquisition (SLA), anxiety negative effects on SLA and mastering the language four skills has been repeatedly mentioned in a plethora of studies (e.g., Brown, 2000; Dornyei, 2005; Ellis, 1994; Horwitz et al, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; MacIntyre, 1995; Price, 1991; Young, 1991).

As a productive skill, writing in L2 has been viewed as one of the most complex language skills since it requires not only linguistic competence but also a sufficient amount of writing convention, cognitive strategies, topical schemata, and communicative competence (Byrd, 2010; Harmer, 2006; Hyland, 2003; Richard & Renandya, 2002). Therefore, the complexity of writing tends to escalate anxiety levels among learners which in turn might lead to demotivation and negative attitudes towards writing (Cheng, 2002; Pajares, 2003; Sharpels, 1993; Zhu, 2004). Regardless of the numerous attempts and practical methods applied to enhance student writing in L2 contexts, writing is still viewed as one of the most difficult skills to be mastered by most L2 learners at all levels (Atay& Kurt, 2007; Erkan and Saban, 2011; Hassan, 2001; Latif, 2007). As a specific facet of foreign language (FL) anxiety, frustration and stress in L2 writing classes have been increasingly recognised and emphasized by many researchers as a hindrance to writing performance and a source of learners' negative attitudes towards writing (e.g., Cheng et al, 1999; Cheng, 2004; Hassan, 2001). The causes of such affective feelings in L2 writing classes have been attributed to multiple sources such as lack of self-confidence, low self-efficacy, product model of teaching writing, linguistic incompetence, poor skill development, teaching practices,

negative feedback, peer competition, as well as cultural factors (Abu Shawish and Atea, 2010; Cheng, 2002; Daud et al, 2005; Latif, 2007, 2012; Lin, 2009; Zhang, 2011). Calling for more investigation into writing anxiety, researchers who have recent interest in this phenomenon (e.g., Abu Shawish &Atea, 2010; Atay & Kurt, 2007; Cheng, 2004; Daud et al, 2005; Hassan 2001; Latif, 2007) have criticized the limited number of studies that address L2 writing anxiety. Similarly, Leki (1999) adds that interpreting the results related to writing anxiety is not an easy task since its sources are quite diverse. As such, identifying and exploring the sources of writing anxiety from affective, cognitive, pedagogical, linguistic and socio cultural perspectives has become a fundamental requirement in L2 writing contexts.

Based on the researcher's experience and observations of what has been happening in English writing classes, it could be claimed that the English writing context in the UAE is not an exception. A relatively small number of studies (e.g., Abu Shawish &Atea, 2010; Sawalha et al., 2012; Hassan, 2001; Latif, 2007, 2012; Salim, 2007) have examined English writing anxiety (WA) in Arab contexts and none of those studies were conducted in the UAE L2 context. Thus, this study is intended to fill a gap in this regard and contribute to a deeper understanding of the issue of English WA among UAE university students who study English as a foreign language (EFL). The researcher's long experience in teaching EFL in the UAE schools and universities has enabled him to observe and feel how much anxious the students become whenever they are asked to write English compositions. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that some students leave writing exams without writing even few sentences or a short paragraph. Meanwhile, other students who are relatively proficient in other skills like reading or speaking exhibit fears of making writing errors and lack of confidence in their writing abilities. So, one of the motives behind addressing

this complex psychological phenomenon is the strong personal desire to understand why students are so stressful in English writing situations and how teachers and students can be assisted to productively dwindle the amount of anxiety. The importance of the current study lies in its being one of the very rare studies that specifically handle English WA (in terms of potential sources and alleviating strategies) in the Arab World and the UAE context in particular. Studies of this kind need to be conducted in the UAE EFL context since finding out the roots of anxiety is not only beneficial to the learners but also to the higher educational institutions which have a large number of students in English language foundation year programmes. Hopefully, the mixed methods research design used in this study will lead to valuable findings that contribute to the current related literature. An important step used in this study was integrating five quantitative and qualitative research instruments that have provided a deeper insight into the investigated issue and explored both learners' and teachers' views about how to alleviate its effects. Compared to similar studies conducted in other L2 contexts (e.g., Abu Shawish and Atea, 2010; Atay and Kurt, 2006; Latif, 2007), this study is unique in investigating and combining the perspectives of different stakeholders in one study (highly-anxious students, low-anxious students and EFL instructors). In the same regard, the suggested alleviating strategies are not only based on the researcher's viewpoint and recommendations but also on the stakeholders' lived experiences and practical suggestions.

In addition to the aforementioned specific motives, the current study acts as a response to the researchers' constant calls for directing more attention to the writing affective variables which largely determine writing performance and learning. In a recent study, Gkonou (2011, p. 278) claims that the number of studies examining L2 writing anxiety is still scarce compared to

speaking anxiety which has received the most empirical attention and he claims that “to date, however, writing anxiety has been less frequently addressed among language anxiety researchers”. In comparison with studies conducted in the first language contexts, Salim (2007, p. 59) points out that “there is relatively little research that investigated this problem [WA] in L2”. Specifically, he calls for further research to investigate writing anxiety causes and alleviating strategies in second/ foreign language contexts.

Before formulating and tackling the four language skill-based anxieties as specific types, the general construct of ‘anxiety’ has been addressed for many years and defined by psychologists (e.g., Scovel, 1978) as subjective feelings of fear, stress and worry, related to an object or a state of apprehension, experienced by individuals with heightened levels of nervousness that accompany these feelings. Anxiety is usually measured by either behavioral/physiological tests or self-report reactions. Based on an individual’s propensity to anxiety, Spielberger (1983) differentiates between trait and state anxieties. ‘Trait anxiety’ refers to the permanent personality characteristic which makes individuals have a tendency to be anxious in any situation, while ‘state anxiety’ refers to the unpleasant temporary emotional condition experienced by a person as a response to a particular situation at a particular moment of time.

In 1970s, the early studies (e.g., Chastain, 1975; Kleinmann, 1977) about language anxiety and its effects on performance in particular, resulted in “inconsistent, scattered and inconclusive results” (Young, 1991, p.426). This was due to considering and defining language anxiety as a manifestation of other types such as test and communication anxieties. As a more recent situation-specific phenomenon, foreign language anxiety is described by some researchers (e.g., Horwitz et al, 1986; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991) as a feeling of stress, apprehension, and

negative emotional reaction associated with L2 learning situations. This definition seems more appropriate since it views language anxiety as a distinct type from other types of general anxiety. Being a complex multidimensional phenomenon, language anxiety may be produced as a result of psychological factors such as the learner's own self-perception, perception about peers, teachers or other cultures (Scovel, 1991), insufficient command of the language or different social and cultural factors such as being afraid of making errors in front of others and losing social identity (e.g., Aydin, 2001; Richard, 1996).

1.1.Statement of the Problem

Although most language anxiety debates have addressed speaking as the most anxiety provoking skills for L2 learners (e.g., Horwitz, et al, 1986; Price, 1991; Young, 1991, 1992), justification for regarding WA as a specific type of language anxiety caused by social, pedagogical, and psychological factors has been provided in several studies (e.g., Bline et al, 2001; Cheng et al, 1999; Daly & Wilson, 1983; Erkan & Saban, 2011; Lin, 2009; Rankin, 2006; Zhang, 2011). In addition, anxiety in writing classes is described as an arousal of emotions, feelings, and fears, particularly when evaluating written products (Larson, 1985). It has been discussed by many researchers (e.g., Huwari& Aziz, 2011; Raimes, 1985; Salim, 2007; Tsui, 1996) that learning to write in L2 is a complex skill involving as much anxiety as the other skills because writers should create ideas, recall lexical items, and consider grammar, mechanics, organization, coherence and the targeted audience. In this regard, the detrimental effects of fears and stress when writing in L2 have been viewed as a significant challenge by most researchers in language anxiety studies. Al Ahmad (2003) has brought attention to the widespread of WA as a real problem facing ESL/EFL students. In the same vein, Gilmore (2009) points to writing complexity by claiming that writing in L1 is considered to be complex for some students and when it comes to writing in

L2 the students' suffering could be exacerbated. To emphasize the affective side of writing skill, McLeod (1987) explains that all phases of the writing process are strongly influenced by affective factors such as anxiety, attitudes and motivation since writing is a cognitive and emotional mixture

After coining the term 'writing apprehension' (Daly and Miller, 1975) and determining its role in writing performance in a first language (Daly & Shamo, 1978) , much scholarly effort has been made to develop measurement scales to evaluate and measure levels of writing anxiety among both second and first language learners (e.g. Cheng 2004; Gungle & Taylor, 1989). As such, a considerable amount of research (e.g., Cheng et al, 1999; Gkonou, 2011; Kurt & Atay, 2007; Latif, 2012; Lin, 2009; Rankin. 2006; Sawalha et al, 2012) has been conducted in order to identify and understand the nature of anxiety one feels when writing particularly in L2.

Realizing the key role of writing apprehension in reflecting the learners' tendency to approach or avoid writing situations and the lack of studies about such a psychological phenomenon in the UAE EFL context necessitates addressing this issue. Furthermore, this study is one of those studies that attempt to extend the study of FL anxiety from places like North America, Turkey, and Japan where a large amount of research has been done, to an Arab context, particularly the UAE where little has been done. In addition, Sullivan's (2004) reflects the concern reported by 'The Federal National Council's Committee for Education and Youth' over the general weakness in the English standards of UAE students and calls tertiary institutions to improve students' language skills that are necessary for their academic future. Undoubtedly, mastering writing as a productive language skill is an urgent necessity in the UAE universities/colleges and of great significance since most of the students are required to write their assignments or projects in

English and to pass standardized proficiency tests of which writing essays is a main component. In this regard, the inability to express one's ideas through written communication exposes him/her to become marginalized as getting a high level of writing competence is a requirement for most postgraduate and undergraduate studies in the UAE high educational institutions. Importantly, Pajares (2003) clarifies that students who are unwilling to express themselves in writing due to apprehension are unlikely to be proficient in writing compositions. In light of the above points and considerations, identifying where the roots of writing anxiety lie, finding strategies to alleviate writing fears and apprehension, and changing students' attitudes towards writing have become essential requirement in the UAE tertiary educational system.

1.2. Research Questions

The primary purpose of this study is to explore and investigate the factors associated with WA and the strategies for alleviating it among the ELLs in UAE universities when writing English compositions. Scarcity of studies investigating such an important topic in Arabic speaking contexts, particularly in the UAE, makes the topic ripe for exploration through the following research questions:

1. To what extent do students in the UAE universities experience anxiety in English writing classes?
2. Is there a significant negative correlation between writing anxiety and writing performance?
3. What are the factors associated with writing anxiety for English language learners in the UAE universities?

4. Which strategies are perceived by student and teacher participants to be the most effective for reducing writing anxiety?
5. Is the use of the computer perceived by students to be an effective strategy for reducing writing anxiety?

As seen, the above research questions show that this study is different from similar studies conducted in different international EFL contexts. As discussed in the next chapter, most of the studies address WA from one or two facets. For instance, some studies investigate the sources without exploring the alleviating strategies; others investigate the anxiety effects without addressing the sources. In contrast, this study progresses from measuring the anxiety levels among the participants, to an investigation of its effect on performance, to the identification of its possible sources, and finally to the exploration of the alleviating strategies from both teachers and students' perspectives. In addition, the fifth research question emerges from the desire to explore the participants' perspectives about the effect of computer use in anxiety reduction which has seemed to be a controversial topic in the recent related literature.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Investigating FL anxiety is a necessity and of a great significance due to the negative effects it can have on L2 learning, performance, achievement and perception towards the whole educational process (Phillips, 1992). A considerable number of studies have pointed to the detrimental effects of anxiety on learners' language achievement (e.g., Horwitz et al, 1986; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994; Worde, 1998), and on social communicative interaction (MacIntyre, 1995), in addition to its interference in the three stages of learning; input, process and output (Tobias, 1986). The importance of creating a low stress learning situation in

improving learner's language competence is stressed by Krashen (1982) when he proposes the Affective Filter Hypothesis which indicates that anxiety, motivation, and other affective factors greatly affect SLA. Other researchers (e.g. Price, 1991) also claim that the learning process and outcomes are influenced by the psychological aspects of the learner towards learning languages. Therefore, uncovering FL anxiety producing factors will broaden insight into that affective construct and help language practitioners and teachers in creating a less anxious classroom environment.

As the four language skills have their own specialties and considerations, exploring the factors standing behind each skill anxiety could contribute to uncovering the sources of anxiety for each skill and help educators find strategies for alleviating such anxieties. The subject of L2 writing is crucial within the field of SLA as writing represents a basic component of human communication. Emphasizing the importance of writing for L2 learners to be successful in social and academic settings, Grabe and Kaplan (1996) emphasize the need of proficiency in writing for all L2 learners and for the teachers to get enough experience in how to teach writing classes. As stated above, little research has yet been carried out, to the best of my knowledge, to investigate the sources of English writing anxiety and its deleterious impact on students' writing performance in the UAE universities. It could be claimed that investigating such issues in the UAE EFL university context has its own distinctiveness and justification for two major points. Firstly, compared to its neighboring countries, the UAE might be considered a pioneer country in terms of higher education as it has become a home to a considerable number of public and private universities. Despite the small size of its population, the UAE has three federal universities (with several branches) and seventy ministry-accredited universities and higher educational institutions

(KHDA, 2010). Secondly, as most of the UAE universities are English medium ones, some standardized proficiency tests such as International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) have become major benchmark examinations for the students joining high educational institutions. The writing modules in such tests (with prompts requiring students to critically discuss some topics) put students under pressure from the moment they join the university since high stake exams generate negative feelings and tension (Lewthwaite, 2007). As such, the findings of this study could be used to help in planning appropriate IELTS and TOEFL preparation courses since practical course planning should be dependent on research theory and feedback gained from the stakeholders' perspectives (Richard, 2001).

The findings of the current study in the UAE context may also have additional areas of application. For example, investigating the level of English WA among the UAE university students and its relation with achievement is expected to draw attention towards anxiety as an essential element which should be taken into consideration when teaching English writing in the UAE universities. Furthermore, uncovering the factors contributing to students' anxiety will raise students' consciousness about English classroom anxieties. Meanwhile, instructors, curriculum designers and other concerned bodies need to think seriously of how to reduce the level of anxiety and mitigate students' fears when writing English compositions. In other words, without knowing the roots of such anxiety, instructors in the UAE universities might unintentionally exacerbate students' writing fears and anxiety. To draw attention to the importance of emotions and affect in learning languages, Djigunovic (2006) insists that affect is more important than

cognitive learning abilities which might not be engaged in the learning process without enough motivation and less anxiety in the learning situation.

1.4. The State of English Instruction in the UAE Educational Context

After gaining its independence in 1971, the UAE has witnessed a remarkable development in many fields. Since then, school education has become compulsory and English has become the only dominant foreign language which is being taught in government schools. Currently, at these schools, students have been taught English like any other school subject and Arabic is still the medium of instruction for all other subjects. The early English language teaching in the UAE schools is part of a comprehensive educational policy that aims to better prepare students for university education (Qashoa, 2006; Zastrow, 2008). In spite of mandating the teaching of English from the age of six (1st grade) to grade twelve, school graduates' proficiency is still quite low. Ahmad (2012) reports that 90% of government school graduates still need to enroll in English foundation remedial programs before being able to pursue their majors as a result of their low English proficiency levels. Consequently, English education has recently received more attention and interest. For example, the Abu Dhabi Education Council has cooperated with Zayed University to pilot a reinforcing program to boost students' English language skills in Abu Dhabi and in the rest of the Emirates at a later stage. Additionally, the Ministry of Education has been equipping schools with language laboratories and providing internet access to every government school to reinforce the use of English.

Concerning the state of English in the university context, English has been viewed as the magic Aladdin's Lamp which is hoped to help university graduates gain social, occupational and economic privileges. In all government universities and in most of the private ones, the medium

of instruction is English except for a few majors that are taught in Arabic such as Arabic language, Islamic studies and some social sciences. Before joining their majors in English medium universities, students are required to take a standardized proficiency placement test to verify their level of English proficiency. The students who are not allowed to join their majors due to low scores in the proficiency tests must be enrolled in foundation and preparatory courses that are expected to ameliorate their English competence and enable them to pass a proficiency test (minimum 5 in IELTS or 500 in TOEFL) (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011). The importance of such reinforcement courses comes from its decisive role in determining the students' future university majors.

1.5. Framework of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore and investigate the factors associated with English writing anxiety and the strategies for alleviating it among the EFL students in UAE universities. Chapter Two reviews the literature relevant to the factors/variables involved in the current study and presents its theoretical framework. Specifically, it addresses and synthesizes theories and empirical studies about the constructs of general anxiety and FL anxiety. In addition, the construct of writing anxiety, its effects on writing achievement, its potential sources, and the alleviating strategies are also reviewed and discussed as well. The detailed methodology used in conducting this study including the research design, participants, data collection tools, procedures, data analysis plan, and some ethical issues is described and elaborated in Chapter Three. Chapter Four presents both the quantitative and qualitative findings of the study that are summarized and discussed in light of the relevant literature in Chapter Five. Pedagogical implications for L2 education field, limitations, and suggestions for further research are also provided in the same chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing has been one of the basic means for exploring and discovering the world since people internationally use it to exchange information and communicate with each other (Kelly and Lawton, 1998; Lin, 2009). Thus, mastering the skill of writing is essential for being a knowledgeable educated individual. However, viewing writing tasks as uncomfortable and punishing by anxious learners makes them avoid writing situations, and if they encounter inescapable writing situations, their writing performance could be deteriorated as a result of high levels of anxiety (Daly and Wilson, 1983). In addition to the deleterious effect of WA on performance, Daly et al (1988) link it to individuals' university majors and occupational choices. Mastering this productive skill is not an easy task because of its demanding nature and the factors pertaining to it (Al Ahmad, 2003; Deane, 2011; Latif, 2007). Unlike speaking, writing needs to be learnt in formal learning situations opposed to speaking which can be learned informally (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). As stated earlier, the difficulty of writing as a message oriented skill is attributed to several requirements that are needed by the writer such as well selected vocabulary, correct grammatical sentences, organised development of ideas, considering reader levels and tendencies as well. Therefore, it can be claimed that writing in L2 provokes as much anxiety as other skills and it requires extra individual work and practice.

Based on the study's research questions which are designed to explore and investigate levels of writing anxiety, its sources and strategies alleviating it among the EFL students in UAE universities, the relevant literature about FL anxiety in general and WA as a specific skill anxiety is reviewed through two sections. A number of topics such as, the concept of general anxiety, its

role in SLA, concept of FL anxiety, effects of anxiety on learning achievement, possible sources, test anxiety, and the four language skill anxieties are reviewed in the first section. To better understand the specialty of writing anxiety, literature about its conceptual construct, sources, alleviating strategies and the impact of computer use on it is reviewed and discussed as well in the second section.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

In psychology as well as in education, anxiety has been found to be one of the most investigated variables interfering with learning and other life affairs. As a psychological construct, FL anxiety could not be studied as a separate construct from general anxiety (Scovel, 1991). The framework and theories that this study is based on are not only related to language anxiety but also derived from psychology and SLA. Consequently, , the construct of general anxiety, SLA models related to anxiety, and some theoretical models from the literature of psychology are firstly outlined and addressed to pave the way for understanding FL anxiety as a situation-specific type.

2.1.1 The Concept of General Anxiety

When we read or hear the word anxiety, some associated words or concepts such as nervousness, fear, stress, tension, affective state, unpleasant emotion, phobia and avoidance might be triggered in our minds. Longman's dictionary (2003) defines anxiety as "the feeling of being very worried about something." In psychology, Cattell & Scheier (1961) view anxiety as a result of not achieving one's needs and uncertainty about fulfilling these needs in the future. From a cognitive perspective Lazarus (1966) describes anxiety as a fear of a threatening situation without seeing an effective action for alleviating that threat. Pointing to the physiological aspects of anxiety, Leary (1982) characterizes it as a cognitive affective reaction accompanied by fear of negative future

outcome and physiological arousal. Spielberger (1980) differentiated between ‘worry’ and ‘emotionality’ as two different dimensions of anxiety. ‘Worry’ is related to the individual’s assessment for the threat and how to handle it, whereas emotionality refers to feelings or physical symptoms such as sweating, nausea, and rapid pulse associated with anxiety.

Broadly speaking, reviewing anxiety definitions in the related literature points to three basic interrelated aspects (e.g., Pappamihiel, 2002): physiological (e.g., blood pressure, muscle tension, sweaty palms, blushing, forgetfulness), behavioral (frequent absence, avoidance behavior, leaving a situation) and cognitive (subjective appraisal process, self-doubt, negative expectations). From a cognitive perspective, being a highly or a low-anxious individual depends on the individual’s appraisal of his/her capacity in dealing with threatening environments.

The two common theoretical models derived from psychology and related to anxiety are Pekrun’s (1992) ‘Expectancy Value Theory of Anxiety’ and Bandura’s (1977, 1991, 1993) ‘Theory of Self-Efficacy’. According to Pekrun’s theory, anxiety is generated naturally when individuals foresee and expect threatening events with an inability to control them. Pekrun combines the appraisal of a situation or an event as threatening or not with an appraisal of being able to control or find solutions to that threat. Bandura describes self-efficacy as the individual’s perceptions of his/her capabilities to control a potential threat or solve a problem effectively. If individuals have high sense of self-efficacy, they will not be prone to high levels of anxiety arousal. It is argued by Bandura that high self-esteem can act as a mitigating factor in anxiety provoking situations and make individuals competent to meet life challenges (Brown, 2000). Bandura (1993, p. 134) explains that a weak sense of efficacy increases students’ anxiety about scholastic demands and “it is best reduced not by anxiety palliatives but by building a strong sense of efficacy. This is

achieved through development of cognitive capabilities and self-regulative skills.” Based on those two models, it can be understood that the constructs of threat and self-efficacy are based on an individual basis and they vary from one individual to another.

So, individual differences in appraising threatening situations have turned scholars’ attention to investigate the reasons standing behind this phenomenon. Experiencing past threatening situations is a contributing factor to individual’s levels of anxiety. Pekrun (1992) claims that an individual who encounters threatening events or situations is likely to be highly-anxious in the same future situations. In this regard, Spielberger (1983) tackles the differences in people’s inclination to anxiety by explicating the differences between trait and state anxieties. He claims that individuals with trait anxiety incline more to anxiety than those with state anxiety which is temporary and easy to fade away when its inducing situation is eliminated. Individuals with trait anxiety, as a stable personality characteristic, look at the world as dangerous and threatening. Goldberg (1993) points out that people with trait anxiety are usually anxious and stressed regardless of situations. As this perspective focuses on the predisposition (intra-psyche properties) not on the situation, it has been questioned by many researchers (e.g., Endler, 2000; Leary, 1982) when they claimed that personality qualities are not significant if they are not considered within the confines of a situation. For example, the same individual may feel anxious in a certain situation but not in others. Levitt (1980) explains that the state anxiety perspective fails to locate the sources of anxiety via self-reporting since it is changeable over time and takes place at a particular moment in time such as when taking a test or communicating in L2. So, the situational determinant of anxiety leads Horwitz et al (1986) and MacIntyre & Gardner (1991) to investigate anxiety from a third perspective which is called situation-specific anxiety. The new

approach is based on the assumption that certain situations are more likely to provoke anxiety than others. For instance, some people feel anxious only when delivering a public speech or taking a test.

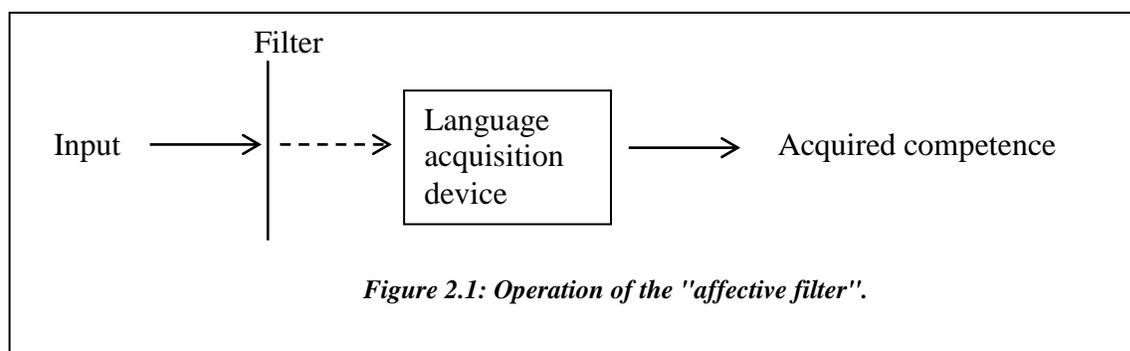
Before conceptualizing the construct of FL anxiety by Horwitz et al (1986), researchers in the field of language learning had been influenced by dichotomous perspective of anxiety (trait and state). Early language anxiety studies (e.g., Backman, 1976; Chastain, 1975) frequently yielded inconsistent and contradictory results. It is thought by educators (e.g., Horwitz et al, 1986; Scovel, 1978) that such discrepancies in the research results are attributable to the inconsistent application of the anxiety construct. This claim has been supported by the findings of other related studies which found that L2 classes elicit anxiety in many people (Aida, 1994; MacIntyre, 1995). Horwitz (2010) refers the mixed and contradictory results of the early anxiety studies to the wide variety of anxiety types.

2.1.2 Anxiety in Second Language Acquisition

In the context of second language learning and acquisition, the learner's attitudes, motivation and anxiety have been frequently shown to be important factors for successful learning. In terms of anxiety, it has been described by many educators and linguists (Krashen, 1982; MacIntyre, 1995; Young, 1991) as a major roadblock to SLA and learning. One of the theoretical constructs that has been associated with SLA and has a strong connection to language anxiety is Krashen's (1982) 'Affective Filter Hypothesis'. This concept has been widely tackled by linguists and language practitioners particularly when they seek to describe how an individual acquires or learns a second language. Krashen (1982) defines the 'affective filter' as an imaginary wall governed by the learner's motives, attitudes or levels of anxiety that allows or inhibits the

language input. This hypothesis demonstrates how motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence play either a debilitating or a facilitating role in SLA. In other words, these affective feelings may inhibit or enhance acquisition or learning by the mediating role they play between the student's ability to learn and the linguistic competence in an input rich educational environment. It is also pointed out that SLA is impeded when low motivation, low self-confidence and high debilitating anxiety combine together and increase the affective filter which prevents the comprehensible input. According to Krashen (1983), SLA would not occur in a high anxiety situation as individuals acquire languages best when pressure and anxiety are off.

As represented in Figure 2.1 (Krashen, 1982, p. 32), low-anxious learners who have positive attitudes towards second languages take in more 'input' since their affective filter is lower or weaker. On the other hand, those who have higher or stronger filter (as a result of being highly-anxious with negative attitudes towards second languages) obtain less input that hardly reaches the language acquisition device.



Reviewing the literature related to language acquisition indicates that the affective filter hypothesis has been a remarkable landmark in the field of language learning since it helps

language instructors understand the appropriate educational environment in which individuals learn and acquire second languages. In addition, it has brought instructors' attention to the importance of creating a relaxing and low stress language classes. It could be claimed that this hypothesis defines a language teacher in a new way. It implies that the effective successful teacher is not only providing comprehensible input but also promoting a low anxiety educational situation. Calling for weakening affective filter and lowering language anxiety, Krashen (1982) urges language practitioners and instructors to adopt motivating teaching strategies such as tolerating students' mistakes, building up risk free language classes and making the class a primary source for 'comprehensible input'. In the next sections, language anxiety aspects, its effects, and sources are reviewed.

2.1.3. Language Anxiety

In the field of second or foreign language acquisition, one of the frequent questions raised by educators and researchers is why some FL learners successfully acquire and learn L2 while others do not. Several cognitive, behavioral, linguistic and affective factors have been called upon to find logical answers for that inquiry. Motivation, attitudes, self-efficacy, and anxiety lie under the umbrella of affective factors.

Two categories of studies about language anxiety can be identified in the related literature: 1) early studies and 2) studies that emerged after the mid of 1980s. Early studies aimed to measure the level of anxiety among language learners and explore its impact on language performance and achievement. Those studies adopted 'anxiety transfer' approach which viewed anxiety related to language context as a transfer of general state or trait anxiety into language domain. In other words, individuals who are generally anxious are prone to be anxious when learning languages.

Scovel (1978) reviewed papers about anxiety studies and pointed out that the results were inconsistent and contradictory. For example, Chastain (1975) investigated anxiety levels of college learners in French, German and Spanish and he found positive, negative and zero correlation between anxiety and learning those languages respectively. Other researchers (e.g., Backman, 1976) concluded in their studies that there was no relation between anxiety and language performance.

Broadly speaking, early studies produced so conflicting results that some of them point to the facilitating role of anxiety in language achievement while others report negative effects of anxiety on language performance. Scovel (1978) and Young (1991) attribute those contradictions to the use of different measures such as trait anxiety measure or test anxiety measures which are not limited to language anxiety. Horwitz et al (1986) argue that the measures used in early anxiety studies did not measure an individual's response to the specific sources of language anxiety. However, many L2 learners can enjoy learning languages with low levels of stress although they are suffering from trait anxiety.

As a result of those confusing results and inadequate conceptualization of anxiety related to L2 learning, a need to explore language anxiety from several approaches and perspectives has emerged. After Scovel's call (1978) for researchers to identify the type of anxiety they are investigating, attempts to investigate language anxiety and its specific aspects by using precise measures and definitions have started to appear. In the mid 1980s, studies about language anxiety started to adopt a 'unique anxiety approach' which uses measures specific to L2 context and are based on the assumption that learning languages particularly L2 produces a unique type of anxiety. It can be claimed that Horwitz et al's (1986) was the first to single out FL anxiety from

general type of anxiety. They introduced FL anxiety construct as a situation specific anxiety resulting from feelings related to language learning. In addition, their Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) as a measure to identify language anxiety has been adopted in almost all anxiety studies as the most widely used instrument. Commenting on that scale, Young (1991) pointed out that a new era started as the issue of finding an appropriate language anxiety scale was resolved. Pappamihel (1999) describes FLCAS as the most pertinent instrument for measuring anxiety related to language learning since its underlying principles are consistent with the modern theories surrounding anxiety.

Considering the aspects of a language classroom, FL anxiety has been conceptualized through three performance components: communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al, 1986). Communication apprehension refers to the fear experienced by FL learners when they communicate in L2 with other people. Learners with high levels of communication apprehension usually tend to avoid communication. Fear of communication in FL situations stems from the typical concern of oral communication and immature FL vocabulary and structures (Horwitz et al, 1986). Test anxiety which refers to nervousness or apprehension during evaluative situations and fear of failure may be caused by a deficit in the study skills or by making errors which is a frequent phenomenon in FL situations. Test anxiety is defined by Horowitz et al (1986, p. 127) as “a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure.” They add that “test-anxious students often put unrealistic demands on themselves and feel that anything less than a perfect test performance is a failure”(p.128). The third component is caused by fear from being evaluated from peers, teachers or others and the expectations of being negatively evaluated. It might also result from social evaluative situations such as giving a public

speech or interviewing for a job (Horwitz et al, 1986). Noticeably, the FL anxiety approach focuses more on speaking as provoking anxiety skills without consideration to writing and reading skills in this regard.

It is worthwhile noting that other researchers have attributed language anxiety and underperformance to cognitive and social factors rather than affective ones. For instance, Spark and Ganschow (1993) claim that poor command of one's linguistic code in his/her native language contributes to language anxiety and failure in FL learning. They propose the Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis (LCDH) to find out why individuals differ in L2 learning. On the other hand, the construct of social anxiety has emerged in literature as one of the common forms of anxiety. It is composed of negative evaluation, shyness in the presence of others and feelings of stress and discomfort, self-preoccupation, worry about one's inability to cope with social requirements and considerations (Shwarzer, 1986). Leary (1982, p.102) defines social anxiety as worries arising from the "presence of interpersonal evaluation in real or imagined social settings." Language anxiety is correlated to this type of anxiety since language learning is largely affected by social and communication aspects (MacIntyre, 1995). Language social anxiety also stems from interpersonal interactions between learner and learner, learner and teacher or native and non native speakers. A stable fear of social interaction could take place when individuals lack the necessary skills for conducting smooth and social interaction. Applying this to language learning, learners may become anxious and apprehensive when they feel they lack linguistic, paralinguistic or socio-cultural skills which are needed for interaction. In general, it can be said that social anxiety is based on Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (1978) which emphasizes the

social nature of learning and investigates the dynamicity of social interaction involved in language learning environment.

As a multidimensional phenomenon, FL anxiety should be investigated from different approaches and perspectives. To achieve consistent and reliable results, the researcher in the current study has considered and benefited from the above argument by incorporating all the possible factors causing writing anxiety such as psychological, pedagogical, social, and linguistic factors when designing the data collection tools.

2.2. Effects of Language Anxiety on Language Learning Achievement

The relationship between FL anxiety and achievement has been referred to by a great deal of studies (e.g., Craigie & kao, 2010; Dalkilic, 2001; Horwitz et al, 1986; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991, 1994; Skehan, 1989; Young, 1991). Over the past three decades, there has been a consensus among educators on the fact that FL anxiety plays a role in success and failure in learning L2 and high levels of anxiety hamper language performance and learning.

As seen in Figure 2.2 (MacIntyre, 1995, p. 92) the dual effect of anxiety on language performance and achievement could be explained with Yerkes-Dodson Law (1908) which illustrates relationship between arousal and performance through an inverted-U-shaped and curvilinear relation. In other words, when anxiety increases, so does performance, but when anxiety increases further and becomes too great, performance drops and deteriorates.

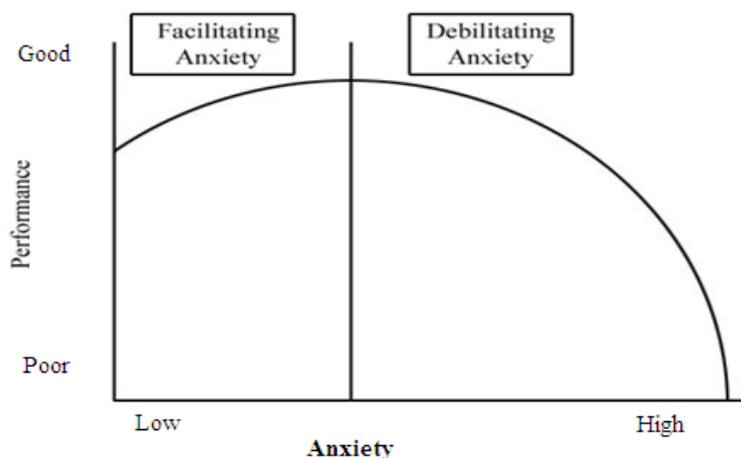


Figure 2.2: Curvilinear relation between performance and anxiety (MacIntyre, 1995, p. 92).

Significant negative correlations between levels of anxiety and achievement or performance among language learners have also been reported in several studies (e.g., Craigie & kao, 2010; Price, 1991; Worde, 1998). Pointing to the effect of anxiety on general learning, Tobias (1986) claims that anxiety acts as a mental block to cognitive performance and it interferes into the three cognitive stages: input, processing and output. If learners encounter anxiety during the input stage, they need extra time to master the task and their attention is distracted. Arousing anxiety at the processing stage negatively affects language acquisition and learning since new words or incoming messages cannot be recognised easily. At the output stage, which is represented by spoken or written materials, anxious learners suffer from weak retrieval of new lexical items and inability to speak or write. In the same vein, Eysenck (1979) explains the effect of anxiety with reference to cognitive consequences by pointing to the negative self-related cognitive aspects such as avoidance, fear of future and self- disapproval. As a result of these negative cognitive aspects, cognitive resources that are basic for learning languages will be consumed. In other words, language performance might be impaired as a result of anxiety related self-thoughts which overload and limit the capacity of mental processes.

Importantly, the existence of FL anxiety as an influencing factor in language achievement has been questioned by some studies (e.g., Sparks and Ganschow, 1993; Sparks et al, 2000). The debate is about whether FL anxiety is a cause of individual differences and poor achievement when learning foreign languages. As mentioned before, Sparks and his colleagues suggest the LCDH which indicate that first language learning deficit is responsible for poor achievement in learning L2 and anxiety is a result of poor achievement rather than a cause. It could be claimed that connecting FL coding abilities with first language ones to interpret poor performance might isolate language learning from its social cultural roots and neglect the uniqueness of FL learning environment and specialty. Other educators and psychologists like Horwitz (2001) and MacIntyre (1995) respond to Spark's hypothesis and argue that anxiety interferes in language learning and its interference in language input, process and output could not be simplified and underestimated. Horwitz points to the independence of language anxiety of L1 learning disabilities and in her response to LCDH, she argues that:

...the numbers of people who experience foreign language anxiety appear to be far greater than the incidence of decoding disabilities in the general population, and many successful language learners also experience language anxiety. Perhaps most importantly, they observe that language learning requires much more than sound-symbol correspondences and argue that the LCDH is ultimately based on an overly simplified view of language learning. From all these perspectives, it appears that language anxiety fits the general criterion for an anxiety which by definition is an unrealistic reaction to a particular situation. Anxious language learners feel uncomfortable with their abilities even if their objective abilities are good (2001, p. 119).

Based on the above arguments and related studies which support the detrimental effect of language anxiety on achievement, it could be claimed that MacIntyre's (1995) and Horwitz's arguments are more persuasive as cognitive abilities are not independent of affective and emotional factors. In addition, it could be indicated from the above arguments that the

relationship between language achievement and anxiety is not a linear one since other factors and variables such as learner's proficiency or cultural background might affect it.

Concerning the impact of writing anxiety on performance, a study conducted at a US university by Faigley et al (1981) to investigate the impact of WA on college students' writing performance revealed that highly apprehensive writers produced shorter and less syntactically essays whereas low apprehensive writers were found to have a greater ability to develop their ideas and put more information into each communication unit. Hassan (2001) goes a step further and investigates the effect of such type of anxiety on the writing quality of EFL Arab university students. The results of Hassan's indicate that low-anxious students write better than highly-anxious ones in terms of quality of composition writing. In line with Hassan's, other studies (Erkan& Saban, 2011; Huwari, 2011; Latif, 2007) in different EFL contexts determine deleterious effects of WA on writing performance, achievement, and quality. In addition, high levels of WA make L2 learners more concerned about form than about content. Focusing more on form at the expense of content and fluency might lead to writer's block which is defined by Rose (1984) as an inability to complete writing for reasons other than lack of commitment or skills. Writer's block is also described as a passage of time with little productive involvement with writing tasks.

In summary, a clear and significant negative correlation between high levels of WA and performance has been demonstrated in the related literature which also shows that highly-anxious learners consider writing unrewarding and avoid writing situations. As such, uncovering the causes standing behind FL anxiety in general and skill-specific anxieties in particular, has become an urgent necessity in the field of learning languages.

2.3. Sources of FL Anxiety

To create an anxiety free L2 classroom, as suggested by Young (1991), the key step for language teachers and practitioners would be to find out where the roots of anxiety lie and identify its sources. Since the four language skills are integrated, exploring the factors standing behind foreign language anxiety in general could to some extent contribute to uncover some sources of anxiety for each skill.

In addition to Horwitz et al's (1986) three main sources of FL anxiety, Young (1991) reviewed the literature of language anxiety and offered a list of its potential sources. These sources could be grouped into four main categories: 1) personal/interpersonal anxieties; 2) learner/teacher beliefs about language learning and teaching; 3) classroom procedures; and 4) language testing. Personal sources of anxiety have been researched along with other social and psychological factors such as self-esteem, demotivation, shyness, peers' evaluation, competitiveness and attitudes towards learning FLs (Bailey, 1983; Horwitz, 2001; Oxford, 1999; Price, 1991). Bailey (1983) claims that the competitive nature of L2 Learning provokes anxiety when learners feel that their self-esteem or proficiency is lower than others in class. Also, personal anxiety sources may be experienced due to psychological factors such as the learner's own self-image, perception about peers, teachers or other cultures (Scovel, 1991). Additionally, it may be a result of insufficient command of the target language. Other educators relate it to different social and cultural factors like being afraid of making errors in front of others and losing social identity (e.g., Aydin, 2001; Richard, 1996).

With respect to learner/teacher beliefs about language learning, Young (1991) points out that some beliefs could heighten the levels of anxiety in students. For example, some L2 learners view

grammar as the fundamental aspect to master and excel at while others think that pronunciation is the most essential aspect of L2. In this regard, Horwitz (1988) reports various kinds of learners' beliefs that lead to anxiety such as believing that few years of learning L2 is enough to gain a native like fluency and pronunciation, believing that accuracy is more important than fluency and believing that learning L2 is limited to some gifted individuals. It seems that some learners' beliefs stem from unrealistic and erroneous conceptions about learning foreign languages. Meanwhile, the matter becomes worse and levels of anxiety increase when reality clashes with some beliefs. On the other hand, some language teachers' beliefs and assumptions could also be sources of stress and nervousness. For instance, when teachers excessively correct learners' errors, particularly in writing and speaking, learners might worry about their performances.

Teacher-generated anxiety has been documented in many related studies (Atay and Kurt, 2006; Latif, 201; Price, 1991; Young, 1991; Zhang, 2011) and the characteristics of the teacher which could be associated with language anxiety include: focus on mechanical and grammatical mistakes, unsympathetic personalities, being fault finders, and absence of support. In addition, Oxford (1999) emphasizes the role of teaching styles in provoking anxiety. For instance, contradiction between student learning styles and teaching styles (style wars) triggers anxiety and disinterest. In this regard, Bekleyen (2004) investigates the influence of teachers' attitudes on foreign language classroom anxiety in a Turkish EFL context. After measuring student anxiety levels by using the 'FLCAS', the researcher prepared interview questions based on the students' answers. Bekleyen classifies the scores obtained by the students into three groups: low anxiety, middle, and high anxiety. Then, six participants were selected randomly from each group for qualitative interviews. The participants from high and low anxiety groups give different opinions

about the same teachers. The influences of teachers on students anxiety levels were categorized under the following subtitles: teachers' personalities (e.g., kindness, being energetic, listening with patience, etc.), teacher-student relationship (addressing students by name, correcting errors, giving turns, etc.), and academic quality of the teachers (teachers' proficiency, fluency, and pronunciation).

In terms of classroom procedures and interactions, some students are likely to be concerned about the process of error correction particularly in front of their peers. Other classroom activities such as making oral presentations and calling on individual students are reported by Young as potential sources of anxiety. In respect of peer influence, the participants in Bekleyen's (2004) reported that their anxiety levels were negatively linked to their classmates' behavior and levels of proficiency.

With respect to language testing as a main source of FL anxiety, test anxiety will be handled in more detail in the next section due to its interference in the four language skill specific anxieties. To conclude, based on the review presented above, it could be claimed that FL anxiety is a multidimensional complex psychological phenomenon influenced by various sources ranging from personal, social, psychological to pedagogical factors. It is worth noting that Horwitz (2001) emphasizes that sources of FL anxiety may vary according to the cultural differences. In other words, some classroom activities could be considered comfortable by one group of learners (e.g., peer correction) while a different cultural group views them as stressful.

2.3.1. Test Anxiety

The ubiquitous nature of anxiety creates different subtypes such as trait anxiety, social anxiety, situational and test anxieties. Anxiety in evaluative and testing situations is a facet of WA in

particular since most of learners' essays and compositions are subject to a sort of evaluation. Test anxiety is defined as the concern about the possible negative consequences of failing exams or any evaluative situation accompanied by physiological, psychological or behavioral responses (Zeidner1998). In other studies (Dalkilic, 2001; Koralp, 2005) test anxiety is viewed as a cause for FL anxiety and an obstacle that hinders L2 learners from performing well in tests. Unequivocally, taking tests has become decisive marks in our lives since passing some tests is a precondition for getting a certificate or being hired in many jobs. Interference of tests in almost all aspects of life normally creates a sort of tension and apprehension for the test takers and even for the others around them.

Concerning the effects of test anxiety on EFL learning, many related studies (e.g., Elbanna, 1989; Rezazadeh & Tavakoli, 2009) confirm the negative effects of test anxiety on the learning process and in turn on achievement. During the long period of teaching and testing EFL in high schools and tertiary levels , it has been noticed that much concern and fear of tests negatively affect actual EFL potential since anxious test takers might lose much of their effort on test coaching, cheating, language recognition, test interpretation rather than on production or real communicative competence. According to Black (2005) test anxious students think that scoring good results is more important than real understanding and as a result their real learning/performance is consumed with feelings of anxiousness. In line with such claims, Ayden (2009) conducted a study in a Turkish EFL context and found out that test anxiety creates psychological troubles for learners; reduces self-efficacy, prevents learners from reflecting actual performance and consequently causes disinterest in EFL learning. Hall (1991) points out that test

anxiety has also negative effects on learners' oral performance, writing and reading particularly when they are requested to make formal interviews, write essays and think aloud.

For the sources of test anxiety, one of the significant factors affecting test taking anxiety is time limit. Madsen and Murray (1984) observed that high-test anxiety students are affected and distressed by strict timed tests. Timed standardized and performance tests are controversial and debatable topics since they examine students under time constraints and pressure. Moreover, it has been found that untimed tests can increase students' motivation and performance whereas timed tests are main sources of test anxiety (Shi, 2012; Immerman, 1980). On the other hand, the proponents of timed tests claim that the allotted time given to all test takers enhances the fairness of standardized tests. In addition, test techniques, format and validity play a crucial role in heightening the levels of test anxiety among learners. Students' attitudes towards testing procedures have an impact on test apprehension as well. To determine differential levels of test anxiety, Oh (1992) faced students with different reading assessment methods and found that think-aloud and cloze tests increased anxiety. Other related studies (Shohamy, 1982) claims that oral interviews are more favorable than cloze tests whereas Madsen and Murray (1984) observe that test takers' unfamiliarity with question types and format during tests constitute important sources of anxiety. Additionally, test invalidity has been found to be a test anxiety provoking factor when the content of the test has not been taught before. Alderson's (1981, p.6) result is consistent with this claim when the researcher points out that "when there is a serious discrepancy between the teaching and the means of evaluating that teaching, then something appears to be amiss."

Teachers' effect on the level of test anxiety in EFL context has also been investigated by many educators (e.g., Ayden et al, 2009; Young, 1991). In Ayden et al's, the relationship between test anxiety and teacher's acts and strategies was investigated in EFL Turkish context. The results indicate that the teacher is a significant factor that reduces the level of test apprehension rather than a strong source of test anxiety among students. The facilitating role of teachers stems from some effective strategies before, during and after tests such as informing students about the normality of moderate amounts of fear before tests, discussing some test techniques with test takers and cooperating with school counselors to alleviate students' test anxiety. In contrast, utilizing tests as means of authority and punishment, lack of inter-rater reliability, negative comments during or after tests will inevitably cause fear and concern among learners.

To conclude, the situations and conditions which might increase learners' test anxiety could be summarized as follows: a) testing what is not taught by assessing students by material different from what they have learned, b) facing students with formats which they have no experience about, c) making the test situation highly evaluative, and d) giving tests an extravagant role in determining the students' job advancement and academic future (Young, 1991).

2.4. Foreign Language Anxiety and the Four Language Skills

A relation of FL anxiety to the four language skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing has been investigated by a plethora of studies as any particular L2 learner might have anxiety around one or more of the four skills (Young, 1992). However, speaking and oral performance in L2 classes have always been considered the most stressful and provoking anxiety skills. Stress and anxiety experienced by learners when they speak or communicate orally stem from the process of integrating many aspects of the language in a limited time and from being evaluated or criticized

for incorrect pronunciation by listeners (Horner and Redmond, 2002). Tanveer (2007) conducted a study in the University of Glasgow to find out the causes of EFL learners' speaking anxiety. Twenty EFL learners and practitioners participated in that qualitative study. Tanveer's (2007) results indicate that speaking is the most provoking anxiety skill for L2 learners. The diversified causes of speaking anxiety stem from strict formal classroom environment, fear of being evaluated negatively by teachers and peers, perfectionism, fear of making mistakes, low self-esteem, and some linguistic difficulties related to pronunciation and grammar.

Later on, the other language skills have been found very anxiety provoking when learning foreign languages (Cheng et al, 1999; Christenberry, 2001; Sellers, 2000). According to Christenberry, listening is a problematic skill and anxiety is likely caused by its difficulty particularly if the discourse is incomprehensible. A study conducted by Hang (2006) in Chinese context to explore listening anxiety sources encountered by learners during EFL classrooms indicates that five sources exist for listening anxiety. The first cause is related to characteristics of listening comprehension. The interviewees clarified that missing words or sentences during listening sessions makes them unable to go over. The second cause stems from listening material features such as speed, pronunciation, acoustic conditions, length of listening texts and level of vocabulary. Besides, characteristics of the listening tasks are also mentioned as sources of anxiety and frustration particularly when learners are asked to do the dictation part of the listening test or when they don't know what kind of texts they listen to. The fourth source of learners' listening anxiety is related to social factors. For example, respondents mentioned the incomplete exposure to authentic listening material and the inappropriate teacher behaviors in correcting students' mistakes as main social causes for listening comprehension anxiety. The last listening anxiety

provoking factor is learners' low self-esteem. The lack of self-confidence among English learners makes them feel apprehensive when listening to English.

Among the four language skills, reading is a potential source for L2 anxiety since it includes many difficulties and complexities for L2 learners (Sellers, 2000). Although it is generally assumed by some language teachers that reading is the least anxiety provoking skill, recent researches have proved that FL reading anxiety exists and it has detrimental effects on the FL learners' cognitive abilities. In this concern, Kuru (2005) conducted a study in a Turkish EFL context to investigate the causes of students' anxiety and tension while they were reading in the target language. The study results indicate that reading specific anxiety is related to general FL anxiety but distinct from it in terms of causes. Kuru's (2005) reveals that reading anxiety stems from lack of motivation, negative background experience, unknown cultural content, complex linguistic structures, uninteresting topics, fear of negative evaluation and improper teaching pedagogy.

As for writing, a considerable number of researchers (e.g., Cheng et al, 1999; Leki, 1999) find writing a potential source of anxiety although writing learners (compared to speaking) have time to think about the message and the used words and structures. As the focus of this study is on WA, its characteristics and sources will be reviewed in detail in the next section.

A critical look at the findings of the aforementioned studies clarifies that L2 general anxiety might be a result of the difficulties learners encounter when learning one skill or more. Additionally, specific skill anxieties seem to be related to the general L2 anxiety but distinct from it in terms of some causes. As seen, the aforementioned studies confirm that some learners'

characteristics (low self-esteem), teaching practices, and some linguistic deficiencies are main causal factors of four specific skill anxieties. But, it can also be concluded that each one of the four language skills has its own specialty in terms of anxiety causes and sources. For instance, acoustic conditions, uninteresting topics, pronunciation are attributed to listening, reading, and speaking respectively.

2.5. The Construct of Writing Anxiety

The term writing apprehension was originally coined by Daly and Miller (1975) to describe first language writing anxiety and justify its existence as a distinct form of anxiety. It is defined as a psychological construct associated with “a general avoidance of writing and of situations perceived by the individual to potentially require some amount of writing accompanied by the potential for evaluation of that writing” (Daly, 1979, p. 37). A self reporting instrument called Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) was developed by Daly and Miller to measure the first language writing apprehension. Silva (1993) concluded that writing in second languages is strategically and linguistically different from writing in the first ones. Silva’s study has encouraged other researchers (e.g., Cheng et al, 1999; Cheng, 2002) to address second language writing anxiety as a different phenomenon from first language writing anxiety. As such, Cheng (2004) developed the second language writing anxiety inventory to measure second language anxiety. In literature, this phenomenon has been investigated under diversified terms like apprehension, block or fear but anxiety and apprehension are likely to be the most interchangeable used terms to describe that writing psychological construct. Recently, Lee and Krashen, (2002) define writing apprehension as anxiety about writing and composing process.

As stated earlier, the situation specific approach has inspired researchers to investigate specific four language skill anxieties. At the beginning of this new trend, the vast majority of anxiety studies were predominated by speaking and listening anxieties. In late 1980s, researchers took the situation specific approach a step further and investigated reading and writing anxieties. Before 1990s it had been assumed that writing is the least language skill prone to anxiety effects. One might think that learners can control the language grammar and content when writing more than they can during speaking and listening since writing permits them to think about and review what is being written. However, related studies have contradicted these assumptions and proved the existence of WA among FLLs. For instance, Hilleson (1996) discovers that L2 learners have anxiety related to the four skills. Other studies (e.g., Bline et al, 2001; Cheng et al, 1999; Cheng, 2002) have provided evidences for regarding L2 writing and reading (Sellers, 2000) anxieties as specific types of anxiety linked to many psychological, social, pedagogical, and cultural considerations

Additionally, Cheng et al (1999) observe that L2 writing anxiety is a language skill specific anxiety associated with writing achievement. Cheng et al (1999, p.421) claim that although second language classroom anxiety and L2 writing anxiety possess their own and distinguishable characteristics, “they seem to share several assumptions, such as negative affect toward certain aspects of communication, avoidance of certain kinds of social exchanges, and fear of being evaluated.” Some factors that might generate anxiety when writing L2 compositions include poor writing skills, perfectionism, difficulty in understanding the remarks written by instructors and paying much attention to grammar and accuracy. As clarified in the following section, there is no

consensus among researchers on the factors causing L2 learners' stress and fear in writing classes.

2.5.1. Sources of Writing Anxiety

As an emotional, cognitive, and social activity, writing is interrelated with cultural, social, contextual factors and learner's characteristics such as self-esteem, motivation, anxiety, linguistic competence, proficiency, beliefs, teaching procedures, learning strategies and even gender. In addition to some sources of general FL anxiety (e.g., test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation) which are applicable to the specific situations of WA, other sources are attributed to some linguistic and cognitive causes such as poor command of grammar, spelling and mechanics of writing, poor skill development and inadequate role models (Hassan, 2001; Latif, 2007; Zhang, 2011). Hassan's indicates that lack of self-confidence among L2 learners when writing is very decisive in determining the amount of WA. Lack of self-confidence could be considered a major cause of anxiety even to learners who are high in writing competence (Cheng, 2002). Moreover, the writer's emotions are extremely affected when writers find themselves unable to express their ideas in a correct and an appropriate language. In other words, the lack of topical knowledge (knowledge schemata) can also impact writer's affective responses and exacerbate their stress. In this respect, Hyland (2003) clarifies that learners who do not have adequate relevant topical knowledge feel much more apprehensive and nervous particularly if they do not receive complete effective feedback.

After developing the most commonly used first language writing anxiety scale by Daly and Miller (1975), the interest in writer's affect has started. Since then, a considerable number of studies from different international contexts have investigated the sources of writing anxiety and strategies for mitigating it (e.g., Cheng 2002; Huwari, 2011; Latif, 2012).The findings have

reported different pedagogical, personal, psychological, social, and linguistic possible sources. Concerning the personal factors, students' low self-efficacy and lack of self-confidence about one's writing capability are also major sources of writing anxiety. For example, MacIntyre et al (1998) notice that students who underestimate their writing ability and have negative expectations about their performance in writing tasks encounter high level of apprehension during writing tasks. Other related studies report the negative influence of learners' low self-esteem on student writing abilities (Cheng, 2002; Madigan et al, 1996). Another WA source is fear of negative evaluation and criticism from peers or instructors. Anxious learners usually fear that the readers of their work will judge them according to their writing performance. Lee (2001) and Oxford (1990) warn that fear of negative evaluation obliges students to stick excessively to the writing rules and consequently prevents them from being creative risky takers during the writing process.

Writing tests could also be a major source of students' fears and stress. Specifically, test takers feel anxious when they are encountered with topics or prompts beyond their topical knowledge and proficiency level. The prompt difficulty might stem from the big number of tasks the test takers are asked to complete. Here, it is beneficial to show an example on such prompts taken from (Kroll & Reid, 1994, cited in Lim, 2010, p. 99):

Some students believe that schools should only offer academic courses. Other students think that schools should offer classes in cultural enrichment and opportunities for sports activities as well as academic courses. Compare and contrast the advantages and disadvantages of attending a school that provides every type of class for students. Which of these types of school do you prefer? Give reasons and examples to support your choice.

Such long multi tasked prompts which call on test takers to do more than six tasks in writing one essay could increase students' test anxiety and overload their thinking during writing tests. As indicated above, WA can be a result of external conditions such as de-motivating learning environment, negative evaluations, threatening situations, linguistic incompetence, and unfulfilled needs (Lim, 2010).

To understand L2 writing anxiety from different angles and contexts, the results of five different studies from various cultural contexts are cited in this review. The first study was conducted by Lin (2009) in Taiwanese universities. Lin's study investigated students' problematic and anxiety provoking factors in English writing courses. Additionally, the study aimed to find out possible solutions that would improve the learning environment in those courses. The participants were 16 junior university students from a college in Southern Taiwan. The subjects were in the highest level of English writing courses. After two months of the course, the researcher conducted face-to-face individual interviews with the subjects inviting them to talk about their possible writing anxiety factors. Lin claims that this study differed from other related qualitative ones since it elicited the anxiety factors and causes neutrally from students' own perspectives without imposing a list of factors created by the researcher. The results of this study reveal that there are many factors contributing to the participants' writing anxiety such as time limitation, teachers' evaluation, peer competition, uninterested topics, and uniformed writing formats. It is easily noted that most of the factors were identified in previous studies except for "uniformed writing formats" which might take away the students' creativity and freedom in writing. As such, Lin (2009) recommends that teachers in Taiwan should be trained on how to release embarrassment

and uneasiness in writing classes to improve students writing performance in addition to the need of investigating how to transfer the negative peer competition into a positive one.

In a university in the US, Rankin (2006) aimed to determine the specific causes of writing anxiety for a group of advanced level English language learners. The participants were from various countries and their ages ranged from 18 to 28. Before conducting the interviews, Gungle & Taylor's (1989) 'English as a Second Language Writing Apprehension Test' was administered to select the highest ten apprehensive students in terms of writing apprehension. Interestingly, the test results revealed that the participants didn't have high trait anxiety, which indicated that their anxiety became a problem only when writing in English. Rankin's results demonstrate that the participants feel anxious for many reasons such as fear of teacher and peer evaluation, frustrations stemming from self-evaluation, and fear of losing one's identity. Underlying factors were also identified when participants referred their writing stress to the teachers' disinterest and the traditional techniques they used in teaching their classes. Generally, the study holds a number of implications for teaching EFL in general and writing in particular. To create motivating L2 writing classes, students should be encouraged by instructors to write in their L2 without embarrassment from errors and feedback. Rankin also emphasizes the importance of a learning environment where every student writer's self-confidence is inculcated through estimating his/her contribution. Moreover, when students first start writing, teachers had better encounter them with familiar topics. Compared to Lin's study, Rankin's revealed more anxiety provoking factors and in depth information had been gained. This might have happened because Rankin interviewed participants who identified themselves as being highly-anxious whereas the participants in Lin's study were selected randomly.

For Arab context, Latif's study (2007) is one of those rare studies that investigate English writing anxiety in Arab EFL context. All the participants were native speakers of Arabic. The 67 Egyptian male subjects could be described as prospective teachers as they were in the fourth year in English department in Al-Azhar University. The study aimed to identify the factors that contribute to the Egyptian English majors' negative writing apprehension and self-efficacy. The interviews showed that low English competence contributes to writing apprehension. Most of the participants mentioned the need to improve their vocabulary, grammar, and spelling, and essay organization. Additionally, the interviews revealed that poor writing achievement and poor perceived writing performance seem to have led to the subjects' high apprehension. Among other anxiety provoking causes were instructional practices, teachers' traditional techniques, negligence of training students in using a variety of writing strategies, and lack of teacher feedback. It is notable that some results constructed by the subjects are consistent with the results of related studies, for example, the writing apprehension caused by poor linguistic knowledge in Daud et al's study (2005). Moreover, the influence of writer's previous history of writing on writing apprehension was also mentioned by Daly and Wilson (1983). Apparently, the results of this study are different from the previous ones by highlighting low linguistic knowledge and writing instructional practices as main provoking writing anxiety factors. Based on these results, Latif (2007) calls for replacing the lecture teaching methods with the group/pair work interactions. Additionally, the teachers need to use the process approach in teaching writing to promote student-student and teacher-student interactions which in turn helps students alleviate the anxiety levels.

Another study (Abu Shawish and Atea, 2010) conducted in the Arab context to investigate the causes of WA among English majors in Gaza universities. Two questionnaires (with open essay questions) were used to determine the anxiety causes and remedies. The effects of gender and academic levels on students' estimates for the causes and remedies were also investigated. No significant role of those two variables was found in the participants' estimates of WA causes except for teachers' feedback and lack of proper vocabulary and grammar which were found to have significant differences in favor of females and males respectively. Additionally, computer use was found not to play any significant role in the students' estimates of the remedies.

In a Turkish EFL context, Atay and Kurt (2006) conducted a study to explore the factors standing behind prospective English teachers' writing anxiety and the effects of that anxiety on their future teaching practices. The participants were 85 prospective Turkish teachers at the English Department in Istanbul University. During the writing courses in the university, the participants had to write paragraphs, essays, and some project works. In addition to Cheng's, 2004 'Second Language Writing anxiety Inventory', Atay and Kurt used an open ended questionnaire as a qualitative instrument. To understand the investigated phenomenon from many perspectives, the participants in this study were asked to give more specific information about the situations in their own setting that might cause their writing anxiety. It is worth noting that this study is distinctive and unique in terms of its results since it reveals that anxiety is caused by factors that were not explored by other earlier related studies such as classroom setting, exams, time limit, past experience, thinking in L1, inability to organize thoughts and getting blank minds at the beginning of writing tasks. The results concerning the pedagogical practices as sources of students WA are consistent with other studies (Price, 1991; Young, 1992). Interestingly, the

results also reveal that the anxious participants prefer to share their feelings and concerns with their peers rather than their teachers. This might happen as a result of some cultural considerations like the nature of the teacher–learner relationship. Atay and Kurt suggest that writing in English should not be limited to controlled exercises. To make writing in L2 an enjoyable and pleasant experience, it seems essential to establish a learning atmosphere in which students can write in a free anxiety writing classroom.. The rich data gained in this study might result from the well designed purposeful research questions in addition to the quality of the participants (prospective teachers) who were able to provide the researchers with such amount of data. On the other hand, it could be claimed that some of the results need to be clarified and identified more. The follow up questions via interviews might be beneficial here. Additionally, the study could be more integrated if there were focus group debates about the strategies which should be followed to alleviate anxiety levels.

The aforementioned studies in this review have attempted to gain deeper insight into the issue of WA. It is notable that they obtained descriptive information on the causes of writing anxiety (teachers, instructional strategies, peers, feedback, etc.) from the subjects' points of view. Additionally, the qualitative instruments in these studies explored experiences that cannot be readily observed such as feelings, thoughts, and attitudes about WA. The first and second studies used open-ended questions to offer the interviewees a wide range of choice within questions. On the other hand, the Egyptian study uses a semi-structured interview where the researcher restricted the questions to certain specific points to go deeper into the selected phenomenon while the Palestinian and Turkish studies used an open-ended questionnaire in natural settings (during writing courses). Interestingly, the five studies are consistent with MacIntyre (1991) who claims

that anxiety as an abstract psychological phenomenon is usually investigated through interviews, self-reports and questionnaires.

For this current study, the results of the five papers have turned the researcher's attention to the following points which should be taken into account to provide more reliable results. Firstly, the interviews in such studies should contain a balance of open and closed questions to investigate the writing causes from different perspectives. Secondly, investigating psycholinguistic issues like anxiety or motivation needs more than one instrument such as focus groups and case studies to lend breadth and richness to the data. Besides, the subjects of the studies should be expanded as engaging more stakeholders in the study (teachers, supervisors, and parents) might enrich the results, foster their reliability and address the multi dimensional construct of WA.

To sum up, an analytical look at the aforementioned studies and other related ones indicates that writing anxiety and fear stem from psychological, social, cultural, linguistic, test related, and pedagogical factors. It is apparently noticed that sources of L2 writing anxiety differ from one context to another since it is interrelated with diversified factors and learning environments. So, the current study is theoretically based on these different perspectives. Additionally, the results of the above studies have drawn attention to the significance of triangulating the research tools when investigating such multidimensional affective issues. However, the main question that remains to be answered through the current study is "To what extent are the causes of writing anxiety in the UAE EFL context different from or similar to the previously reviewed ones?"

2.5.2. Strategies Alleviating Writing Anxiety

After realizing that the sources of language anxiety are mainly caused by the classroom, teacher, learner or an interaction among them, researchers have explored strategies that can be used to

reduce anxiety levels from learners' and teachers' perspectives. In terms of learning strategies, Oxford (2001) classifies the strategies which could be utilized by L2 learners to facilitate language learning into three types: affective, cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies. These learning strategies could be of great significance in reducing L2 WA. Affective strategies include learner's awareness about the learning tasks and environment that evoke anxiety and stress. Multi affective strategies have been suggested to alleviate language anxiety (e.g., O' Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Salim, 2007). They include keeping a diary to record feelings about writing stages, clarifying about the writing tasks, working with peers, self-talk, rewarding one-self when a task has been completed, discussing one's feelings with others, breathing deeply during writing tasks and using a checklist of one's emotional state. The significance of such affective strategies could stem from the nature of the writing skills which involve writer's emotion and cognition during the writing process. So, it could be claimed that incorporating affective strategies in any attempt for reducing WA is indispensable.

On the other hand, cognitive strategies refer to how the learner interacts with the material to be learned. For example, four cognitive strategies which might be helpful for improving writing skills and in turn, reduce WA caused by linguistic difficulties are suggested by O'Malley and Chamot (1990). They are repetition (repeating phrases, expressions and words during task performance), translation (using the first language to understand writing prompt or any part of L2), transfer (applying previously acquired linguistic schemata to facilitate a writing task) and rehearsing the language needed for completing a writing activity. Additionally, Oxford (1990) points out that practicing, revising and imitating some writing models are key techniques for improving structure, vocabulary and writing mechanics which in turn reduce WA levels.

Meta-cognitive strategies which enable learners to establish self-knowledge about their needs and learning styles help learners choose strategies fitting with their preferable styles which in turn mitigate WA. Hyland (2003) emphasizes the importance of identifying one's learning style preferences in reducing WA and clarifies how this could be achieved. For instance, visual learners feel comfortable when they are asked to write about graphs or video material while auditory learners find taped materials or lectures enjoyable sources for writing tasks and they prefer group work that involves discussion and reasoning. On the other hand, writing reports is preferred by tactile learners. Importantly, research shows that students who are taught in accordance with their preferred learning styles usually score higher in tests and feel less anxious than those who are taught in contradicting styles learning environment (Reid, 1987).

With respect to teaching strategies, teachers and educators can mitigate L2 learners' anxiety by helping them cope with existing anxiety provoking situations and creating a less stressful learning environment. Teachers can reduce the levels of WA when they adopt the process based approach in L2 writing. According to this approach, the focus is on the classroom activities and the processes writers follow when writing essays or any other tasks rather than on the product itself. To promote writing as a process rather than a product, teachers need to inculcate positive perspectives and self-confidence in students even in case of failure in writing tasks. In this regard, Cheng (2002), Hassan (2001) and Latif (2012) call teachers to build up self-confidence among learners by adopting certain teaching techniques such as encouraging students to talk about their past writing experiences, varying writing modes, finding patterns in students' writing errors, valuing students' writings, providing encouraging feedback, focusing on content rather than form and allowing non judgmental writing activities occasionally.

For anxiety stemming from writing tests and formal evaluation, teachers could also play a significant role in alleviating that anxiety. Teachers should be objective in scoring processes and consider tests as a means of evaluation and learning rather than a means of punishment and authority. Students should be informed by teachers about the test format, number of questions, test technique, test aims and so on. This could be achieved easily by administering a trial version of tests as suggested by Alcala (2002) to familiarize test takers with test techniques and rating system. Additionally, other means of evaluation and checking students' language proficiency such as assignments, projects and presentations should be incorporated within the testing and assessment system. Teachers also can contribute to combating test anxiety by giving students an opportunity to voice their concerns and express their attitudes about test fears they encounter during tests. Young (1991) claims that allowing students to express how they feel about tests is a practical strategy for reducing test anxiety. In FL context, creating a low stress language environment is of great importance for acquisition and communication. Language teachers can achieve this by acknowledging students' fears and maintaining a positive climate for testing as Phillips (1990) recommends that an encouraging smile before the test starts is able to dispel anxiety and diminish the stressful atmosphere.

Empirically, Atay and Kurt (2007) conducted a study to determine the effects of peer feedback on the WA of Turkish prospective teachers. The participants were 86 prospective teachers enrolled at the English department in a state university in Istanbul. The participants were all native speakers of Turkish and their English proficiency was high. The participants were divided into experimental and controlled groups during a writing course. The researchers trained the participants on peer feedback during the first weeks of the course and provided a checklist. The

instructor's interference in correcting student essays and writings was kept to a minimum. After eight weeks from the beginning of the writing course, structured interviews were conducted to determine whether the participants found peer feedback helpful, and whether or not they liked it. The participants reported that they helped each other in using more appropriate vocabulary and correct grammar. Additionally, they said that they felt less anxious, more self-confident, and free since they could ask their peers many questions without any fear or hesitation. Atay and Kurt (2007) claim that social dimension of feedback fosters the participants' attitudes toward writing by increasing their motivation and reducing anxiety as many things come to students minds when they are discussing their own essays with peers. Based on the study results, the researchers recommend teachers to let their students practice peer feedback rather than getting theoretical knowledge and realize the peer feedback effects on establishing an authentic collaborative environment.

The effectiveness of peer feedback in reducing WA might stem from its ability in promoting negotiated interaction between peers, providing self confidence, and making students readers and writers at the same time. Despite the undeniable positive impact of peer feedback in learning L2, it should not be adopted for granted. Instead, much investigation is needed to be made since the socio cognitive approach to learning might not suit all L2 learners who are culturally diversified. In addition, peer feedback should not completely substitute teacher feedback particularly for students at higher proficiency levels.

In another study, Ozturk and Cecen (2007) investigate the effects of portfolio keeping on the students' WA. They claim that there have not been any studies on the effects of portfolio keeping on students writing anxiety. So, this study is unique in terms of its topic and objectives. As the

participants were prospective teachers of English, many implications would be offered for the teacher education program as well as foreign language teaching. The participants were fifteen prospective teachers in a university in Turkey. They failed the TOEFL exam, so they had to take preparatory courses for a year to begin their undergraduate programme. The idea of the study stemmed from the researchers' observations of students' anxiety during writing courses. Attempting to overcome their anxiety, the researchers came to the idea of making the students keep a portfolio as a self-growth tool for reducing writing anxiety in an English setting. The portfolio requires the participants to take part in different writing tasks such as a personal essay, persuasive essay, narrative and analytical essays. Students in workshops shared their writings with the entire class and they received responses and comments. Anyway, after a six-weeks-portfolio process, two reflective sessions were held with the participants by the researchers to allow the students to talk about the effectiveness of the portfolio and its effects on their writing anxiety level. The two reflective sessions were recorded, analyzed, and categorized. It is notable that the first session aimed to explore the students' perceptions about the importance of keeping portfolio while the second session was restricted to the portfolio effects on anxiety. The results indicate the participants' desire to use portfolio in their own classes when they become teachers. Interestingly, most of the participants' confirmed the positive effect of keeping portfolio on sharpening their writing skill and reducing their anxiety.

Based on the above review; it seems that alleviating L2 learners' WA is a shared responsibility as students and instructors can work cooperatively to make writing classes more enjoyable. After developing self-confidence which is a key alleviating strategy, writing instructors need to select one strategy or more and tailor it towards students' needs and learning styles. It could be said that

the more teachers know about their students' attitudes about writing in L2, the easier it will be to find out workable alleviating strategies.

2.5.3. The Impact of Computer Use on Foreign Language Writing Anxiety

In the global era of the informational society, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) programmes and internet technology have become indispensable equipment and influential constituents in L2 learning pedagogy. Various related studies point out the significance of computer and internet technology in creating collaborative and independent learning environments (e.g., Kung, 2002; Taylor & Gitsaki, 2003). Additionally, as an active stimulus for L2 learning, Lee (2002) argues that computer technology should be applied in language learning since it can offer students more learning motivation, enhance students' achievement, increase authentic material for study, foster teacher-student interaction, consider the individual needs and ease learner's anxiety.

It should be acknowledged that computer as a powerful technological tool has pervaded many sectors in our life. Education and language learning have been largely influenced by the new information age. The role of technology in language syllabus and learning is not new. In previous decades, language laboratories with cassettes, microphones and headphones were used enormously in most educational and language settings. They acted as a major component of EFL syllabus grounded on drilling practice and stimulus–response patterns. Eventually, another medium for language learning and teaching has been provided by CALL. Language text books have utilized computer software as supplementary materials for teaching and learning vocabulary, grammar, spelling, listening, writing etc. Blake (1987) claims that CALL has revolutionized teaching-learning process by increasing learner motivation, incorporating sound,

graphic, video and presenting information in a non linear sequence which enables learners to access information they want at an individual pace.

As a part of strategies sought to reduce L2 WA, computer-assisted writing (CAW) or as it is sometimes called computer-based composition has been largely introduced in the writing classes in the past three decades. Indeed, some universities and colleges resort to computers (word processing) as a basic tool for teaching writing classes in the hope that this technological tool helps improve students' writing skill and minimize the levels of WA. The feelings prevailing that the computer is a magic stick for the teaching of writing with least amount of anxiety stem from the following beliefs: Word processing enables student writers to write faster and worry less about the niceties of style since neatly printed readable hardcopies heighten student self-confidence and pride in their writings (Larson, 1984). Word processing helps students become more conscious about writing as a process as they can rewrite and revise without recopying (Daiute, 1985). Furthermore, CAW relieves student writers from fear of making spelling mistakes and some basic structural errors which in turn lessen WA resulted from these factors.

As a widespread phenomenon among L2 student writers, anxiety hinders students in their academic work and negatively influences their career choice and self-image (Cheng, 2002). As such, educators and researchers have started implementing empirical studies to investigate the effect of CAW in lessening WA. Davis et al (2009) conducted a study to determine if integrating technology (computer) could help lessen college learners' anxiety in an American university. The study compared the results of a pretest-posttest and writing apprehension scale of the experimental group which was taught writing via computers to the control group results which

was taught traditionally. The results show that students of the experimental group had lower anxiety levels and higher grades than their counterparts in the controlled group.

In other related studies, mixed and inconclusive results are easily noticed even among the participants of the same study. For instance, Phinny and Khouri (1993) investigated the effect of CAW on English learners' behavior and motivation. In their case study, they found that the four participants displayed different attitudes towards the CAW. Two of the participants demonstrated high levels of motivation and less fears to use word processing. Another participant demonstrated high levels of anxiety over writing via computer. As such, the researchers recommend providing lengthy period of exposure to CAW. In Arab EFL contexts, Abu Shawish & Atea (2010) report that computer use did not play a significant role in minimizing learners' anxiety in English writing classes in Gaza universities. Similarly, Zaid (2011) conducted a study in a Saudi university to investigate the effect of some pre writing activities on writing anxiety. He concluded that hyper-media based activities in writing classes increased the participants' writing anxiety. To examine how CAW can ease and reduce WA, Shen (1999) conducted a pretest-posttest mixed method study at Suzhou University in China. The study used both questionnaire and interviews to explore the causes of the changed attitudes in a traditional writing classes and computer based ones. The results revealed that students feel more comfortable and less anxious in computer writing classes than in traditional writing ones. Additionally, the research indicated that subjects had higher motivation and increased written output both in quantity and quality. Shen's (1999) attributed the positive attitudes to the fact that CAW enables student writers to write in a natural learning environment which enhances learners' autonomy and lessen teacher's control and peers' pressure.

As seen, reported findings about the effects of word processing on students' composition and anxiety differ due to different factors such as the duration of data collection, the training the student receive on using computers and the period students are exposed to CAW. So, it could be said that computer is just a tool and the teacher's role in understanding learner's abilities and attitudes is still decisive in both writing learning contexts. As finding out the coping strategies for reducing WA is one of the basic objectives in the current study, investigating how the use of computers in writing classes is perceived by the study participants has become a necessity.

2.6. Summary

The literature related to FL anxiety in general and second language writing anxiety in particular has been discussed in this chapter. The definitions of general anxiety and two theoretical models (Expectancy Value Theory and Self Efficacy) derived from psychology were then reviewed to pave the way for discussing the construct of FL anxiety and the specific skill ones. Furthermore, effects of language anxiety on performance, its sources, test anxiety, sources of WA and alleviating strategies were also reviewed. As seen in the previous review, a large amount of research has been conducted to establish the distinctiveness of language anxiety as a specific situation type different from the construct of general anxiety. After getting more insight in language anxiety, researchers have further investigation about specific skills anxieties such as speaking and writing ones. After Daly and Miller (1975) coined the concept of writing apprehension, a long series of empirical studies have been conducted about first language writing anxiety while fewer studies have been carried out about L2 writing anxiety particularly in Arabic contexts.

Anxiety in writing classes is a worthwhile topic to be investigated due to its great impact on learners' writing achievement and attitudes. After reviewing most of the WA studies conducted in Arab EFL contexts (e.g., Abu Shawish & Atea, 2010; Hassan, 2001; Latif, 2007; Salim, 2007), several gaps and remarks were found in the research. First of all, all the participants in those studies were university English majors or prospective teachers. None of them was conducted on school students or EFL university students other than those majoring in English. Secondly, to determine the correlation between WA levels and performance, those studies utilized some linguistic tests (e.g., Latif's, 2007) or timed English essay writing tasks as in Hassan's (2001) to measure students writing performance. These measurements might not be taken seriously by the participants since they are only used for research purposes and do not have real consequences for the participants. Instead, formal final writing exam scores could reflect the real situation and authentic feelings. Furthermore, the potential sources of WA were not extensively explored and identified as they were investigated only through questionnaires as in Abu Shawish & Ata's (2010) or through interviews as in Latif's (2007). In addition, the alleviating strategies suggested in most of the related studies came in the form of recommendations by the researchers rather than authentic learners' lived experience. However, the researcher of the current study has benefitted from the strong scholarly foundation provided by those studies and taken the above remarks into his account as it could be seen in the next chapter which describes the methodologies and methods used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

To implement this study and address the research questions, which mainly aim to identify the possible factors associated with WA from the students' perspectives and explore the strategies for alleviating it, quantitative and qualitative methods have been combined in a sequential mixed methods fashion (Creswell, 2003). The epistemological and ontological assumptions underlying this method are in line with the pragmatic perspective which focuses on the research problem and uses pluralistic approaches to understand it (Morgan, 2007). Thus, the philosophical foundation for the suggested methodology in addition to research design, data collection and analysis are presented in this chapter.

3.1. Theoretical Foundations of the Methodology

One of the essential points in the selection of a research design is based on the researcher's world view assumptions (paradigms). Due to the possible effect of beliefs on actions (Guba, 1990), recognizing the philosophical assumptions held by the researcher helps explain why a certain approach is adopted in his/her study. There are many definitions of a paradigm across the literature. A paradigm can be defined as a set of beliefs or worldviews, held by a researcher or a scientist in a certain discipline, that influence the way of conducting a research study and interpreting its findings (Bryman, 2008). A paradigm is also described as "a general organizing framework for theory and research that includes basic assumptions, key issues, models of quality research, and methods for seeking answers" (Neuman, 2006, p.81). Embracing a quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods approach in research studies is often determined by those worldviews.

Currently, the four common paradigms as stated by many scholars and researchers (e.g., Creswell, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 2005) are: post-positivism, constructivism, emancipatory and pragmatism. In brief, post positivism represents the traditional form of research and inclines more to quantitative approach. Post-positivists claim that causes probably determine outcomes. Constructivism is typically seen as a paradigm underpinning qualitative research. Social constructivists assume that subjective meanings can be constructed through individuals' lived experiences. The worldviews of emancipatory writers are seen with qualitative or quantitative approach and those writers need the research to be intertwined with action agenda to change the marginalized individuals and groups' social situations. Alternatively, pragmatism which has been adopted as the philosophical basis for this study is described as a different paradigm from post-positivism as "the knowledge claims arise out of actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions" (Creswell, 2003, p.11). In response to the controversial debate about "paradigm wars", pragmatism has emerged as a sort of rejection to the forced choice between naturalistic and scientific approaches (Creswell, 2003; Greene et al, 1989; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The combination between quantitative and qualitative research has been given a life of its own as a new research paradigm on the basis that their philosophical principles should not be violated (Morgan, 2007). It can be argued that the acceptance of possible compatibility between research approaches and the limitation of a mono methods research approach has strengthened the position of a mixed methods approach proponents and advocates.

Pragmatists emphasize the research problem and look for all approaches available to understand it. The importance of pragmatism as a philosophical paradigm underpinning mixed methods studies arises from its focusing attention on the use of pluralistic approach for the best

understanding of a research problem without committing to only one system of philosophy or reality (Cherryholmes, 1992; Morgan, 2007; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). Concerning the relationship between mixed methods approach and pragmatism as a philosophical paradigm, it can be claimed that there is a consensus among a considerable number of researches on considering pragmatism as a theoretical foundation for mixed methods approach. For example, Johnson et al (2007, p.113) suggest that “the primary philosophy of a mixed methods approach is pragmatism.” Moreover, pragmatism is described as a “leading contender for the philosophical champion of mixed methods arena” (Greene, 2008, p.8). It can be argued that pragmatism arose as a response to the ‘paradigm war’ and the emergence of mixed method approaches.

To conclude, the pragmatic rationale for combining both quantitative and qualitative procedures at different stages in this research study has stemmed from the researcher’s pragmatic assumptions which indicate that neither qualitative nor quantitative methods are able by themselves to capture the whole image and details of a complex psychological construct like writing anxiety. But, when used in combination, both complete each other to gain a deeper insight and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Greene et al, 1989; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998).

3.2. Research Approach

When investigating such issues that are related to affective factors and cognitive psychology, much controversy has taken place among researchers about the use of either quantitative or qualitative methods. Proponents of quantitative methods (e.g., Maxwell & Delaney, 2004; Schrage, 1992) claim that social sciences can be truly scientific measurable realities as they only use numerical and statistical methods. Proponents of qualitative methods (e.g., Lincoln & Guba,

1985; Schwandt, 2000) accuse their counterparts of obscuring the reality of the social and psychological phenomena because they underestimate non-measurable factors.

FL anxiety in general has been investigated, for the most part, quantitatively through correlation studies (e.g., Daud et al, 2005; Hassan, 2001). However, these studies have not been able to draw a complete picture of the specific causes of language anxiety and their influence on students' achievement. Investigating L2 anxiety through empirical studies only yields limited results as it is dynamic and correlated with context bound factors. In this respect, Horwitz (2001) points out that clear understanding of the impact of language anxiety on learners' achievement is still unresolved since anxiety is a complex multi-faceted construct. So, using additional qualitative in-depth methods and analysis will help in understanding and exploring the participants' experience and views about FL anxiety in terms of its effects and sources. Price (1991) suggests that the qualitative approach is needed in investigating FL anxiety to gain deeper insight into the research topic by obtaining qualitative information on variables not easily explored through empirical studies.

Importantly, the integral qualitative part (interviews and focus groups) of this study is in alignment with descriptive phenomenological approach where participants' lived experiences are explored to gain fresh rich descriptions of the investigated phenomenon as it is concretely lived (Wertz, 2005). Applying the philosophical insights of phenomenology to psychology, Giorgi (1985) describes phenomenological psychology as a rigorous study of the phenomenon that produces lived experiences which are typical for groups of people. It is noteworthy that the focus of phenomenological psychology is descriptions of people's experiences and the meanings attached to them rather than interpretations (Osborne, 1990).

To gain richer understanding of L2 anxiety research results, the more recent tendency among educators and researchers (e.g., Latif, 2007; Worde, 1998) is to use eclectic approaches. In other words, quantitative methods might be used to complement qualitative ideas and qualitative methods could be used to understand the meanings and indications of the numbers produced by quantitative studies. In social and psychological studies, some quantitative and qualitative researchers have acknowledged the value of using mixed methods in deepening understanding and enhancing validity of the research results. For example, Campbell and Fiske (1959) as quantitative researchers recommend multiple methods to ensure validity and reliability in quantitative studies. On the other hand, qualitative theorists like Denzin (1989) and Patton (2002) claim that intrinsic bias coming from single methods can be overcome by combining multiple methods and data sources.

Language anxiety has measurable levels and effects on learners of L2. These aspects can be demonstrated by using quantitative measurement scales and questionnaires. However, understanding the experience of language anxiety requires qualitative methods. Pappamihel (2002) found that there was a difference in levels and sources of language anxiety among Mexican high school students. She could not fully understand those differences until she used qualitative methods of focus groups and open questionnaires to identify the participants' experiences for why and when such anxiety existed.

In recent years, the mixed methods approach (MMA) has received much interest and attention from many researchers (e.g., Creswell, 2008; Patton, 2002) and there is a consensus on characterizing it as a research design containing elements of both quantitative and qualitative methods. The general rationale behind using mixed methods is to overcome the drawbacks and

weaknesses of a single method. In this regard Greene et al (1989) suggest the following functions and justification for using the mixed methods in research studies: Compensation (enriching the study by using the strengths of each method to compensate the weaknesses of the other); expansion (using multi methods to get a clearer picture about a researched phenomenon), and triangulation (studying the same phenomenon by using multi-methods to gain convergence, validity, and deeper understanding).

Based on the purpose of this study and due to the complexity of language anxiety as a psychological construct, a sequential explanatory mixed methods design (Creswell, 2003) has been used where the quantitative data is collected in the first phase to help in collecting qualitative data in the second phase. Undoubtedly, quantitative studies have revealed much about FL anxiety, but there is still much to be explored qualitatively since deeper and more comprehensive understanding of anxiety cannot be captured numerically. Therefore, qualitative interviews and focus groups were used in this study to supplement and elaborate the data collected from the questionnaires. In this regard, Weir (2005) points out that qualitative interviews act as a complementary instrument to elaborate and explain quantitative findings. Importantly, the way in which the researcher can get what he/she wants or knows is determined by the research methodology which is defined by Wellington (1996, p.16) as “the activity of choosing and justifying research methods.” Choosing a research methodology is strongly dictated by the research purpose and it can be adopted to suit the topic under investigation. With this respect, research methodology should fit the research purposes:

Though researchers might advocate and adhere to a specific research tradition, it is sensibly wise to consider 'fitness for purpose' as the 'guiding principle' because different research paradigms are suitable for different research purposes and questions. (Cohen et al, 2000, p.1).

To conclude, adopting the “complementary position” (utilizing multiple research methods to address the research problem) and integrating both methods stem from the multifaceted nature of the study topic and its main objective which is about investigating WA sources and exploring strategies for alleviation. In other words, the process of measuring anxiety levels and identifying its sources among the participants of this study lends itself to quantitative scales and questionnaires, while deeply understanding, elaborating and complementing the quantitative results mandate utilizing phenomenological interviews and focus groups.

3.3. Research Methods

Considering the nature of WA as a complex multifaceted concept and the purpose of this study, a sequential explanatory design of a mixed methods approach is used to address the research questions. According to this approach, the quantitative data was collected in the first phase to give general trends about the investigated phenomenon and pave the way for collecting the qualitative data that integrates and complements the quantitative findings in the second phase. In this study, the quantitative survey questionnaires were used in the first phase to measure the level of students’ WA and identify its potential sources. Students’ final writing course grades were used to examine the correlation between level of anxiety and writing performance. In addition, data obtained from the first questionnaire was used to help in the selection of interviewees (student participants) in the second phase. Phenomenological interviews and a focus group discussion were conducted in the second phase to complement the quantitative findings and gain a much deeper understanding of students’ anxiety.

In the mixed methods approach (MMA), the priority in emphasizing quantitative or qualitative data or giving emphasis on both is determined by the nature of the study under investigation

(Bryman, 2008; Creswell et al, 2003). In this study quantitative and qualitative components have been emphasized equally. The rationale behind this stems from the idea that integrating data obtained from using questionnaires with data obtained from phenomenological interviews and focus group can triangulate the research data and give in-depth insight to the findings. In the pages to follow, research participants, data collection instruments, procedures and data analysis are addressed respectively.

3.3.1. Participants

One hundred and ten Emirati students (males and females) from three different universities in the UAE participated in the quantitative phase of this study. Ages of students ranged from 19 to 21 and all of them studied EFL at schools from grade one to grade twelve. The three universities are located in three different emirates and the majority of their students are from the UAE. The first language of all the student participants is Arabic. All of them were enrolled in intensive English programmes which are designed to improve students' English language competence and communication to cope up with their future majors in which English is the language of instruction. As each programme consists of different levels, students have to pass level 1 by scoring 60% and more to transfer to the following level and so on. After passing level 1, students are entitled to sit for the TOEFL or IELTS exams and they are requested to score more than 500 or 5 respectively to join their majors. In each level, students study the four language skills for four months with an average of twenty five hours a week. In the writing classes and in the related tests students are required to write different types of letters, short paragraphs, and essays. The study participants were chosen randomly (from levels 2, 3 and 4) to complete the questionnaires. Students who were still in the general English course or in level one were not recruited in this study as students in such levels might not have enough writing experience to provide detailed

information about their WA experiences. In the second phase of the study, ten highly-anxious students and ten low-anxious ones were interviewed individually by the researcher. Those students had been identified after analyzing the results of the Second Language Writing Apprehension Inventory (SLWAI), which was administered in the first phase of the study. In addition to the students, six EFL instructors who have been teaching writing for tertiary level participated in the focus group sessions to investigate their experiences in how they try to alleviate their students' WA. Ages of the instructors' ranged from 36 to 57 and all of them have been teaching English in the UAE universities for more than eight years. They come from Jordan, Tunisia, Syria, Palestine and Canada. Interviewing individuals with different characteristics and levels present multiple perspectives which in turn "represents the complexity of our world" (Creswell, 2003, p.194). Correlations between some variables like age, gender or length of courses spent in the university and the participants' choices for the possible sources of writing anxiety were beyond the scope of this study. However, the effect of gender and place (university) on the level of writing anxiety among the participants was tested. Table 3.1 presents the demographic characteristics of the study's student participants.

Table 3.1: Number of subjects by university and gender.

University	Female	Male	Total
A	25	7	32
B	15	22	37
C	31	10	41
Total	71 (64.5%)	39 (35.5%)	110

As shown in the above table, the majority of participants are females (n=71) while (n= 39) participants are males. The uneven female-male ratio is consistent to some extent with the actual

student population which is dominated by female students in the UAE universities (MoHE, 2009).

3.3.2. Data Collection Methods

As this study adopts the MMA to answer the aforementioned research questions which aim to investigate the students' English writing anxiety in UAE universities, three quantitative and two qualitative data collection tools were used to investigate and explore the factors contributing to the participants' anxiety and the strategies for alleviating it as shown in(Table 3.2). The detailed description of these tools is presented in the next section.

Table 3.2: Summary of data collection instruments

<i>Collection Tool</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>#Participants</i>
Second Language Writing Apprehension Inventory (SLWAI)	To measure the levels of students' writing anxiety.	110
Final writing grades	To investigate the effect of WA on performance.	62
Sources of Writing Anxiety Questionnaire (SWAQ)	To identify the factors associated with students' writing anxiety and the possible strategies for alleviating it.	110
Interviews # 1	To explore the possible sources of writing anxiety from highly-anxious students' point of views and complement the data emerging from the questionnaires.	10
Interviews # 2	To explore strategies used by the low-anxious students for alleviating writing anxiety.	10
Focus group	To explore teachers' suggestions and strategies used for reducing their students' writing anxiety.	6

3.3.3. Data Collection Tools

SLWAI, SWAQ, students' final writing grades, interviews and focus group discussion were used to collect the study's data. Kalaja (1995) mentions that questionnaires can measure affective factors in theory but actual behavior particularly in writing cannot be measured only by

questionnaires. Therefore, incorporating qualitative research tools such as interviews, observation or focus groups allows researchers to probe deeply into the quantitative data and enables the participants to interact with the researcher and other participants.

3.3.3.1. Second Language Writing Apprehension Inventory (SLWAI)

The SLWAI (see Appendix A) which was developed by Cheng (2004) was used in this study to measure the degree to which students feel anxious when writing in English. Cheng takes into account the multidimensional nature of L2 writing anxiety and based the scale on Lang’s (1971) tripartite framework. In that framework, anxiety consists of three different components: Somatic (physiological), cognitive, and behavioral. Accordingly, L2 writing anxiety is defined by Cheng (2004, p.319) “as a relatively stable anxiety disposition associated with L2 writing, which involves a variety of dysfunctional thoughts, increased physiological arousal, and maladaptive behaviors”. The twenty two items of SLWAI are answered on a five Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Table 3.3 shows how the scale items are classified into three groups reflecting three types of anxiety with their manifestation symptoms.

Table 3.3: The classification of SLWAI three types of writing anxiety and their symptoms

<i>Type of anxiety</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Symptoms</i>
<i>Somatic</i>	2, 6, 8, 11, 13, 19, 15	Physiological arousal such as nervousness, heart pounding, and sweaty palms.
<i>Cognitive</i>	1, 3, 7, 9, 14, 17, 20, 21	Cognitive aspects of anxiety such as negative expectations, perception of arousal, and fear of negative evaluation
<i>behavioral avoidance</i>	4, 5, 10, 12, 16, 18, 22	Avoiding writing situations and withdrawal.

The effectiveness of WA measures which were dominant before developing SLWAI has been criticized by many L2 writing anxiety researchers as stated in [2.5] (e.g., Cheng, 2004; Shaver, 1990) because they were originally used to investigate writing anxiety of first language learners.

In contrast, SLWAI which has respectable internal consistency with Cronbach coefficient alpha (.91) is distinct from writing self-esteem scales (Cheng, 2004). The fact that SLWAI has been originally utilized to investigate WA for college students studying English as a foreign language makes it an appropriate scale for measuring the levels of writing anxiety among the participants of this study.

3.3.3.2. Sources of Writing Anxiety Questionnaire (SWAQ)

The second research instrument is SWAQ (see Appendix B) which has been developed by the researcher based on his long experience as an EFL instructor as well as on the results of related studies (e.g., Abu Shawish and Atea, 2010; Clark, 2005; Daly and Miller, 1975; Daud et al, 2005; Horwitz et al, 1986; Latif, 2007; Rankin, 2006; Lin, 2009). The main purpose of this questionnaire is to investigate the possible sources, factors, and aspects of the participants' (students) English writing anxiety. Its items are answered on a five point Likert scale ranging from (5=strongly agree; 4=agree; 3=undecided; 2=disagree; 1=strongly disagree). The questionnaire's thirty five items are distributed over the following seven domains (categories): affective, cognitive, linguistic, teaching practices, feedback, evaluation, and tests. For the affective domain, items 1-5 address the learners' self-confidence, motivation, nervousness and self-evaluation. The affective domain items are based on Bandura's theory of self-efficacy which clarifies the negative effects of low self-efficacy and confidence on learner's anxiety. The results of related studies (e.g., Cheng et al, 1999; Rankin, 2006) show the negative effects of such affective factors on FL anxiety. Concerning the cognitive domain, items 6-12 handle learners' cognitive ability and skills to write English compositions. These domain items are based on the "skills deficit hypothesis" (Schlenker and Leary, 1982) which implies that individuals' anxiety develops when they feel that they lack the cognitive skills and competencies for performance and

interaction. Toth (2010, p. 10) applies this hypothesis to language learning when he claims that “language learners may feel anxious about using the L2 in and outside the classroom because they lack the skills and various competencies...necessary for smooth and pleasant interaction.” Items 13-17 handle linguistic aspects like weakness in grammar, spelling, vocabulary and conjunctions. According to “linguistic coding deficit hypothesis” (Spark and Ganschow, 1993), language anxiety could be developed as a result of language deficiency. Many related studies have attributed a part of language anxiety to linguistic deficiency (e.g., Abu Shawish and Atea, 2010; Daud et al, 2005; Latif, 2007). On the other hand, items 18-28 deal with teaching practices and feedback. In this regard, most of studies about FL anxiety have shown that the feedback which is usually given about students’ writings in addition to some teaching practices in these classes are sources for learners’ anxiety (e.g., Daly, 1979, Latif, 2007; Rankin, 2006; Young, 1992). Evaluation and test domains (items 29-35) are based on Horwitz et al’s (1986) ‘foreign language anxiety model’. In addition to the seven domains, two open-ended questions were incorporated to give respondents (students) an opportunity to add other possible causes of WA or any remedial strategy which might not be elicited through the questionnaire items.

3.3.3.3. Students’ Grades

Another source of quantitative data is the participants’ final writing grades which have been used to investigate the correlation between the students’ levels of anxiety and writing achievement. In two of the participating universities, students’ final writing exams are graded within a committee by two different instructors. In case of discrepancy by more than 10% between the two instructors’ ratings, a third marker interferes and the average of the three marks is adopted. Concerning the grading system in the third participating university, writing final exams are graded and calculated in a different formative way. As such, final writing grades of sixty two

student participants from the two universities that follow the same grading system were used in this study as reliable indicators for writing performance. Importantly, the final course grade has been considered an effective indicator to overall performance and adopted as an assessment tool of foreign language proficiency in many studies about language anxiety (e.g. Aida, 1994; Cheng et al 1999, Worde, 1998).

3.3.3.4. Interviews

Semi-structured phenomenological interviews are an important data collection technique in this study. They have been used in many qualitative studies as an elicitation interviewing technique to capture tacit knowledge of the interviewees and maintain the consistency of the interview process (Johnson and Wellers, 2002; Wengraf, 2001). Face to face individual interviews have been chosen since they are expected to be proper tools for exploring the specific participants' perspectives about the contributing factors to WA in addition to being complementary tools for verifying findings from the survey questionnaires (Weir, 2005). In this regard, it has been claimed by Locke et al (2000) and Merriam (1998) that semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to gain deeper insight into the participants' experiences and bring their voice to the issue being investigated through contacting them directly in natural contexts. In addition, interviewing is described as a deliberate way to learn and know about people's thinking, feelings and experiences in their life (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). In this study, after identifying the level of WA among the participants (on the basis of the first questionnaire), ten highly-anxious participants were interviewed individually to explore and elaborate the factors standing behind their high anxiety whereas ten low-anxious students were also recruited for interviews to explore the individual strategies they are using to alleviate anxiety. The flexibility in the interview format, open ended questions, and additional follow up questions enabled the interviewees to

share and give a clear picture about the relevant thoughts and experience. The precise wording or order of interview questions in this study were not outlined or determined in advance since some questions were directed according to the questionnaire results and by the new concepts/ideas emerging from the participants during the interview sessions. Nevertheless, the biggest portion of the questions (see Appendix C) focused on the possible sources of WA and the coping strategies to get a wealth of data from the participants and deeply capture the individuals' experiences and perceptions. All the interviews, which were conducted by the researcher, were held in the students' native language (Arabic) to assure their understanding and let them feel comfortable when expressing their perspectives and thoughts. The interviews contained questions about the interviewees' experiences in terms of the factors contributing to their WA and the strategies they use to cope up with. Interviews with students were audio-taped, transcribed and translated to be analyzed.

3.3.3.5. Teachers' Data

The second exploratory qualitative research tool is a focus group discussion. Young (1992) emphasizes that L2 anxiety should be investigated from a variety of perspectives since it is a complex phenomenon influenced by multiple factors. In this study, six EFL teachers' perspectives about the alleviating strategies were explored through focus group discussions. The focus group discussion was directed by pre-prepared questions on how to reduce students' WA and follow up questions emerging from the participants' responses (see Appendix C). The rationale behind utilizing focus group as a data collection tool stems from the ability of this tool in stimulating thoughts that cannot be easily captured through individual interviews (Gillham, 2005). Furthermore, Barbour and Kitzinger (1999) mention that focus group discussion is a powerful research tool to identify shared and common knowledge since data can be generated

through interaction and the participants to ask questions and comment on each other's views. As a result of potential dynamic interactions among the focus group participants, individuals have a chance to evaluate and compare their practices and experiences to those of others. Morgan (1997, p. 20) calls for the use of focus group discussions as a research data collection tool since "they reveal aspects of experiences and perspectives that would not be as accessible without group interaction." In addition, unanticipated ideas and perspectives might emerge and be triggered. When investigating language anxiety, the importance of employing focus group discussion is highly recommended because of its ability in aiding participants to articulate their feelings and reactions (Osbo, 2007; Pappamihiel, 2002). However, attention is drawn to the drawbacks of the technique of focus groups. For example, the small sample size and the non-random selection of participants might prevent the findings from being generalized to a wider population. Another disadvantage of focus group discussions is the possibility of not expressing the thoughts opposing the view of other participants (Freitas et al, 1998). Schurink et al (1998, p.13) points to other drawbacks when he claims that "respondents could be reserved on sensitive issues which require a tactical approach by the facilitator...and other respondents may tend to monopolize the interview and try to intimidate other respondents."

Importantly, the appropriateness of utilizing teachers' focus group interviews in this study has stemmed from their ability to formulate general trends about the alleviating techniques used to overcome WA that might not be easy to detect through other tools. Furthermore, they have enabled the researcher to tap into different forms of day to day communication such as arguing, teasing or inquiring. Exploring what people know and experience requires such forms of communication since their attitudes and views are not only understood through encapsulated

responses to direct questions. To vitalize the role of this powerful data gathering tool, the group participants were selected according to Krueger (1998) who recommends that the participants should be as homogeneous as possible and share common experiences about the investigated issue. To keep the discussion focused on the topic of alleviating students' WA, the researcher provided the participating teachers with questions that were assumed to be designed according to the interview and questionnaires results. Additionally, the discussion was moderated by the researcher to encourage the hesitant participants to share their ideas and ensure an even participation. A sample of teachers' responses during the discussion can be seen in Appendix I.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

Prior to the formal data collection, a pilot study was conducted in October, 2011 to check the administration of the questionnaires and the time needed to complete them, ensure the clarity of the two questionnaires, and examine their validity/reliability. Having given some guidelines, the researcher administered questionnaires to 30 students at the University of Sharjah. The participants' ages ranged from 19 to 24. All of them were registered in levels 2 and 3 which require them to study the four language skills. The participants read the consent form and finished the two questionnaires in 35 minutes. After the thirty participants had completed the questionnaires, they were asked by the researcher if there were any ambiguous items or any correction needed. The participants answered that the questionnaires' items were easy to read and there was no ambiguity. Meanwhile, some participants suggested providing their emails instead of their mobile numbers. Based upon the results of the pilot study, a few translated words in the two questionnaires were modified to eliminate any ambiguity or misunderstanding. Additionally, the item in the background information asking students to provide their mobile numbers if they volunteer to be interviewed was changed into email address.

After getting a preliminary approval from the directors of English language centers in the three concerned universities, the directors were visited and given a more detailed idea about the study's objectives, data collection tools, participants' numbers/levels, and significance for teaching writing. Admittedly, the idea of researching WA was highly appreciated by the directors since they were eager to find out how they could improve their students' writing performance. It was suggested to select the participants per sections to facilitate the data collection process. A few days later, the researcher was informed about the selected sections, timing, and the teachers who were designated to help in some logistic arrangements. For the formal study, data was collected during the fall semester, 2011 in three UAE universities with the exception of the data elicited from the focus group discussion which was collected in February 2012. As stated earlier, data was collected in two phases. The quantitative data was collected first to form a basis for the collection of qualitative data in the second phase. During English classes, the two questionnaires were administered (on three different days) by the researcher himself, who assured the respondents' confidentiality and anonymity. The participants from each of the three universities were informed about the purpose of the study and its importance in uncovering the causes of EFL learners' writing anxiety. They were asked to read and sign the consent forms, and then to provide their background information (gender, age, level, emails) and complete the entire items of the two questionnaires as well. The time needed to complete the two questionnaires was 30-40 minutes. After collecting the completed questionnaires, the researcher coded them before starting the computerization process.

Two weeks after tabulating the information collected from the two questionnaires, ten highly-anxious students (six females and four males) from the three universities were interviewed

individually to explore their experiences about their high levels of WA and ten low-anxious students (seven females and three males) were also interviewed to explore the strategies they use to alleviate their anxiety. Place and time were pre-arranged to be convenient for all interviewees. During the interviewees, students were allowed to use Arabic. The length of time spent with each interviewee ranged from 15-25 minutes. After grading the final exams in December 2011, the researcher received the final writing grades of sixty two participants from the universities A and B. Later on, an invitation was sent to eight EFL instructors from the three participating universities to participate in a focus group discussion. Only six of them were able to participate in the discussion which aimed to identify and explore the strategies they use or suggest to mitigate their students' WA.

3.5. Data Analysis

The quantitative data was coded and entered in the SPSS program which was flexibly used to generate charts, tabulated reports, descriptive statistics and more complex statistical tests such as the Scheffe test. The SLWAI data was analyzed by summing up the respondents' scores of the questionnaire items. For the negatively worded items, reverse scoring was done before summing up the scores. As there are 22 items in SLWAI, the possible range of score is from 22-110. Therefore, lower total scores indicate lower level of anxiety and higher scores imply high level of anxiety. The related Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was carried out to determine if there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the three participating universities in terms of writing anxiety levels. To test gender effect with regard to writing anxiety levels, the independent sample t-test was also used. Additionally, The Pearson correlation test was applied to measure the correlation between students' level of anxiety and the writing grades. For the "sources of writing anxiety questionnaire", frequencies, means, and standard deviations were

used to show the frequency of different variables. Besides, ANOVA was carried out to determine if there is a statistically significant difference among the mean scores of the seven categories. The Scheffe test was also conducted to identify the most effective (significant) contributing factors to students' WA and the directionality of significant differences.

Qualitatively, several steps were taken to analyze the large amount of information that emerged from the phenomenological interviews and focus group sessions since analyzing qualitative data requires “working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others” (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, p.145). The emerging data was analyzed through the following stages:

Stage 1: The taped interviews and focus group sessions were transcribed by the researcher. Powers (2005) asserts that the type of transcription (verbatim or non-verbatim) is determined by the purpose of the research. In this study, interjections (e.g., uh, hmm, ah etc), and some repeated filler phrases like “you know”, “I mean” were left out during transcription since the main interest is in the content of what has been said rather than the mechanics of speech and the researcher is more engaged in understanding the ideas expressed by the interviewees than in conversation analysis. This method is justified for increasing the readability and manageability of transcripts (Bennstam et al, 2004). It could also be used particularly in hybrid studies that have disparate aims from the pure qualitative ones. In other words, qualitative data in mixed method research is frequently integrated with quantitative data to provide senses of ‘completeness’ and ‘confirmation’ of the obtained data (Halcomb & Andrew, 2005; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). All the transcription was done on paper. To review and check the hardcopies of transcripts,

audiotapes were listened to again and slight corrections were made. After transcribing the taped interview and focus group sessions, the transcripts were read to elicit the general sense of the information and reflect on the units of general meanings. During the preliminary review process, the researcher used memos, notes, and highlighters to identify interesting, important and relevant items to the research questions (open codes).

Stage 2: In this stage, The Constant Comparison Method (Merriam, 1998) was adopted to categorize the meaning units and find relationships among them. One privilege of this analysis method is its capability to “be undertaken deductively (e.g., codes are identified prior to analysis and then looked for in the data), inductively (e.g., codes emerge from the data), or abductively (i.e., codes emerge iteratively)” (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, p. 565). The deductive analysis method was used as a means for corroborating themes to analyze the data related to the third research question which aims to explore the possible sources of WA. According to this method, the existing data to be analyzed based on a pre-prepared framework (Patton, 2002). Specifically, data emerging from the highly-anxious interviewees’ responses was chunked, compared and placed under the seven categories which represent the possible sources of WA (affective, cognitive, linguistic, evaluation, pedagogical, feedback, and test factors).

Stage 3: To analyze the data emerging from the interviews with low-anxious students and focus group sessions, the inductive analysis method was used. This analysis was carried out to reveal themes in the students’ and teachers’ perceptions about the strategies they adopt to alleviate WA. To explore the participants’ lived experience without imposing pre-prepared ideas or a framework, related data was analyzed inductively with open codes to keep the researcher more attentive to what had been said by the interviewees. In this regard, Strauss and Corbin (1998)

clarify that open coding is a process for analyzing data through the emerging themes and dimensions.

Stage 4: Open codes that go together were grouped to construct categories and subcategories about the different sources of writing anxiety and the emerging strategies for alleviating it. The processes of selecting, synthesizing, comparing and interpreting the interview and focus group data were done to give explanation to the research questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Additionally, each category or subcategory was represented by interviewees' quotes. The quotes extracted from the individual interviews with students were translated from Arabic to English. The selected quotes were translated literally in meaning to reflect and convey the participants' direct speech (more details about the translation issue in this study could be seen in the following section [3.6]. Later, constant reviews and revisions were also conducted to identify relationships between both qualitative and quantitative data. A summary of data analysis process including data sources and analysis tools for each of the research questions is provided in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: A Summary of research questions, data sources and analysis tools

<i>Research questions</i>	<i>Data sources</i>	<i>Analysis tools</i>
To what extent do students in the UAE universities experience anxiety in English writing classes?	Scores from SLWAI survey.	Descriptive statistics (frequencies, standard deviation, mean, minimum and maximum.
Is there a significant negative correlation between high levels of anxiety and writing performance?	Students' final writing grades and scores from SLWAI.	Pearson Product- Moment/ correlational analysis
What are the factors that associated with WA for English language learners in UAE universities?	Scores from SWAQ and highly-anxious interviewees' responses.	Descriptive statistics in addition to constant comparison method (deductive analysis).
Which strategies are perceived by student and teacher participants to be the most effective for reducing writing anxiety?	Low-anxious interviewees' responses and instructors' focus groups.	Constant comparison method (inductive analysis).
Is the use of computer perceived to be an effective strategy for reducing writing anxiety?	Two open ended questions in SWAQ and interviewees' responses.	Frequencies and deductive constant comparison method.

3.6. Translation

Despite the researcher's bilingualism and competence in Arabic and English, the translation process throughout the conduct of this research became one of the most important issues related to methodology and validity. Translating interview data from the source language (Arabic) into the target language (English) required solid preparation. This is due to the necessity of translating the meaning from one language to another rather than doing it from word to word. In addition, both Arabic and English have different word order, grammar and contextual based meaning. In this respect, it has been pointed out that "communication across languages involves more than just a literal transfer of information [and]... translators must constantly make decisions about the cultural meanings which language carries" (Temple and Edward, 2002, p. 2-3).

For the sake of providing reliable translated data, the back translation method was employed to translate the two questionnaires while the collaborative translation was adopted to translate the excerpts taken from interviewees' responses. To prevent the loss of meaning or any possible language ambiguity when implementing the survey questionnaires, the back translation method, which is the most commonly used method in cross culture research (Brislin, 1980), was used to translate the items of the two questionnaires and make sure that the translated versions were equivalent to the original. The first questionnaire (SLWAI) and the second one (SWAQ) were translated into Arabic by the researcher himself and then an instructor of translation from the English department at the researcher's university translated the Arabic versions into English. The received back translation was compared to the original versions of the questionnaires (see Appendices A&B). As a result, slight modifications were made on the Arabic versions which were sent to an Arabic language instructor to check their accuracy and correctness. To eliminate any potential translation-related problem or misinterpretation, the researcher asked the

participants during the pilot study to express their perspectives about the clarity of the items' meaning.

For the qualitative data that was collected through the individual interviews with student participants, the researcher translated the Arabic transcripts into English before the analysis process. The researcher's bilingualism and considerable teaching experience in the UAE context enabled him to capture the intended sense of the interviewees' responses and provide the translated transcripts which were needed for data analysis. However, a dilemma emerged when it was decided to use direct quotes from the interviewees' responses to support and clarify the findings coming from the qualitative data. As Arabic and English languages have different word order and grammar, the meaning rather than wording of those quotes had to be literally translated. To ensure translation validity and provide readers with reliable translated quotes, the researcher decided to employ collaborative translation method which combines together disciplinary expertise and cultural knowledge when translating quotes (Douglas and Craig, 2007). As such, the selected quotes which were intended to be used in reporting the interview results were separately translated from Arabic to English by the researcher and a bilingual EFL colleague who holds a PhD in linguistics. Later on, a meeting was held between the researcher and that colleague to review and discuss the differences of wordings between the two translated English versions. The review process involved discussion about translating the words that identified as problematic in terms of finding proper equivalence for them. The refined English version of the quotes along with the original Arabic one were sent to an Emirati (national) translator to ensure the appropriate equivalence of some words that are greatly related to the local dialect and culture. The aforementioned translation steps were taken to verify the quotes accuracy and check if they

reflect and maintain the original meaning. All the extracts which were used in [4.3.1-4 and 4.4.1.2] reflect the final amended English version of the quotes while the original Arabic one is shown in Appendix H.

3.7. Validity and Reliability

As the quality of research conclusion is assessed by the level of how valid and reliable the results are, this section reviews the steps taken in this study to ensure the validity and reliability of its findings. These issues are so important that they can help the readers determine the significance of the findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The SWAQ content validity was determined when two educators who have a long experience in researching affective factors such as motivation and attitudes were asked by the researcher to express their views on whether they consider the 35 items of the SWAQ representative for the potential sources of WA or if some additional items need to be added. The two expert educators suggested adding item 27 (teacher's red color comments make me anxious) to the feedback category and item 18 (I have not got adequate teaching of different writing genres) to the teaching practices category. In addition, face validity was tested through the pilot study when the participants were asked to inform the researcher whether the questions were understandable and clear. Based on some participants' remarks, three Arabic words in item 19 and 24 were replaced with clearer ones. The factor analysis has not been used in this study due to the small sample size of the respondents who participated in the pilot study. To get reliable factor analysis, the sample size should not be less than two hundred respondents (Comrey and Lee, 1992). In this regard, Field (2010, p. 559) states that "a sample of 300 or more will probably provide a stable factor solution." As stated earlier in [3.4], the pilot study was conducted one month prior to the main study data collection to examine the two questionnaires validity, reliability and clarity. Due to the importance of reliability in any survey

research, internal consistency was measured to check the questionnaires reliability and show the homogeneity of the items which make up the questionnaire. In this regard, Dornyei (2003) emphasizes the significance of internal consistency for that internal consistency for any scientific survey measurement. With a sample of 30 participants in the pilot study, the Cronbach coefficient alpha, by which internal consistency is usually measured, was .86 for the SLWAI and .91 for the SWAQ. To determine the accuracy of the formal study findings and to assess further the quality of the research instruments from the point view of the participants, the reliability of the two questionnaires was also examined through the internal consistency. With one hundred ten students, the formal study yielded an internal consistency coefficient of .88 for SLWAI and .93 for SWAQ using Cronbach alpha. So, it could be claimed that the two questionnaires were shown as reliable tools for investigating the levels and sources of WA of the EFL students in the UAE universities.

To validate the findings of the qualitative research tools, the questions of the interviews were carefully selected to triangulate and clarify the quantitative data. The focus of the interview questions was directed towards the research questions. In addition, two students who participated in the pilot study were interviewed after they completed the questionnaires to indicate the validity of the interview questions which gave satisfactory answers. Another source of validity for the qualitative data in this study came from the researcher's being the primary instrument in data collection. In this regard, Patton (2002) points out that a researcher's educational background and experiences add credibility to the research. For this study, the researcher's familiarity with this research context and tertiary students has enabled him to form a deep understanding of the investigated phenomenon. In the same vein, Strauss and Corbin (1998) assert that significant

issues in the data could be sensitized by the researcher's experience and knowledge which enable him/her to explain the findings or theorize emerging concepts. To externally check the research findings (Creswell, 2003), a peer examiner who conducted his own doctoral thesis using qualitative research methods, read through the findings and brought the researcher's attention to some cases of bias when reporting the results.

3.8. Ethical Issues

Clarifying the ethical issues that are considered when conducting researches plays a vital role in making the findings more trustworthy. Doing what is legally and morally acceptable when making research projects assists the researcher to be sure that the outcomes are free of harmful negatives. Minimizing the chances of misleading results requires the researcher to meet the ethical standards during planning and conducting the study. Researchers are cautioned to be aware of some ethical guidelines before, during, and after conducting the research (Miles and Huberman, 1994). These guidelines and issues involve informing the participants of what is being involved by providing informed consent forms, preventing participants from danger or any physical discomfort, protecting the participants' dignity, and promoting the principles of confidentiality and privacy.

In this study, before distributing the survey questionnaires and starting interviews, participants were given the letter of information and consent (Appendix D). Before reading and signing the consent letter, the researcher gave an informal briefing in Arabic to assure the participating students' understanding of the nature and purpose of the study. During the interviews, the focus group discussion, and the completion of the questionnaires, the participants were informed that they could inquire about any issue/item related to the study or withdraw even after starting

completing the questionnaires or commencing the interviews. Additionally, the participants were informed and assured that their questionnaire and interview responses would be used for research purposes only and no one even their teachers or university authorities would be allowed to look at them without their prior consent. As the issue of confidentiality and participants' anonymity are taken seriously by the ethical guidelines at the British University, none of the participating students, teachers and universities was identified directly in the final report. In general, it could be claimed that no ethical concerns or any kind of risk were identified or foreseen throughout the research process since the questions in the research tools were not personally sensitive.

CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents a broader comprehensive picture about writing anxiety as a complex multidimensional phenomenon by combining different quantitative and qualitative data sources. Addressing the study objective stated in the first chapter has required analysis of the collected data by making use of frequencies, mean, standard deviation, percentages and the Pearson Product Correlation Test to analyze the quantitative data in addition to transcribing, coding, categorizing and comparing to analyze the qualitative data that has emerged from the interviews and focus group discussion. As stated earlier, the study has been guided by the following research questions:

- 1- To what extent do students in the UAE universities experience anxiety in English writing classes?
- 2- Is there a significant negative correlation between high levels of writing anxiety and writing performance?
- 3- What are the factors associated with writing anxiety for English language learners in the UAE universities?
- 4- Which strategies are perceived by student and teacher participants to be the most effective for reducing writing anxiety?
- 5- Is the use of computer perceived by the students to be an effective strategy for reducing writing anxiety?

In this study, 110 students from three universities completed the two questionnaires (Appendices A&B) which were designed to measure the WA levels among EFL learners in writing classes and

identify the sources of such anxiety. Based on the quantitative findings, 20 students were also interviewed to explore their lived experiences about the investigated phenomenon. To triangulate the results, six EFL instructors participated in a focus group session to talk about their experiences in how they are alleviating their students' WA.

4.1. Research Question One

To what extent do the students in the UAE universities experience anxiety in English writing classes?

The first research question in this study has been designed to check the existence of WA and measure its level among the English learners in three UAE universities. As mentioned in [3.3.2], SLWAI has been used to answer this question and identify the extent to which WA has been a problem for students in the UAE EFL context. Among the twenty two items of the SLWAI (see Appendix A), seven items (1, 4, 7, 17, 18, 21, and 22) were negatively worded and as a result their ratings were reversely scored before summing up the total scores of all the questionnaire items. Hence, in all instances, a high score indicated a high level of writing anxiety. Specifically, the respondents whose total scores of the twenty two items were equal to or smaller than 50 were judged to be low-anxious while those whose scores were equal to or higher than 65 were considered to be highly-anxious. The total scores in-between indicated average (moderate) levels of anxiety (Cheng, 2004; Zhang, 2011).

The possible scores of the questionnaire items range from 22 to 110. The distribution of SLWAI scores has been examined through a histogram which reflects the normal distribution of the scores (see Appendix E). As seen in (Table 4.1), the participants' scores in this study range from 30 to 103. A high level of WA among the participants is reflected (mean= 67.33, > 65) and (SD=

15.02). Additionally, the descriptive statistics reveal that 62 students (56%) have high levels of WA (*mean*= 78.14); 16 students (15%) have low levels of WA (*mean*= 43.12); and 32 students (29%) are found to be moderately anxious (*mean*= 58.50). The high number of highly-anxious students might lead to the assumption that learners in UAE universities encounter high levels of WA when writing English compositions.

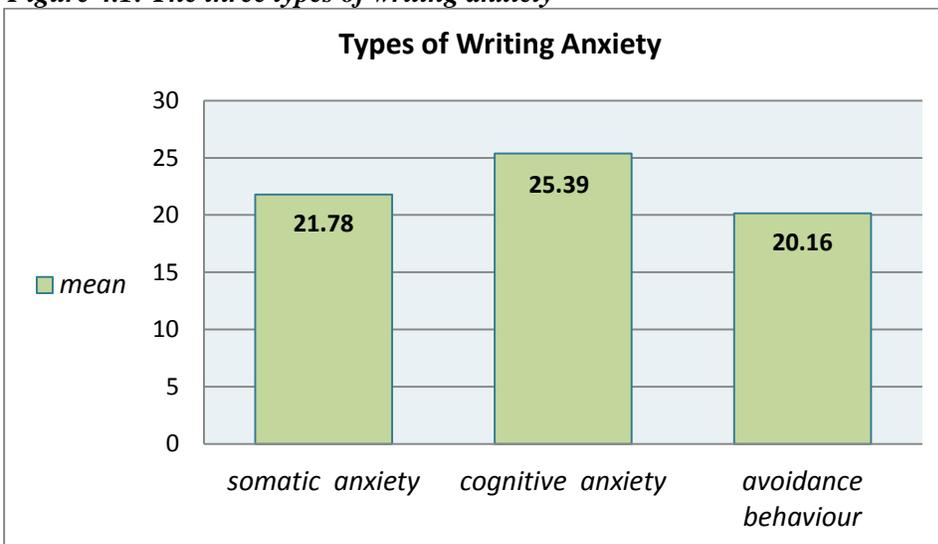
Table 4.1: Descriptive statistics of the SLWAI scores

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>St. Deviation</i>
<i>Total</i>	110	30	103	73	<u>67.33</u>	15.02
<i>Highly-anxious</i>	62	65	103	38	78.14	8.57
<i>Low-anxious</i>	16	30	50	20	43.12	6.00
<i>Moderate Anxious</i>	32	51	64	13	58.50	3.84

As mentioned in [3.3.3.1], the twenty two items of the SLWAI are divided into three types of WA: Somatic anxiety which refers to physiological aspects and effects of anxiety experience such as tension, nervousness and unpleasant feelings; cognitive anxiety which refers to the cognitive aspects relating to negative expectations, concern about others' evaluation or test results; and avoidance behavior which refers to behavioral aspects resulted from anxiety experience such as avoiding writing situations and finding excuses for not practicing writing compositions (Cheng, 2004). A close examination of the frequencies and mean scores related to each anxiety type shows that the participants have high levels of English WA in the three types. Specifically, Figure 4.1 shows that the cognitive anxiety is the most common type of WA encountered by the participants (*mean*= 25.39). The mean scores of somatic and avoidance behavior are (21.78) and (20.16) respectively. As such, it could be claimed that severe concerns about others' expectations and fear of negative evaluation mainly contribute to the participants'

WA. The cognitive component of WA might lead to writing test anxiety when learners extremely worry about the results and fear evaluation (Cheng, 2004).

Figure 4.1: The three types of writing anxiety



Going back to the individual SLWAI statements, items 2, 3, 9 and 11 receive the highest scores from the participants. The second item of the questionnaire is about heart pounding when writing compositions under time constraint; the third item is about learner's nervousness and unpleasant feelings resulted from evaluating their writings by teachers; the ninth item handles learner's worries when getting poor grades in evaluated English compositions and the eleventh item is about getting jumbled thoughts when writing under time pressure. Table 4.2 shows that item 9 receives the highest ($mean=3.68$) and 73 participants agree/strongly agree that they become worried about scoring poor grades if they know that their English compositions are to be evaluated. It is also observed that 72 participants agree/strongly agree ($mean=3.61$) that their thoughts become jumbled when writing English composition under time constraints. In addition, 73 participants agree/strongly agree ($mean=3.60$) that they feel stressed during writing

judgmental compositions while 62 participants agree/strongly agree ($mean=3.39$) that they feel their hearts pounding during writing English composition under time pressure.

Table 4.2: Descriptive statistics for the scores of the highest four items on SLWAI

Item	SD	D	U	A	SA	Total	Mean
item 2	7	25	16	42	20	110	3.39
item 3	7	18	12	48	25	110	3.60
item 9	4	23	10	40	33	110	3.68
item 11	9	14	15	45	27	110	3.61

SD= strongly disagree, D= disagree, U= uncertain, A= agree, SA= strongly agree

Taken together and analyzing the mean scores of both the three types of WA and individual items of the questionnaire demonstrate that the participants' WA is largely attributed to the fear and nervousness that resulted from evaluation and taking writing tests under time constraint and pressure. This result is in line with the FL anxiety model (Horwitz et al, 1986) which indicates that test anxiety is one of the main sources causing L2 anxiety.

Concerning the differences between the three participating universities in terms of writing anxiety levels, the related ANOVA in Table 4.3 shows that there is no a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of anxiety levels between the universities, ($F(50)=1.051, p=.424$).

Table 4.3: ANOVA results for the three participating universities in terms of anxiety levels.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	34.047	50	.681	1.051	.424
Within Groups	38.217	59	.648		
Total	72.264	109			

For the gender effect on writing anxiety levels, the independent sample t-test reveals that gender has no statistically significant effect on the study participants' writing anxiety levels $t(1023) = 1.023$, $p = .308$, two tailed).

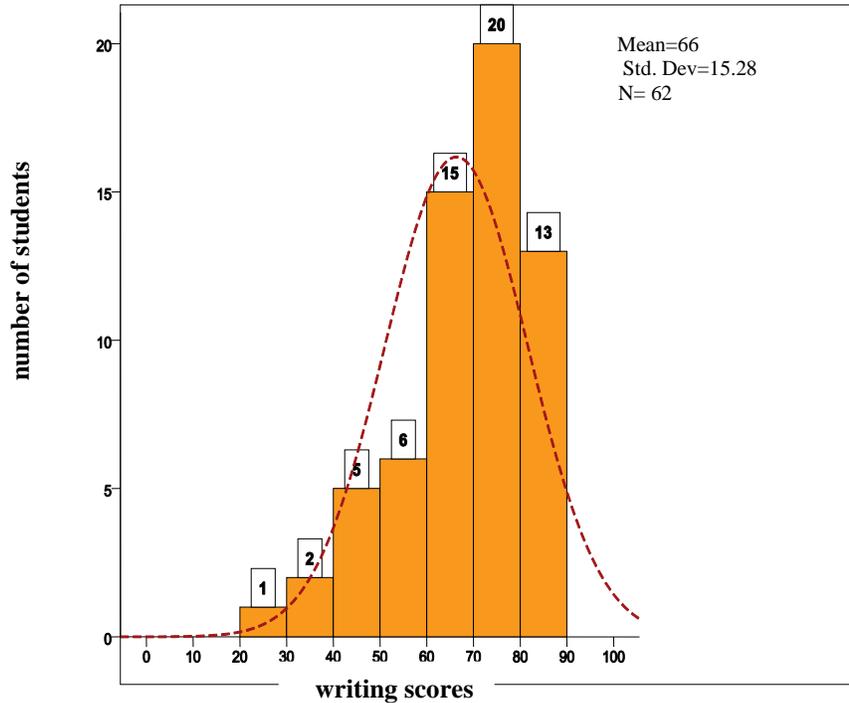
4.2. Research Question Two

Is there a significant negative correlation between high levels of anxiety and writing performance?

This research question aims to determine the extent of correlation between the participants' WA levels and their writing performance which is represented in this study by final writing scores. To utilize reliable writing grades as a quantitative data collection tool, final writing grades for sixty two students from the universities A and B have been used in this study to answer the second research question. As previously mentioned, the writing rubrics in the two universities (A and B) were unified and the marking process was consistent since each writing topic was marked by two markers and a third marker is involved in case of discrepancies. The criteria for getting students' final grades in university C were different and they did not match the marking standards which are followed in the other two universities. For reliability considerations, writing grades of students from university C were not used by the researcher.

To answer this research question and identify the relationship between English writing anxiety levels and writing performance, the Pearson Product correlation test was calculated. Before calculating the correlation, the normal distribution of the writing scores was examined through the histogram (Figure 4.2) to clarify how frequently the students' scores occurred and to determine if the scores contained outliers.

Figure 4.2: Histogram of the participants' writing scores.



The histogram illustrates the normal distribution of the writing scores with a slight skewness to the right with the coefficient of -0.998. Due to the outlier on the left of the histogram, the records were rechecked to make sure that there were no errors during calculation or data input. The outlier case had a writing score of 20 and no errors were found. Additionally, the descriptive statistics of the writing scores are shown in Table 4.4 with a mean of 66.34 (SD=15.28). The highest score is 88 whereas the lowest score is 20.

Table 4.4: Descriptive statistics of the writing performance scores.

Writing performance scores	
<i>Mean</i>	66.34
<i>Std. deviation</i>	15.28
<i>Maximum</i>	88
<i>Minimum</i>	20

The Pearson correlation test (Table 4.5) indicates that there is a statistically significant negative moderate correlation between the level of writing anxiety and students' writing scores ($r = -0.406$, $n = 62$, $p = 0.001$, two-tailed). In other words, the higher the anxiety level, the lower the writing score is. This also means that 16.5% of the variation is shared between the two variables. This result is unsurprising since the negative detrimental effects of anxiety on L2 writing performance and learning have been demonstrated in a plethora of studies (e.g., Faigley et al, 1981, Hassan, 2001; Zhang, 2011).

Table 4.5: Correlation between writing anxiety scores and writing performance scores

		anxiety level	writing scores
anxiety level	Pearson Correlation	1	-.406**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	62	62
writing scores	Pearson Correlation	-.406**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	62	62

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Determining the correlation between English writing anxiety levels and English writing performance (scores) through answering the second research question reveals a negative effect of anxiety on writing scores. That is to say, students with lower writing anxiety levels have higher writing performance and vice versa. It should be realized that correlation does not imply linear causation between the students' grades and their writing anxiety levels. This correlation can be a hint that needs more investigation as students' low grades might also stem from poor language abilities.

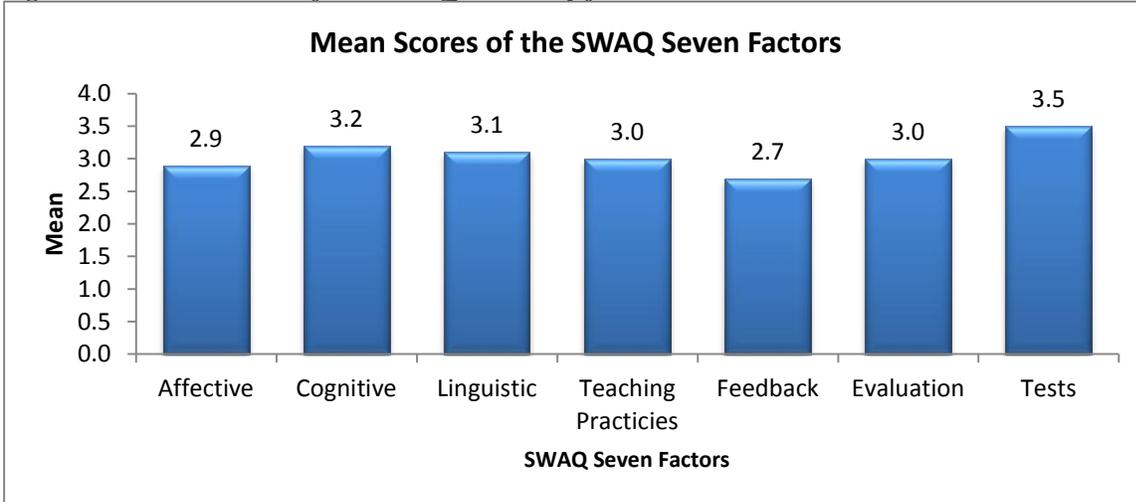
4.3. Research Question Three

What are the factors associated with writing anxiety for English language learners in the UAE universities?

After determining the level of WA amongst the participants and its effect on writing performance, the next essential step is to identify and explore the possible factors contributing to the participants' anxiety and fears. The third research question has been designed to meet this necessity. As this study mainly aims to investigate the factors associated with the participants' English WA, quantitative and qualitative data has been collected and analyzed to answer the third research question and identify the contributing factors. The quantitative data has been collected through administering SWAQ to 110 participants. The frequencies, means, percentages, related ANOVA and the Scheffe test of the seven SWAQ categories (affective, cognitive, linguistic, teaching practices, feedback, evaluation and tests) have been calculated and applied to the results. To further explore the participants' experiences and provide in-depth information about the quantitative findings, 10 highly-anxious participants have been interviewed. The answers of a related open ended question have also been utilized.

The extensive descriptive statistics for the seven categories of the SWAQ are illustrated in Appendix F. Meanwhile, the mean scores of the seven categories (factors) which represent the thirty five items on SWAQ are shown in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: Mean scores of the SWAQ seven key factors



The above figure illustrates the mean scores of the seven key factors associated with participants' English WA. A close look at the mean scores indicates that the seven categories which comprise the questionnaire 35 items are considered possible WA sources with different levels of effect. The first three places in terms of anxiety sources are occupied by test related factors which get the highest score (mean= 3.5) whereas the second and third places are occupied by cognitive (mean=3.2) and linguistic (mean=3.1) factors respectively. Based on the mean scores of the participants' responses, the other four factors are still considered effective contributing sources to writing anxiety but with different rates (teaching practices (mean=3.0), evaluation (mean=3.0), affective factors (mean=2.9), and feedback (mean=2.7).

As shown in Table 4.6, further statistical analysis using the related (ANOVA) test reveals that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the seven SWAQ categories, ($F(6) = 9.388, p < .001$).

Table 4.6: ANOVA results for the seven SWAQ categories

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	44.256	6	7.376	9.388	.000
Within Groups	599.458	763	.786		
Total	643.714	769			

To identify the most effective contributing factors to WA and determine if there are statistically significant differences among them, the Scheffe post hoc test has been conducted. As seen in Table 4.7, the test identifies the statistically significant differences among the seven factors of the SWAQ by clustering them into three different groups: the least effective contributing factors, the moderate effective factors, and the most effective ones. The weak and moderate contributing factors include affective, teaching practices, evaluation and feedback factors. The most effective contributing factors to students' writing anxiety include tests, cognitive and linguistic factors. Importantly, the Scheffe test does not reveal a statistically significant difference among the group of the most three effective contributing factors ($p = .155$). This indicates that students' WA is largely attributed not only to one factor but to the aforementioned three most effective ones (test-related, cognitive and linguistic factors). Based on the analysis of descriptive statistics, particularly the mean scores of the seven SWAQ categories, in addition to the Scheffe post hoc test, it could be detected that the participants' writing anxiety is strongly associated with tests, cognitive and linguistic factors.

Table 4. 7: The Scheffe test results of SWAQ seven categories

Domain	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	3
5- Feedback	110	2.696364		
1-Affective Factors	110	2.854545	2.854545	
6- Evaluation	110	2.954545	2.954545	
4-Teaching practices	110	3.022727	3.022727	
3- Linguistic Factors	110		3.130909	3.130909
2- cognitive Factors	110		3.201299	3.201299
7-Testing Factors	110			3.496970
Sig.		.282	.211	.155

Concerning the first open ended question on the SWAQ ‘what are the other causes of WA that apply to you?’ which allows students to include additional factors or aspects associated with their WA, responses to that question support the quantitative results by adding more clarifications and subcategories. Of 110 participants, 82 responded to the first open ended question. The emerging categories, as well as some related aspects, and sub categories are reported in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Categories emerging from the responses to the first open ended question on the SWAQ

Categories	Sub Categories and Related Aspects
Tests	- reminding students of remaining time during tests -test limited allocated time and a big word count in writing tests -confusing and difficult prompts -negative consequences of getting low scores.
Vocabulary/ grammar	-Inadequate mastery of English vocabulary -improper use of some words -enormous spelling mistakes and misuse of linking words -arbitrariness and difficulty of some grammatical points.
Teacher	-Teacher’s extreme seriousness, nervousness and harsh comments -evaluating techniques (correcting errors in front of peers, announcing results in public) -gaps between teacher expectations and students’ writing levels.
Cognitive factors	-Inability to organize ideas and coherent essays- -lack of exposure to writing outside classrooms- -poor basic mechanics of writing

As seen, the participants reveal how the tests, teachers and other sources affect their writing stress and anxiety. The open ended question enriches the quantitative data when the respondents clarify how some aspects of teachers and tests increase their anxiety. To get a clearer picture, the results that are related to the individual items of the SWAQ seven categories are presented below in detail, particularly the items which make up the three aforementioned most effective factors.

4.3.1. Test-related Factors

Items 33, 34, and 35 from the SWAQ are categorized as test-related factors (see Appendix B). Table 4.9 shows the frequency percentages and mean scores of the test-related items that contribute to the participants' English WA.

Table 4.9: Frequency percentages and mean scores of test related items on SWAQ

Item # on SWAQ	Test- related items of SWAQ	Percent (%)					M
		SD	D	U	A	SA	
33	I fear the negative consequences of failing writing tests.	11.8	22.7	8.2	33.6	23.6	3.35
34	I get upset when I do not understand the prompts in the writing tests.	4.5	7.3	8.2	44.5	35.5	3.99
35	I feel my heart pounding when I sit for writing tests.	11.8	28.2	13.6	25.5	20.9	3.15

SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, U=Undecided, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree, M= mean

A large number of respondents express their fear and anxiety resulting from writing tests. Inability to understand the prompts in writing tests seems to be a primary possible source of WA since 80% of the students (mean= 3.99) agree/strongly agree with the item 34 that states ‘*I get upset when I do not understand the prompts in the writing tests*’. In this respect, Mickan et al (2000) found that writing performance and test takers’ behavior were greatly influenced by the clarity and lexico-grammatical structures of the prompt. Fears and concerns about the negative

consequences of failing writing tests are rated the second highest mean (3.55) and 57.2% of the students agree/strongly agree with item 33 which indicates such concerns. The results also show the negative effects of writing tests when 46.4% of the students (mean=3.15) agree/strongly agree with item 35 that reads *'I feel my heart pounding when I sit for writing tests'*.

Aiming to elaborate the afore-presented quantitative results and explore students' experiences and feelings about how tests contribute to WA and heighten its levels, ten highly-anxious interviewees were asked about their perspectives in this regard. When the researcher asked about how the tests could be a contributing factor to WA, fear and stress developing from the possibility of not understanding the prompts in English writing tests were referred to by all of the interviewees as main anxiety provoking factors as seen below in Extracts 4.1 and 4.2:

Extract 4.1: the first thing I am usually worried about during taking writing tests is the prompt. I get confused and anxious if I do not understand the meaning of some words in the question.... I did not do well in the last IELTS writing question since I did not know the meaning of 'historic ruins'.... In contrast, I feel comfortable when I am asked to write about understandable topics like 'sport'.

Extract 4.2: the high level of fear I encounter in writing tests is caused by the difficult prompts which impede the flow of ideas. Imagine how anxious I am when I spend a long time thinking of the difficult words in the prompt... I personally start writing quickly if I easily understand the wording of the question.

Some interviewees go further by revealing that they get anxious during any writing test regardless of its difficulty or simplicity. In addition, they claim that test anxiety is responsible for making them confused and unable to organize their ideas when writing judgmental English compositions. Another highly-anxious interviewee expresses his fears and uneasiness from taking formal writing tests and being formally evaluated. In Extracts 4.3 and 4.4, it seems that relating

students' academic future to the IELTS or any other standardized test scores escalates students' tension and worry:

Extract 4.3: I do not like any writing test since it makes me very anxious and determine my academic future....In ordinary writing classes, I am able to write well organized compositions, but in tests I feel so confused that my teacher once told me that I usually write good essays while in the exam my writings are totally different.

Extract 4.4: ... taking formal writing tests like IELTS makes me lose concentration and change my ideas many times. The impact of test results on my academic future makes me nervous. Once I failed to write well in an IELTS test...I do not know why. When I returned home, I wrote about the same topic and my writing teacher on the next day praised my writing.... I wish they could save us from scary tests and substitute them with other evaluation means.

Insufficient testing time and time limits in writing tests seems to take up much of students' thinking and concerns. Most of the interviewees express their anxiety and worries about the so called "speeded tests" in which testing time is so limited and insufficient that most of the examinees cannot complete them. The high level of WA attributed to short and limited testing times is indicated in Extracts 4.5 and 4.6.

Extract 4.5: In spite of my preparedness for taking the writing tests, I feel upset and stressed about the short time allocated for us to accomplish two writing tasks in one hour... I wonder how we can write, check and review four hundred words in two writing tasks in IELTS.

Extract 4.6: I feel anxious when I realize that I write under time pressure. I feel as if I am in a running race. I am sure that most of students will score better grades and be less anxious if they are given extra testing time.

Other highly-anxious interviewees' responses show that anxiety during writing tests stems from some proctors'/teachers' actions and behaviors. Drawing examinees' attention to the remaining time frequently is referred to as a major anxiety provoking act. Other students talk about the

impact of time constraint and frequent reminding of remaining times on writing performance. The following three Extracts (4.7, 4.8 and 4.9) show the negative feelings emerging from distracting students' attention particularly through writing under strict time pressure:

Extract 4.7: the most stressful moment in writing test is when a teacher interrupts the flow of my ideas by announcing the remaining times for more than three times.... when the teacher says you have ten minutes more or so, I feel so anxious that I cannot concentrate and stop writing well.... Everyone knows the allotted time for IELTS or TOEFL so, there is no need to frighten students and make them feel as if they are in a contest.

Extract 4.8: whenever I write essays or any English composition without time limit in the classroom, I get a good score and feel comfortable. In contrast, writing under time pressure makes my heart pounding and jumbles my ideas.

Extract 4.9 ... I keep thinking about time. I feel I need more time to organize my ideas and meet the word count which is required in English compositions. What worsens the situation and increases students' nervousness is mentioning the remaining time every now and then. I am sure my writing scores will be better if I am given enough time.

As seen, the above interview results support the quantitative results and elaborate how some test aspects and related situations contribute to students' anxiety and fears. It clearly appears that writing tests and evaluative situations are main sources of writing anxiety. Integrating the SWAQ results which show writing tests as main sources of the participants' anxiety with the interviewees' responses could provide a clearer picture on how some test aspects like time pressure and prompts contribute to writing anxiety and fears.

4.3.2. Cognitive Factors

Cognitive domain refers to the mental processes used by an individual to acquire knowledge as it includes problem solving, thinking and perception (Brown, 2000). Items 6 to 12 from the SWAQ

are categorized as cognitive WA factors. Mean scores and percentages of students' responses to cognitive factors which occupy the second place in terms of being possible WA sources are shown in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Frequency percentages and mean scores of cognitive items on SWAQ

Item # on SWAQ	Cognitive items of SWAQ	Percent (%)					
		<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>M</i>
6	I lack the ability to generate and organize ideas.	10.9	32.7	13.6	27.3	15.5	3.4
7	I find it hard to write what I mean.	4.5	22.7	10.9	44.5	17.3	3.47
8	I find it hard to start writing English composition.	7.3	27.3	11.8	36.4	17.3	3.29
9	It is difficult for me to write good compositions.	8.2	23.6	16.4	30.9	20.9	3.33
10	I know little about the features of good writing.	5.5	26.4	26.4	35.5	6.4	3.11
11	I lack the habit of writing in English.	18.2	33.6	15.5	23.6	9.1	2.72
12	I find it difficult to handle the topic within the required length.	8.2	16.4	16.4	40.0	19.1	3.45

The results in Table 4.10 reveal that 61.8% of students (mean=3.47) agree/strongly agree with item 7 that states '*I find it hard to write what I mean.*' A large proportion of students 59.1% (mean=3.45) find it difficult and anxiety provoking to write the topic within the required length. Lack of writing skills and knowledge about the features of good writing seems to be another source of anxiety. 53.7% of the students (mean=3.29) agree/strongly agree with item 8 which reads '*I find it hard to start writing English composition.*' In the same vein, 51.8% of the respondents (mean=3.33) agree/strongly agree with the ninth item that states '*It is difficult for me to write good compositions*' whereas 41.9% of the respondents (mean=3.11) express their agreement/strongly agreement with item 10 that states '*I know little about the features of good writing.*' Additionally, 42.8% of respondents agree/strongly agree with the sixth item '*I lack the*

ability to generate and organize ideas' and 32.7% agree/strongly agree with item 11 that states '*I lack the habit of writing in English.*'

In an attempt to explore the cognitive aspects and factors associated with students' WA, interviewees have been asked questions to clarify and reveal their perceptions about writing and composing skills. Poor organizing ability seems to be a big concern for students in writing classes and tests. Inability to generate ideas is referred to by five highly-anxious participants as a big concern. This is attributed by students to little knowledge about the features and components of coherent essays. In addition, little exposure to the different types of writing genres exacerbates students' cognitive incompetence as indicated in Extracts 4.10 and 4.11 below:

Extract 4.10: a big proportion of my anxiety is due to my inability to generate ideas which hinders me from expressing my thoughts and ideas clearly. I feel very stressed when I write [argumentative] essays since writing in English is totally different from writing in Arabic.

Extract 4.11: writing good English compositions is very difficult for me since my writing teacher always tells me that the way you should use to write an essay is different from the way you use when writing a letter or describing a graph....what constitutes a good English composition is not an easy task as I feel that every kind of English composition requires a certain way of format and organization.

The unfamiliar topic seems to be another source of students' WA particularly when there is a big discrepancy between the individuals' existing knowledge or background and the new knowledge. When students fail to relate the writing topic to their schemata, it is natural that students feel anxious and apprehensive. As indicated in Extracts 4.12 and 4.13, topic unfamiliarity hinders the flow of ideas during writing due to the lack of background knowledge which is necessary for generating ideas and thoughts.

Extract 4.12: it is easy for me to generate ideas and write about the topics I have background knowledge about. But, I feel nervous when I am asked to write about unfamiliar topics.

Extract 4.13: I feel anxious when I am asked to write about topics of which I hear about for the first time. Difficult topics hinder me from generating ideas and finding proper vocabulary to use.

Another student attributes her poor writing ability to the little exposure to English writing outside the classrooms. In other words, writing in English is not a common habit among most of the students. It could be indicated through Extract 4.14 that limiting writing to the classrooms only prevents writing from being a habit practiced frequently outside classes.

Extract 4.14: I am not writing in English outside the classroom. Writing in English outside the formal classes is not a habit in my life. I think the more one practices writing in her free time the less anxious she will be.

Apparently, the students' responses and clarifications of quantitative results related to the cognitive factors show that high levels of anxiety are also associated with lack of skills that are necessary for writing English compositions and lack of topical schemata and experience about the features of good compositions.

4.3.3. Linguistic Factors

Linguistic factors which are rated as the third possible source of WA are based on Sparks and Ganschow's model (1993) which indicates that language anxiety is a reflection of linguistic deficiency when processing language input. Items 13 to 17 of the SWAQ are categorized as linguistic WA factors. Table 4.11 illustrates the percentages and mean scores of students' responses to the linguistic items.

Table 4.11: Frequency percentages and mean scores of linguistic items on SWAQ

Item # on SWAQ	Linguistic items of SWAQ	Percent (%)					
		<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>M</i>
13	My constant grammatical mistakes make me upset when writing English compositions.	6.4	34.5	18.2	27.3	13.6	3.7
14	My inadequate vocabulary knowledge makes me stressed.	10.9	33.6	2.7	41.8	10.9	3.8
15	I lack the skills of writing coherent essays with complex sentences.	9.1	25.5	13.6	40.9	10.9	3.19
16	I do not know how to use conjunctions properly.	8.2	35.5	10.0	31.8	14.5	3.9
17	My spelling mistakes frustrate me.	13.6	26.4	5.5	33.6	20.9	3.22

Frustration and fear resulting from the spelling mistakes score the highest mean (3.22) and 54.5% of students express their agreement/strong agreement with item 17 which handles spelling mistakes as a WA provoking factor. Lacking the skills of writing coherent English essays with complex sentences is rated the second highest mean (3.19) and 51.8% of students agree/strongly agree that they lack such skills. It is also shown that 52.7% (mean=3.8) and 40.9% (mean=3.7) of students agree/strongly agree with item 14 ‘poor vocabulary knowledge’ and item 13 ‘constant grammatical mistakes’ respectively. In terms of conjunctions, 46.3% of students (mean=3.9) reveal that they do not know how to use conjunctions properly.

When asking interviewees about how the linguistic factors contribute to WA, most of them refer to their poor English proficiency as a major anxiety provoking factor. In other words, it is indicated that students’ WA are also attributed to the big number of spelling mistakes they make when writing English compositions, the limited number of vocabulary they are able to use, and the difficulty they encounter in writing grammatically correct sentences. Extracts 4.15 and 4.16 from the interviewees’ responses illustrate how linguistic anxiety factors may have affected students’ self- esteem which in turn, leads to anxiety:

Extract 4.15: ...as English is a foreign language for me, the vocabulary I know is limited and not enough to express ideas and thoughts in writing particularly in formal tests. I dislike writing essays due to the difficulty I face in finding the proper words.

Extract 4.16: what makes me frustrated in writing tests and classes is the numerous number of spelling mistakes. Much thinking about spelling mistakes interrupts the flow of ideas and makes me write less than the required word count.

One highly-anxious participant goes further and points to the possibility of failing a writing test because of her poor vocabulary knowledge. The little vocabulary knowledge not only prevents student writers from expressing their thoughts and write meaningful sentences, but also increases their fear and concerns of not understanding the writing prompts, which is considered the most anxiety provoking aspect as seen in Extract 4.17.

Extract 4.17: sometimes I spend a long time attempting to understand or guess the meaning of some words in writing prompts in standard proficiency tests.... The possibility of failing to write anything in some writing tests might happen as a result of not understanding the meaning of some words or expressions in the writing prompt itself.

Four participants illustrate that their grammatical weakness and mistakes are partially responsible for their writing fears and anxiety. They point to the fact that frustrations happen when they do not master the use of some grammatical points such as verb tenses, prepositions and articles. Extract 4.18 reflects the frustration resulted from grammatical incompetence.

Extract 4.18: the difficulty of some English grammatical rules frustrates me. I feel it is impossible for me to master the use of some linking words, prepositions and what is called present perfect and continuous.... I usually get low scores in my writing tests because of grammatical mistakes.

Based on the above, it can be argued that linguistic anxiety factors seem to have contributed with other factors to students' writing anxiety and the feeling of being unable to write English

compositions without countless spelling and grammatical mistakes might heighten students' demotivation and anxiety. The poor language ability as source of L2 writing anxiety has been referred to in other related studies (e.g., Daud et al 2005; Latif, 2007).

4.3.4. Teaching practices, Evaluation, Affective and Feedback Factors

As illustrated in the previous Figure (4.3), the overall mean of each of teaching practices, evaluation, affective and feedback factors is three or less. The extensive descriptive statistics of the individual items which make up these four categories shows that some items strongly contribute to students' WA (see Appendix G). Concerning teaching practices, a considerable number of students (40.9%, mean=3.26) agree/strongly agree with item 19 which points to the teachers' focus on theoretical concepts of writing more than the practical aspects. 47.3% of the respondents (mean=3.18) feel anxious as they do not get adequate teaching of different writing genres whereas 39% of respondents (mean=3.17) agree/strongly agree with item 23 that indicates their teachers' focus on accuracy more than fluency. Additionally, 40.9% of students (mean=3.06) agree/strongly agree with item 20 that reads '*teachers only concentrate on my writing as a final product.*' On the other hand, items 21 and 23 score the lowest means (2.57, 2.88) and the number of students who disagree with them is higher than the agreeing ones. This suggests that students might feel comfortable that their writing teachers give enough instructions about writing conventions and deal with writing as a teachable skill rather than as an unattainable art.

Qualitatively, out of ten highly-anxious interviewees, seven expressed their satisfactions about teaching practices and techniques in writing classes. Students mentioned that their teachers usually encourage them to be trained on different writing genres. Additionally, they feel

comfortable when their teachers correct their mistakes and give feedback. On the other hand, three participants felt anxious about some teachers' practices when evaluating and correcting mistakes. Extracts 4.19 and 4.20 illustrate this:

Extract 4.19: the excessive strictness of the teachers frightens me, particularly when they evaluate my writing and underline all the mistakes with red ink without discussing my mistakes..... The big amount of correction symbols and the teacher's negative attitude towards my mark make me dislike writing compositions.

Extract 4.20: I get embarrassed and stressed when some teachers evaluate me or announce my results in public. I do realize that we learn from mistakes, but I dislike to be criticized in front of others.

With regard to evaluation factors, only item 29 scored the highest mean (3.32) and 56.4% of students agree/strongly agree that they get anxious when they know that their writing would be evaluated by teachers. Item 30 that states '*discussing my writings with my peers makes me anxious*' scores a mean of less than three (2.85) and 53.7% disagree/strongly disagree with it. Similarly, items 31 '*I get anxious if my friends read what I write in English*, and 32 '*I fear of losing my face when committing many mistakes in my compositions*' score mean scores of less than three (2.81, 2.85) while 53.7% and 50.9% of students disagree/strongly disagree with both items respectively. In addition to the quantitative results, interviews with highly-anxious students indicate that most of them feel uneasiness from the process of evaluation in general. Again, fear of formal evaluation seems to be a major source of WA. This fear as mentioned in chapter two is one of the main constituents of the Horwitz et al (1986) FL anxiety model. Meantime, students call for substituting the traditional ways of evaluation and formal tests as seen in Extract 4.21.

Extract 4.21: I get stressed when I know that my compositions are going to be formally evaluated. Whenever I write an essay at home, I easily generate and organize the ideas. I find out

big differences between my writings in formal tests and my writings which are not going to be evaluated.

With regard to peer evaluation, all the interviewees except one do not feel any kind of anxiety or embarrassment when working and discussing their writings or mistakes with their peers. In terms of affective factors, competitiveness appears to be an anxiety provoking element since 62.8% of the students (mean= 3.55) agreed/strongly agreed with item 3 that reads '*I feel that other students in the class can write better than me.*' Meantime, a considerable number of students (44.5%, mean= 2.97) feel stressed when they write English compositions. On the other hand, students have the lowest mean with items 1 and 5 which are related to self-confidence and motivation. To be more specific, 60.9% of students (mean= 2.49) disagree/strongly disagree with item 1 that states 'I have no self-confidence in my writing abilities', and 59.1% of them (mean=2.55) disagreed/strongly disagreed with item 5 that states '*I have no motivation to write English compositions.*' This result might indicate that most students are motivated/self confident and other situational factors such as tests and linguistic incompetence contribute more to their anxiety. The results about the affective factors have also been reflected in the interviews when all the participants express their eagerness to learn how to write English compositions and awareness of the importance of writing in their future majors and studies. However, when students were asked about how competitiveness contributes to their writing anxiety, two interviewees clarify how it is frustrating to them as illustrated in Extracts 4.22 and 4.23.

Extract 4.22: I get angry when I see my colleagues writing while I stare at a blank paper and I do not know how to start or what to write.

Extract 4.23: when I see others handing in their assignments or compositions within a short time, I think I am different from others and feel nervous.

Concerning the category which scores the least overall mean (2.7) among the seven main categories of the SWAQ, the related descriptive statistics and the Scheffe test reveal that feedback factors are the least effective contributing WA factors. Among the five individual items which make up the feedback category, only item 25 '*the feedback I get on my writing is almost unclear*' scores the mean of (3.00) and 43.7% of students agree/strongly agree with it. On the other hand, 53.7% of students (mean=2.55) disagree/strongly disagree with item 28 that states '*I get anxious if my colleagues say that my writing is poor.*' 54.6% of students disagree/strongly disagree (mean=2.54) with item 24 which reads '*writing teachers do not give individual feedback*'. Furthermore, 55.4% (mean=2.65) and 48.2% (mean=2.78) of students disagree/strongly disagree with items 27 '*teacher's red color comments make me anxious*' and 26 '*the feedback I get is often negative*' respectively.

After knowing that English language writing anxiety exists and identifying the possible roots of such a complex psychological phenomenon, the next step is to look for alleviating strategies that might mitigate students' concerns and nervousness in writing classes.

4.4. Research Question Four

Which strategies are perceived to be the most effective for reducing writing anxiety?

The fourth research question has been designed to explore the strategies which could be adopted to reduce the levels of WA among the EFL students in the UAE universities. This question has been answered through three qualitative data collection tools. The first tool is the second open ended question on the SWAQ which has elicited the participants' suggestions on how WA levels could be reduced. The second tool is conducting interviews with ten low-anxious students to explore the strategies they use to reduce WA levels and identify the strategies which enable them

to reduce the levels of WA and feel comfortable in writing classes. The third data collection tool is conducting a teachers' focus group session with six EFL instructors to investigate their perspectives about the tactics and strategies they use or suggest to help students feel comfortable and less anxious when writing English compositions. Exploring both student and teacher perspectives about alleviating strategies and possible solutions is based on the belief that overcoming foreign language anxiety in general is a shared responsibility between learners and their teachers. Before presenting the results of the individual interviews with low-anxious students which represent the learning strategies used to cope with WA and focus group sessions with teachers which represent the teaching strategies, the participants' written responses to the open ended question have been analyzed and categorized as demonstrated in the next section 4.4.1.

4.4.1 Coping with English Writing Anxiety from the Students' Perspectives

The students' perspectives towards alleviating strategies and suggestions have been explored through an open ended question and individual interviews. The following two subsections illustrate the results.

4.4.1.1 The Open Ended Question Results

The second open ended question on the SWAQ which asks the student participants to state their opinion on what should be done to reduce WA allows students to express their suggestions and perspectives about the strategies and activities which might reduce the levels of WA. Of 110 participants, 85 responded to the second open ended question. Categories emerging after analyzing and comparing the written responses include various suggestions related to learners, teachers, tests and other elements. Those suggestions can be clearly seen in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Categories emerging from the responses to the second open ended question on the SWAQ

Categories	Suggestions and alleviating strategies
Tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -allocating more time for writing tests -modifying writing test formats especially in IELTS -focusing on familiar topics-simplifying the writing test prompts -exposing students to regular mock exams -allowing students to use dictionaries in some writing tests.
Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -focusing on content and quality rather than form and quantity -giving more individual feedback and tackling different writing genres -stopping distracting students by reminding them of remaining time during tests -tolerating students' minor spelling and grammatical mistakes -avoiding scolding students when committing mistakes -considering students' learning styles and abilities - giving regular training on certain grammatical rules.
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increasing background knowledge through reading more English books and stories -getting much training on the basics of writing -memorizing topical vocabulary- recognizing spelling common mistakes -writing non judgmental assignments

A thorough examination of the above students' suggestions shows the learners' awareness of the ideas and tactics which can be implemented to overcome their writing fears and anxiety. The students' ideas involve different concerned parties such as teachers, test makers and students themselves. After getting a general idea about the participants' views on reducing the levels of WA, the low-anxious interviewees' perspectives about the alleviating strategies are presented in a more detail in the next subsection.

4.4.1.2 Interview Results

Data resulted from the individual interviews reveals the low-anxious student participants' viewpoints and experiences which mainly focus on how they cope with WA and mitigate its

effects on writing performance and abilities. The following concrete suggestions and strategies emanating from the interviewees' responses and perspectives are classified into three categories ranging from affective, cognitive to testing related strategies.

With regard to the affective strategies used by the low-anxious interviewees, it appears that students are aware of the connection between the writing anxiety and affective strategies. It is indicated by the interviewees' responses that getting self-confidence in EFL classes in general and in writing classes in particular is essential and a basic strategy for reducing anxiety and fear. Extracts 4.24 and 4.25 from students' responses clarify how self-confidence plays an effective role in this regard:

Extract 4.24: I always try to confide in my learning abilities since I realize the effect of nervousness and fear on my writings. Reciting certain prayers before I start writing in formal tests helps me to be relaxed and confident.... I put in my mind, if I fail the test, nothing will happen. It is not the end of the world.

Extract 4.25: I view English writing as an easy task. I enjoy writing in English and in my native language as writing is a good means for us to express thoughts and ideas.

Similarly, a positive view towards committing mistakes and error corrections by their teachers or peers seems to play a role in reducing WA. Several low-anxious interviewees emphasize that their self-confidence is not negatively affected by the mistakes they commit when writing or by the way they are corrected. So, dealing with committing mistakes when learning in a positive way and considering them a part of the learning process helps the low-anxious participants to promote their self-confidence and consequently reduce the levels of anxiety as indicated in Extracts 4.26 and 4.27:

Extract 4.26: ... I convince myself not to fear from teachers' remarks and corrections since I know that I learn from their feedback and corrections.... My teacher once told us that people learn from

suffering. Personally, I don't mind if my peers know about my mistakes as all of us inevitably learn from them.

Extract 4.27: *I do not fear mistakes. I sometimes discuss my errors with my teacher in front of all the class. As a result, one of my English teachers commented on my courage and said that I have to be a journalist.*

To flexibly cope with English writing anxiety, some interviewees resort to some specific affective strategies such as relaxation exercises particularly when taking tests or being in evaluative situations. Extracts 4.28 and 4.29 illustrate these strategies:

Extract 4.28: *before I start writing or thinking about the test questions, I take a deep breath and close my eyes for few seconds. Getting used to relaxation exercises in stressful situations lets me focus on the test material.*

Extract 4.29: *... I still follow my school teacher's advice by making some relaxation exercises before tests such as closing eyes and imagining a quite place I love. This slows down my heart rate and lowers my anxiety.*

For the cognitive coping strategies, interviewees reveal that they use many types of strategies which generally involve interactions with writing compositions or genres to be learned or tested in writing courses and classes. In Extracts 4.30 and 4.31, some students mention practice and much training on writing English essays and compositions outside classroom as major steps for minimizing anxiety:

Extract 4.30: *In my free time I specify some time for practicing different types of English compositions like essays and letters. The more one practices English writing outside classroom, the less stress she feels in writing tests and classes.*

Extract 4.31: *I use certain teaching websites to learn about the features of good writing. Before taking an IELTS exam, I trained much on how to write an [argumentative] essay and describe graphs as if I am taking a formal test.*

Imitating writing model samples, rehearsing writing essays/paragraphs, and practicing writing through establishing friendship through blogs and some social networks are also referred to by other students as cognitive alleviating strategies:

Extract 4.32: I usually read stories and some English articles not only for the sake of reading but to imitate the way of organization.... I imitate the model essays and letters which are posted on some websites to learn how ideas are organized and developed.

Other interviewees talk about the strategies they use to reduce writing anxiety caused by linguistic difficulties such as inadequate mastery of vocabulary and incorrect use of some grammatical rules. Extracts 4.33, 4.34, and 4.35 show that low-anxious participants' awareness about vocabulary learning methods such as using writing notebooks or journals in addition to frequent use of the new words enable them to overcome the fears resulting from poor vocabulary knowledge. Besides, identifying one's grammatical and spelling weak points and looking for remedial solutions contribute to WA reduction:

Extract 4.33: since I was a school student, I have been using a writing journal and a notebook to jot down any new English word I come across.... In my free time I made it a habit to use the new words in meaningful sentences. So, I feel I have enough words to express myself through writing.

Extract 4.34: to reduce the number of the grammatical mistakes which frighten us when learning English, I agreed with my writing teacher to make me understand my grammatical mistakes particularly the ones resulted from misuse of verb tenses and [articles].

Extract 4.35: getting a list of common English spelling mistakes has reduced the spelling mistakes I am used to committing when writing English compositions.

In terms of test related alleviating strategies used by low-anxious students, the interviewees' responses in this regard indicate that students (in addition to the relaxation exercises which are

mentioned above) use other mitigating strategies pre and during English writing tests. Some of the pre-test strategies such as well preparedness, practice, and the use of checklists to review their writings with peers are reflected in Extracts 4.36 and 4.37:

Extract 4.36: to get rid of writing test anxiety, after understanding the format of the test, I start preparing and training on writing paragraphs, letters and essays several days before the formal test. With peers or sometimes with my teacher, I use a certain [checklist] and review the compositions. I think the more a student trains on tests, the less anxious he will be.

Extract 4.37: before taking formal tests like IELTS, I used to answer two or three mock exams under time constraints as if I am in test halls.

Other comments include the strategies taken during writing tests. Some responses demonstrate how low-anxious students start writing essays, deal with difficult prompts and view a good writing composition. Extracts 4.38, 4.39, and 4.40 show that using some tactics such as outlining, prompt division, guessing the meaning when taking writing tests is a practical coping strategy. Importantly, realizing that fluency is more important than accuracy also helps students get rid of the fears resulting from the numerous grammatical and spelling mistakes committed when writing.

Extract 4.38: the easiest way I found to start writing and save time is to make an outline on the paperback. Following a certain pattern and outline save my time and make me more focused.

Extract 4.39: I read the prompt and divide it into three parts. In case of difficult words, I try to guess the meaning through the other words. In some writing prompts, I understand the prompt through the helping ideas which come along with the writing prompt.

Extract 4.40: I do not let fear from grammatical and spelling mistakes prevent me from writing. My teacher always says that the fluency and flow of ideas are more important than wasting time thinking of grammar correctness.

The above mentioned strategies and suggestions low-anxious students use to reduce the levels of WA indicate that these students are aware of the negative effect of such phenomenon on their writing performance. Furthermore, it could be understood that the different alleviating affective, cognitive and test related strategies are not far away from teachers' encouragement and interference. In other words, most interviewees acknowledge their teachers' assistance and roles in helping them mitigate writing fears and anxiety. In the next subsection, WA reduction techniques and strategies from the teachers' perceptions are presented and analyzed.

4.4.2 Coping with English Writing Anxiety from Teachers' Perspectives

As previously mentioned in [3.3.3.5], the focus group discussion has been designed in this study to elicit EFL instructors' opinions, attitudes and perceptions about the coping strategies and techniques they use or suggest to reduce the levels of WA among their EFL tertiary learners. Six instructors participated in the focus group discussion which was moderated by the researcher himself. Interestingly, the focus group participants have been teaching English for the foundation year students in different UAE universities and their experience ranges from seven to thirteen years. It should be noted that the findings resulting from the focus group discussions are not intended to be generalizable due to their qualitative nature and the small number of the participants. Nevertheless; the reported results provide rich insight and general trends which might help learners and teachers understand how to act when they encounter similar situations. The focus group teacher participants interacted with the points and questions raised during the discussion and provided a great deal of rich information about the alleviating strategies they use when experiencing fears and anxiety among their students in English writing classes and tests. The coping strategies suggested by the participating teachers are addressed below under these

five subcategories: writing tests, process writing approach, affective strategies, error correction, and vocabulary knowledge.

4.4.2.1 Writing Tests

One of the most important coping strategies used by the focus group participants is related to writing tests. There is a consensus among the participants about the existence of stress in their English classes particularly during tests and evaluative assignments. Concerning the students' fears that resulted from the possibility of not understanding the meaning of some words in the writing prompts particularly in standardized proficiency tests, a variety of affective and cognitive coping strategies are suggested. These strategies include focusing on fluency and the development of ideas rather than accuracy. In addition, teachers resort to training students on how to guess the meaning of difficult words in the prompt through context and neighboring words. Extracts 4.41 and 4.42 exemplify what is being clarified and said by the writing teachers to students who fear the difficulty of some writing prompt words:

Extract 4.41: the most important step in this regard is to build self-confidence by informing students that there is no right-wrong answer in writing tests. For example, I always tell my students if you fail to know the exact meaning of some prompt words, do not give up since the examiners are not after testing your vocabulary.....whatever you write about the related topic or the main idea will be considered and you will score something.

Extract 4.42: whenever you have a topic and you are unable to understand the meaning of some words, just guess the meaning through the other neighboring words or expressions in the prompt and write something related to the whole context. Even if you fail to exactly write about the topic, you are not going to be penalized for the whole test. You will get some marks on vocabulary, grammar etc.

In addition to the above strategies being used, a suggestion was raised by one of the participants to use translation as a helping tool to make students understand the writing prompt. That suggestion is rationalized by claiming that in writing tests the main objective is testing writing abilities rather than testing vocabulary. That suggestion was very controversial since most of the participants did not support the idea of using Arabic translation in English writing tests. However, it was agreed to consider that suggestion as one of the possible coping strategies but in a different mechanism. Extract 4.43 summarizes the suggested mechanism:

Extract 4.43... facilitating students' understanding of the writing prompts in all writing tests sounds interesting. One of the possible practical ways is limiting the key words in writing prompts to the list of one thousand most common English words which all students should be familiar with... In case of having any key word from outside the list, explanation or synonyms should be provided in the footnotes but not in Arabic.

To help students who feel anxious about taking tests under time constraints, most of the participants assure the importance of exposing students to test-like situations and getting them accustomed to writing compositions within a time limit:

Extract 4.44:several times during the writing course when I ask my students to write an English essay or any composition in the classroom, I make them write within a time limit. I know that it makes some of them anxious in the writing class. But in the long term, getting them accustomed to write under time pressure and in situations similar to those in formal tests will lead to low levels of test anxiety.

It could be easily detected that most of the teachers' suggestions and strategies for alleviating test fear and stress are in line with low-anxious students' strategies in this regard as reported in the previous section.

4.4.2.2 Process Writing Approach

The process approach to writing as an alleviating strategy is evidenced in the comments made by the focus group participants. According to this approach, writing is looked at as a creative act requiring planning, editing, drafting, working in groups, and getting feedback rather than setting students a writing topic and receiving it as a product for correction without any feedback or discussion during the writing process itself. Many activities related to this approach such as group work, planning, chunking, and peer correction are referred to in Extracts 4.45 and 4.46 as coping strategies for reducing WA.

Extract 4.45... instead of asking students to sit in front of a blank page and start writing individually from the beginning to the end, I encourage them to work in pairs or in groups to produce ideas or related words, making plans, and asking questions. I have found out that these strategies help students get started and feel more comfortable when writing English compositions.

Extract 4.46: in my writing classes, I train my students not to start writing without planning and outlining. I usually tell them that the first step which should be done is to outline what you are going to discuss or write about. Regardless of the level, every writer needs to outline and map his/her writing especially under exam conditions.

The above suggestions which include training students on how to start and end English essays, outline the ideas before starting writing, work in pairs and ask questions could help the students who lack writing cognitive competence. So, engaging students in such skills could contribute to building self regulatory abilities and the ability to practice and direct one's composing process is a basic skill in writing (Flower & Hayes, 1980).

4.4.2.3 Affective Strategies

Among the coping strategies used by the focus group participants, affective activities take a considerable part of the discussion. The vitality of providing a less fear-inducing environment in

writing classes and tests, practicing some relaxation exercises, setting achievable realistic goals, and instilling self-confidence are assured and stressed by all the participant teachers as it appears in Extracts 4.47 and 4.48:

Extract 4.47: to minimize anxiety levels when writing under time pressures, I taught my students to do some relaxation exercises. I showed them how to put hands on knees, breathe deeply and keep air in for seconds before blowing it off. At the beginning they thought I was crazy and most of them were reluctant to do that. Gradually, such relaxation exercises have been noticed to be utilized by most students.

Extract 4.48:promoting the spirit of self-confidence among anxious students is a basic coping strategy in L2 classes particularly when speaking and writing. To reduce the anxiety resulting from perfectionism among high advanced students, I always tell them to set achievable goals and be more realistic since being a perfect bilingual takes a long time In my classes, I have noticed how some too ambitious students become confused and stressed when they are unable to score a full mark.

The affective strategies suggested by teachers could positively change the students' attitudes in writing classes since inculcating self-confidence and encouragement among students have been referred to by low-anxious interviewees as practical coping strategies. Promoting self-confidence and positive beliefs develops learners' self-efficacy. Importantly, self-confidence can also be inculcated in learners through teachers' supportive feedback. In this respect Pajares & Johnson (1994, p. 327) assert "that one important source of students' self-confidence lies in the feedback that students receive from their teachers."

4.4.2.4 Error Correction

Changing the negative perception (mentality) towards committing mistakes and error corrections received much interest and emphasis as relieving strategies for WA. The focus group participants point out that they are battling the negative students' thinking and looks when committing

mistakes or when their writing is being evaluated or corrected. Some teachers clarify that they are trying to reduce the fear of committing mistakes when learning languages by creating positive attitudes and convincing students that learning through mistakes is a major part of improving writing skills and abilities. Extracts 4.49, 4.50, and 4.51 clarify how other participants go a step further and suggest innovative tactics (creating mistake happy zones, celebrating grammatical mistakes, and reviewing common mistakes regularly before taking tests) to reduce anxieties emerging from grammatical and spelling mistake concerns:

Extract 4.49: personally, I suggest teachers to create the so called mistake happy zone which enables students to write non judgmental compositions at least once a week. This lets ideas flow without being hindered by the fear of spelling or grammatical mistakes. In this way, students get used to paying more attention to the content.

Extract 4.50:tension develops from the concern about numerous numbers of spelling and grammatical mistakes could be decreased by making students celebrate their mistakes. To activate this suggestion, once I asked my students to record the spelling and grammatical mistakes they committed during the writing course. Eventually, students were asked voluntarily to display the common mistakes in the class and present how they benefitted from them. By doing so, I am trying to make learning from errors a sign of pride instead of a source of embarrassment.

Extract 4.51: to minimize the number of grammatical mistakes committed when writing English essays and in turn, reduce the fears that resulted from that, I identify my students' common grammatical mistakes in the first few weeks of the course and keep a list of them with examples. Before any formal writing test, I ask them to review that list."

Within the discussions about students' writing mistakes, the participants acknowledge that tracking the very slight spelling mistakes and the severe strictness during the marking sessions exacerbate students' worries and anxiety. Consequently, there is a consensus among the participants on tolerating spelling and grammatical slight mistakes which do not alter the

meaning of words or largely affect the sentence structures and to allocate the biggest portion of the grade for the content rather than form.

4.4.2.5 Vocabulary Knowledge

As previously mentioned by the highly-anxious interviewees that the very limited number of vocabulary contributes to their writing stress and anxiety, the focus group respondents are generally in agreement that inability to master and use a reasonable number of words will inevitably lead to anxiety. Consequently, the importance of encouraging and directing students to read more to acquire new words has been a common suggestion across the focus group discussions. Some suggest that students should be provided with lists of the most common English words and certain words/expressions which are designed to accommodate the two writing tasks (essay and report) in the IELTS. Extracts 4.52 and 4.53 illustrate these suggestions.

Extract 4.52: to overcome worries coming from the shortage of vocabulary which is necessary to make up any English compositions, I asked my students at the very beginning of the course to memorize and use at least the five hundred most common English words. To motivate them, I exposed them to certain writing samples and asked them to count and estimate the percentages of words which are taken from the lists of common English words..... I think this thing builds up self-confidence and lower the anxiety levels.

Extract 4.53: ... when I teach IELTS task one which is about describing graphs, I usually teach them[students] certain words that are used to serve writing this task and provide them with the sources where they can find the right vocabulary for each writing task.

The insights gleaned from the focus group sessions reflect the affective, cognitive, pedagogical coping strategies and tactics which might contribute to lowering writing anxiety levels from the teachers' point of view. A critical comparison between the alleviating strategies used by the low-

anxious students in the previous subsection and the ones suggested or used by teachers reveals the significance and practicality of the teachers' suggested strategies since most of the low-anxious interviewees attributed their success and low levels of writing anxiety to adopting such strategies mentioned by the focus group participants. Furthermore, it could be noted that teachers have been trying to interact with students writing concerns and find out proper solutions to the contributing factors which are mentioned by the anxious students as main sources for their writing anxiety and fears.

4.5. Research Question Five

Is the use of computer perceived to be an effective strategy for reducing writing anxiety?

This research question aims to investigate and determine to what extent the students perceive the use of computer to alleviate their WA when writing English compositions. The use of computer as a possible alleviating strategy has been explored through the second open ended question on the SWAQ which elicits the participants' suggestions on how WA levels could be reduced, the interviews with low-anxious students and the focus group discussion which one of their aims is understanding more about the efficiency of computer use in lowering WA levels.

As mentioned earlier in [4.4.1.1], eighty five respondents gave suggestions through answering the second open ended question. The use of computers in writing English compositions was mentioned only by one respondent as an alleviating strategy. In an attempt to explore the low-anxious interviewees' perceptions about this issue, a direct question was asked for each to deeply understand if they consider the use of computer when writing compositions a practical alleviating strategy. The ten interviewees' answers indicate that they are aware of the role played by

technology in learning languages, but there is a consensus that the use of computer in writing compositions particularly during formal tests might increase writing stress and anxiety. Extracts 4.55, 4.56, and 4.57 illustrate students' perceptions in this regard:

Extract 4.55: I feel more comfortable when I write on paper since I can review, edit and manage time without being engaged with looking at the screen and scrolling up and down.

Extract 4.56: it has been a rooted habit for me to write on paper using a pencil and eraser. ...I cannot stand taking computer based writing tests as I think it is so stressful.

Extract 4.57: I did not use to write formal English compositions on computer. Underlining spelling and grammatical mistakes automatically on computer distracts one's attention and wastes her time, which in turn heightens stress and worries.

To triangulate the findings related to the use of computer in writing classes, the issue was raised in the focus group discussion. None of the focus group participant teachers mentions that he/she asks students to use computer when writing English compositions for the sake of writing anxiety reduction. Instead, some teachers claim that asking students to take computer-based tests might increase their WA since they are not familiar with this skill during their school days and most of them are not skillful enough to use computers (word processor) properly. Others relate the preference of paper-based composition by students to the intimate traditional relation between paper and students as appears Extract 4.58:

Extract 4.58: sometime I [teacher] do not feel at ease when taking computer based tests. I think that there is an intimate acquired relation between papers and a student which makes them feel more comfortable... Possibly, it is a matter of skillfulness and familiarity with the use of computers to write compositions under time constraints.

Meanwhile, one participant emphasizes the importance of computer in reducing at least the anxiety that resulted from committing spelling mistakes when writing. He suggests creating a positive attitude towards using computer in writing classes by directing students to write nonjudgmental computer-based extra-curricular writing activities.

4.6. Summary of the Findings

As a mixed methods research study, a large amount of data has emerged through the use of different quantitative and qualitative research instruments. In this section, the major findings are summarized with respect to the study's five research questions.

The first research question has been designed to determine the existence of WA among the participants and measure its levels. The findings indicate that WA strongly exists among the participants as more than half of them (56%) had high levels of anxiety while only 16% show low WA levels. It has also been revealed that the cognitive anxiety is the most common WA type encountered by the participants (mean=25.93) followed by somatic anxiety (21.78) and behavioral avoidance (20.16). Examining the overall results developing from analyzing the SLWAI twenty two items and the mean scores of the anxiety types indicates that fear of negative evaluation and taking tests under time pressure contribute to students' high levels of anxiety in writing classes.

The second research question has aimed to determine if there is a statistically significant correlation between students' writing performance and levels of WA. The results of Pearson correlation test shows that there is a significant negative moderate correlation ($r = -0.406$, $n = 62$,

$p=0.001$, two-tailed) between the levels of WA and students' writing grades. That is to say, highly-anxious students have lower writing performance and vice versa.

Regarding the possible factors associated with WA, the third research question has been designed to identify and explore those sources. Analysis of the SWAQ results and the interviews with highly-anxious students reveal several sources and causes of WA. The most three effective contributing factors are tests, cognitive and linguistic factors. Test related aspects include test difficulties, unfamiliar topics, unclear prompts, word count, time constraints and limits, and negative consequences of failing writing tests. Cognitive factors include inability to organize ideas, poor basic mechanics of writing, different writing genres, and little knowledge about the features of good writing. In addition, linguistic factors which are rated as the third possible source of WA include weakness in grammar, lack of vocabulary, and numerous spelling mistakes. The results also reveal other sources of students' WA such as some teaching practices (excessive focus on accuracy, nervousness, and following the product writing approach), evaluation related factors and competitiveness with peers.

The fourth research question has aimed to explore strategies that are perceived (by teachers and low-anxious students) to be most effective for reducing WA levels. Diversified coping strategies arise from the interviews with low-anxious students and focus group sessions with EFL instructors. From the students' perspectives, different tactics and strategies are suggested and mentioned particularly by the low-anxious interviewees. The strategies include promoting self-confidence, enhancing background knowledge, creating positive attitudes toward committing mistakes, peer correction and relaxation exercises. Cognitively, other strategies are suggested such as good preparation, more practice and training on writing essays, and imitating some

writing model samples. In terms of test related strategies, rehearsing some tests, taking mock exams, learning the task of outlining and guessing the prompt difficult words, and using dictionaries in writing tests are among the suggested strategies. From teachers' perspectives, affective alleviating strategies are reported such as building up self-confidence among students, encouraging students to accept positive criticism and view mistakes as an important part of the learning process. For the writing tests, they suggest to limit the keywords in writing prompts to familiar English words, training students on taking tests under time pressure, and making more non-judgmental tests. Other strategies include adopting process writing approach, tolerating slight grammatical and spelling mistakes, providing students with lists of most common English words.

To conclude, the fifth research question has been designed to explore the participants' perceptions about the role of computer in reducing anxiety in writing classes and tests. The findings resulting from both interviews with low-anxious students and focus group sessions with instructors do not lend support to the idea of using computer as an alleviating strategy for students' WA. Despite the consensus among the participants on the importance of technology particularly the computer in EFL teaching and learning, the participants emphasize that computer based tests and writing assignments might increase anxiety and they have attributed this to the little exposure to computer based writings during school years. In the next chapter, these findings are discussed thematically with reference to the tertiary UAE EFL context.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

As writing is one of the most significant factors for L2 learners to succeed in social and academic life, Grabe and Kaplan (1996) point to the need for all learners to get some proficiency in writing and for the teachers to be skillful in teaching writing. However, writing as a productive skill that comprises cognitive and emotional activities is influenced by different affective factors like motivation and anxiety (Al-Ahmad, 2003; Cheng et al, 1999; McLeod, 1987; Zhang, 2011). Despite the increasing number of studies about writing anxiety in different L2 contexts, it has been rarely explored among ELLs in the Arab contexts (Hassan, 2001; Latif, 2007). As such, the present study aims to fill in this gap by investigating the target issue in a specific Arab EFL context and by using a hybrid research design that combines five diversified quantitative and qualitative data collection tools to deeply explore the writing anxiety aspects. Specifically, the study has mainly aimed to investigate and explore the possible sources associated with English writing anxiety among the EFL students in UAE universities. Alleviating strategies which might lower those anxiety levels have also been explored by integrating the perspectives of learners and teachers as two major stakeholders in the educational process.

The study's findings could provide contribution to creating a low-anxiety writing environment as they draw attention to the existence of high levels of WA, identify some of its roots potential, and suggest practical coping strategies. In the next sections, a thematic discussion of the major findings in relation to previous studies and the reviewed literature are organized according to the research questions.

5.1. A Thematic Discussion of the Major Findings

A detailed discussion of the overall findings is conducted under the following four main categories which reflect the ideas indicated in the research questions: levels of writing anxiety and its effects on writing achievement, the contributing factors standing behind high levels of writing anxiety, alleviating strategies, and the participants' perceptions about the role of the computer use in anxiety reduction.

5.1.1. Levels of Writing Anxiety and Its Effects

The findings gained from answering the first research question point to the existence of high levels of English writing anxiety among the student participants from UAE university EFL contexts. The results show that 56% of the participants (mean=78.14) have high levels of anxiety while only 15% have low levels of anxiety (mean=43.12). The number of highly-anxious participants reflects the fear and stress taking place in English writing classes and tests. This finding demonstrates that English WA exists as a phenomenon in a UAE EFL context where the study has been carried out. The significance of this result lies in its being a call for the stakeholders to pay more attention to the existence of anxiety in writing classes and in the indication that students' unresponsiveness in writing classes might be attributed to anxiety rather than cognitive incompetence for example. These findings are consistent with those of other researchers in EFL contexts which point to the existence of WA as a specific type of anxiety (e.g., Al-Ahmad, 2003; Atay and Kurt, 2006; Latif, 2007; Lin, 2009; Rankin, 2006, Sawalha et al, 2012; Zhang, 2011). This result also lends support to Tsui's (1996) argument when she claims that writing in L2 is stressful and it provokes much anxiety since students are deprived of help and support during writing. The apparent existence of WA in the study's context is not in line with the assumption stating that writing is not an anxiety provoking skill. Importantly, the

findings related to the WA levels in this study agree with those of the most recent similar studies (e.g., Abu Shawish, 2010; Huwari and Aziz, 2011; Sawalha et al, 2012) investigating English WA among Arab university learners. These three recent studies reveal the high levels of English WA experienced by EFL Palestinian students in Gaza universities, Arab university students in a Malaysian university, and by Jordanian students at Yarmouk University in Jordan respectively. So, it could be claimed that English WA is existed among Arab learners in different contexts, but with different rates.

The large proportion of students in this study who acknowledge themselves as highly-anxious suggests that English WA is a major prevailing problem that needs to be seriously addressed. Regardless of the specific sources (which will be discussed in [5.1.2]) contributing to the high levels of anxiety, there might be other imperceptible reasons responsible for these alarming levels such as current educational practices and culture related issues. For the educational practices in the field of L2 teaching, the UAE Ministry of Education, educational policy makers and syllabus designers endorse the principles of reducing anxiety approaches by adopting the communicative approach for example. Unfortunately, little has been done to facilitate its implementation particularly in the UAE high schools (Qashoa, 2006). Commenting on the real situation in the UAE school English writing classes, Alhosani (2008, p.12), as a UAE postgraduate student, attributes her struggling with English writing to traditional teaching techniques:

When I came to the U.S.in August 1999 to study for my master's degree, I found myself struggling with the English language and with writing, in particular, which was the most difficult skill for me to master. Whatever the writing task that I had to accomplish in English homework, research papers, stories, or letters, I always felt uncomfortable and nervous because, as I was taught before, my main concern was with grammar and surface structure errors, not with composition itself.

In this regard, Nunan (2002, p.11) evaluates the language teaching practices in most Asian countries and concludes that “rhetoric rather than reality is the order of the day.” Claiming that traditional teaching methods are still the norm in most EFL contexts, Rinvoluceri (1999, p.197) reports that much discussion has taken place about the positive role of communicative language teaching, “but meanwhile the grammar-translation teachers just quietly do their work and do not feel the need to enter into debates.” This could be applicable to some teaching situations in the UAE context when product writing approach and focus on accuracy prevail in the writing classes (Alhosani, 2008).

From a cultural viewpoint, the loss of face and shyness from committing mistakes or failing exams is noticeable among the Asian students who are sensitive to ‘saving face’ issue (Jones, 2004; Wang & Donald, 2002). Like most of the Asian students, one possible source of FL anxiety among Arab learners might be a culture based syndrome. Being extremely cautious and sensitive to low proficiency and committing numerous mistakes in front of other peers or a social group is a part of such syndrome. In speaking and writing as productive language skills, the issue of face loss heightens the anxiety levels and inhibits interaction particularly among the L2 low proficiency learners. During the researcher’s teaching experience in Arab contexts, anecdotal evidence suggests that the culture of classroom plays a big role in the issue of language anxiety. For instance, it is common to encounter students who usually remain silent in the classroom and speak fluently with the teacher outside it as they are extremely sensitive to be corrected publicly.

The nexus between high levels of WA and the fear of others’ expectations and consequences of getting low scores in writing tests has been clearly reflected in the results chapter. Apparently, one of the main reasons escalating the participants’ high levels of WA is largely attributed to the

big concern about the writing part in standardized proficiency tests. For instance, the decisive roles of IELTS and TOEFL in students' academic and social future make them feel more anxious than usual. As previously illustrated in Figure 4.1, the cognitive WA is the most common type encountered by the participants of this study. This supports Cheng's conclusion (2004) when she warns that extreme fears of others' evaluation and concerns about test results lead to negative cognitive interference and less focus on writing tasks at hand. Based on the findings, it could be understood that WA is a central construct rather than an add-on element in the study's context. Its existence implies that teachers should incorporate anxiety issues in their plans when they attempt to improve students' writing skills.

Concerning the effects of writing anxiety on students' writing achievement, the correlation between the scores on SLWAI which represent the levels of WA among the participants and their final writing grades is used to determine to what extent WA affects achievement. The statistically significant negative correlation shown in Table 4.4 indicates that highly-anxious students tend to achieve lower grades in writing courses. The evidence provided in this study about the negative detrimental effect of anxiety on students' writing performance is in agreement with the results of related studies which find that highly-anxious students achieve lower grades in writing tests (e.g., Zhang, 2011) and indirectly with (Erkan& Saban's, 2011; Book's, 1976; Hassan's, 2001) which conclude that highly anxious learners write undeveloped or less quality essays compared to their low-anxious counterparts.

The poor writing grades scored by highly-anxious participants in the current study reflect the negative influence of anxiety on their writing quality. This result is so important that it indicates that high levels of WA might impede writing performance and achievement. This might happen

as high levels of stress hampers the capacity of the working memory and make learners more distractible (Eysenck, 1979). Consequently, teachers in the UAE context are called to pay more attention to the learners' affective state which appears to greatly affect their writing abilities. Among the empirical studies conducted to find out why the apprehensive students' writings get poor grades, Book (1976) investigated the general differences between the writings of high and low-anxious students in terms of the use of certain grammar features and encoding patterns. The study revealed that anxious students write fewer words and in case of writing more they divulge less information. At the same time, the poor quality of their writing showed how negatively anxiety affects writing tasks:

The content analysis showed that the high apprehensive students had 3 times more misspelled words than the low apprehensive ones. Also, the high apprehensive, as a group, had more non sentences and elliptical structures than low apprehensive ones. These occurrences may again reflect underdeveloped writing skills, a possible result of avoidance of writing tasks and lack of experience (p. 20).

Referring to the results of SLWAI, a considerable percentage of students report the negative effects of WA on their behavior in writing classes or in situations requiring English writing. Figure 4.1 in the previous chapter shows that avoidance behavior is also a common type of WA encountered by the participants under study. Given the fact that writing is a productive skill requiring more training and practice to be effectively learned and mastered (Richards and Renandya, 2002), it could be inferred that avoiding writing situations would inevitably lead to poor writing competence which in turn, cause higher levels of anxiety.

To be realistic and give a reliable picture, it could not be claimed that writing grades are only correlated with, or affected by levels of anxiety. Several individual characteristics such as motivation, self-efficacy, expectations, language proficiency, test taking strategies, and

preparedness contribute to writing performance and language achievement in general. Comparing the results emerging from the writing anxiety scores on SLWAI to students' final grades supports this claim since they reveal that some highly-anxious students scored high writing grades. This suggests that these students in spite of their fears and anxiety might possess a sufficient amount of persistence or other positive characteristics to battle anxiety and be successful language learners. This is consistent with Calvo and Carreiras (1993) who claim that high test anxious learners tend to devote more time and effort to compensate for the negative effect caused by anxiety. Much work is still needed to understand the exact relatedness between writing performance and anxiety. Nevertheless; it can be gleaned from the overall results of this study that writing anxiety mostly plays a negative role in writing performance and is a negative predictor of writing competence. Consequently, teachers and the stakeholders are called to find out the underlying anxiety sources and do their best to dry out its roots.

5.1.2. Possible Sources of Writing Anxiety

The results of the SWAQ and interviews with highly-anxious students uncover a wide range of contributing factors and aspects which make English writing classes unpleasant and unwanted learning situation. In this study, the most frequently mentioned reasons scoring the highest means are related to tests, cognitive, linguistic factors in addition to some pedagogical practices and competitiveness. These results imply that writing underperformance might not only be caused by cognitive incompetence but also by deeply rooted anxieties resulted from other sources. In addition, the identified sources of WA in the current study seem to be largely interrelated with contextual surroundings. For example, fear of tests occupies the first place in terms of WA sources in the study's context due to the decisive role of such tests in learners' academic future. It

is therefore very important that English teachers make L2 writing assignments as different from testing situations as possible. The most effective contributing factors are discussed below.

5.1.2.1 Test Related Factors

Based on the findings reported in Chapter Four, the most common source of students' fear and anxiety is related to test related factors and aspects, namely, fear of IELTS and TOEFL writing tests. Based on the results, it seems that the participants are extremely concerned about writing tests in terms of their prompts, time limit, and consequences of failing such tests. The participants' concerns about time pressure and topic unfamiliarity agree with Hawkey's (2004) findings. In that study, IELTS international candidates participated in a study that aimed to investigate the impact of IELTS on candidates and teachers. It has been reported in Hawkey's study that time pressure and topic unfamiliarity were the most factors affecting the candidates' performance. In the same study, 71% of the respondents (n=190) were 'very much' or 'quite a lot' anxious and worried about the test.

Exploring students' perceptions about the writing test related aspects gives an impression that test anxiety has become the most influential possible source of WA in the study context. The following quotation is a clear indicative example:

Extract 5.1: I do not like any writing test since they make me very anxious and determine my academic future... In ordinary writing classes, I am able to write well organized compositions, but in tests I feel so confused that my teacher once told me that I usually write good essays while in the exam my writings are totally different.

This result partially agrees with the findings of similar studies which conclude that fear of writing tests is one of the sources causing WA (e.g., Atay and Kurt, 2006; Latif, 2007; Zhang, 2011).

Compared to the sources of WA reported in these studies, the present study has been able to rank and explore the major and most effective WA sources encountered by the study participants. In this regard, Atay and Kurt (2006, p. 111) observe that “a review of literature has shown that sources of anxiety are closely intertwined, creating a difficulty in teasing out a discrete factor or source”. The fear emerging from the possibility of not understanding the prompts in writing tests has not been referred to in any of the aforementioned related studies whereas 80% of the current study participants express their fears and concerns about this writing test aspect. The interviews also reveal that ambiguous/unclear prompts particularly when they are accompanied with unfamiliar topics greatly escalate students’ anxiety. This finding is consistent with Tobias’s (1994) claim which states that poor performance is a consequence, at least in part, of working on unclear topics or uninteresting tasks which in turn, lead to less imaginary and a lack of engagement in the task. In other words, the difficulty of prompts impedes the flow of ideas and thinking during writing compositions, which in turn, escalates stress particularly in high stake tests.

The low-anxious participants in this study suggest that having knowledge about the topic and understanding the test writing prompts increase the learners’ interest, promote writing quality, and lower the stress levels. However, it could be claimed that facing writing test takers with writing prompts outside the realm of their experiences and proficiency levels may generate more test anxiety. Instead, effective writing prompts should be within the general experience of all examinees, provoke writer’s thinking, and allow some freedom for individual expressions (Miller and Crocker, 1990). This finding demonstrates why the participants feel anxious about writing tests. Inability to understand the writing prompts indicates that students lack sufficient linguistic

competence and effective vocabulary learning strategies that might help them guess the meaning of words through context. It could be claimed that finding a way to sort out the issue of writing prompts particularly in proficiency tests could make test takers feel more comfortable and confident. For instance, limiting the prompt wording to words from lists of common English words or provide synonyms for difficult words might lower test takers' fears.

Another aspect related to the participants' test anxiety is the consequences of failing writing tests. Fifty seven percent of the student participants fear failure in tests and the interview results show that students who excessively think about grades likely develop test anxiety. Worries about the consequences of failing tests might result from the high stake tests which greatly impact students' academic and occupational future (Black, 2005). High levels of test anxiety can be easily noticed among English learners in the UAE context since students' academic future and their admission to universities largely depend on the scores of some language proficiency tests like TOEFL or IELTS. Recently, large numbers of students are rejected yearly by the universities due to their low scores in proficiency tests like IELTS (Khaleej Times, 2009). As such, being competent in English and passing some standardized tests have become the *magic key* for tertiary level students in the UAE for graduation and getting prestigious jobs.

Based on the interviews with highly-anxious participants, time limit and insufficient testing times, particularly in standardized tests, seem to be other test anxiety provoking aspects which take up much of students' thinking and concerns. This finding is congruent with Madsen's claim (1984) which is that strict timed tests are a major source of students' distress and nervousness. In the UAE context, feeling anxious about test limited times could be attributed to the lack of exposure to such timed tests before joining the local universities. Based on some anecdotal

evidences, the potential leniency of some school administrations and teachers in this respect might make students accustomed to have extra given time to complete tests. Culturally, it is beneficial to keep in mind differences when addressing L2 test anxiety. Cultural influences such as parental expectations (Bodas & Ollendick, 2005), teacher authority, emphasis on rote memorization, text book centeredness contribute to test anxiety.

5.1.2.2 Cognitive and Linguistic Factors

For the cognitive factors, the results indicate that they occupy the second place in terms of WA sources. Among cognitive related factors and aspects reported in the current study results are encountering difficulties in writing what one means, writing a topic within the required length, lacking knowledge about the features of good writing, and lacking the ability of generating ideas particularly about unfamiliar topics. As seen in the related interviewees' responses, lacking the habit of writing in English might be caused by lack of topical schemata and little exposure to English writing outside classrooms. Some of these findings are in agreement with the results of other studies in different EFL contexts. For example, lacking writing practices and inability to organize ideas when writing English compositions are also reported as cognitive WA contributing factors in a similar Egyptian study (Latif, 2007), in the Turkish context (Atay and Kurt, 2006), and in China (Zhang, 2011). These cognitive factors and aspects reflect learner-induced anxiety since they emerge from self-perceived incompetence, poor cognitive abilities, and some unrealistic learners' beliefs about the difficulty of writing English compositions particularly essays. For example, showing concerns about being unable to write good compositions or the little knowledge about good writing constituents makes students tend to view writing English essays as an unattainable task. Beliefs such these may lead to low self-efficacy and frustration. It has been concluded in related studies that anxiety levels increase when L2

learners underestimate their competency in language production and when the perceptions of less proficient language learning abilities prevail (e.g., Latif, 2007; Price, 1991). On the other hand, students who believe that good composition should meet ideal standards and be free of errors might become anxious when there is a clash between their outcomes in reality and the high expected standards.

For the present study, an inability to generate and organize ideas is repeatedly mentioned by the interviewees as a major source of worries and anxiety. This might be attributed to different reasons. Firstly, lack of topical schemata (background knowledge) that is caused by little extensive reading, which has been easily observed among the students in the UAE pre-university educational system, is partially responsible for the difficulty in generating ideas. Sufficient background knowledge is considered a pre condition for good comprehension and composition and it has been demonstrated by Heller (1999) as a predictor of success in different writing tasks. Pointing to the importance of reading and listening in developing writing skills, Abdullah Zahed (2010) contends that passive listening and lack of reading as a habit negatively impact learning in general and writing in particular. Secondly, lack of vocabulary and poor linguistic competence that these study participants suffer from could contribute to such cognitive deficiencies. Thirdly, reinforcing rote learning and memorizing writing topics rather than promoting critical and creative thinking in most of UAE government school educational practices might also contribute to that inability (Qashoa, 2006). Anecdotal evidence also indicates that school students indirectly become rote learners due to the exams which usually ask them to recall what they have memorized and the excessive emphasis on scoring high grades at the expense of developing true creative learners. Finally, the huge differences between Arabic and English writing styles make

English essay organization uneasy task for some learners. In this regard, several factors resulted from different writing styles make Arab university students' English writings disorganized and incoherent:

It was indicated that Arab university students tend to follow certain techniques in their written English that make their writing incoherent such as including a broad statement in the opening sections of their essays before introducing the topic sentence” (Atari, 1983, cited in Ahmad, 2010, p.213).

Pointing to the reasons causing incoherence in Arab student English writings, ElKhatib (1983) attributes incoherence and poor quality of Arab students' English writing to the overuse of coordinating sentences and inability to state topic sentences properly. Based on the overall results related to cognitive factors, it seems that writing English essays, particularly in standardized proficiency tests is more laborious and demanding than other writing tasks such as writing letters or short paragraphs. The students' cognitive writing incompetence might be linked to the traditional teaching methods that have been adopted when teaching Arabic composition in most of the UAE schools. Aljomhooor (1996) found that teaching Arabic composition in the UAE schools is based on the product approach to writing and it is limited to how to write short stories and summaries. Pointing to the traditional rhetoric pedagogy when teaching Arabic writing Alhosani (2008, p.9 &11) claims that “Writing instruction in Arabic that is utilized in schools in the U.A.E. in all grades merely focuses on grammar and vocabulary... Writing in Arabic in the U.A.E. and most Arab schools appears to be an isolated act.” Writing in Arabic in UAE schools has been a big challenge facing the students as the Arabic language curriculum is still built about literature and grammar. In addition, some traditional teaching techniques in Arabic writing classes are still prevailing. For example, working in pairs or getting peer feedback is considered cheating practices (Alhosani, 2008).

In terms of linguistic factors as possible sources of students' WA, it has been reported [4.3.3] that some of students' WA levels resulted from linguistic factors and aspects such as a big number of spelling mistakes committed during writing English compositions, inability to write complex coherent sentences, limited number of vocabulary, weakness in grammar and difficulties in using conjunctions properly. At the broad level, these results contribute to the controversy and debate taking place among educators (e.g., MacIntyre, 1995; Sparks et al, 2000) about whether L2 anxiety is a cause or effect of poor language skills and linguistic deficiency. The negative correlation between language proficiency and FL anxiety has been confirmed in several studies (e.g., Cheng et al, 1999). That says, low proficient L2 learners have more anxiety than high proficient ones since their self-esteem is more threatened by the frustration and problems they encounter when using L2. In light of the related results and interviewees' responses, it can be argued that the participants' low linguistic competence has contributed to their anxiety and frustration levels. These results seem to be consistent with Daud et al's (2005) which is guided by LCDH and states that deficient linguistic knowledge and skills lead to poor performance which in turn, cause L2 anxiety. Specifically, the present study results support the findings of Latif's (2007), Abu Shawish and Atea's (2010) and Zhang's (2011), which point to linguistic factors as possible sources of L2 learners' WA. Due to the different data collection tools used in the current study, its findings particularly the students' responses in the interviews explain why and how linguistic incompetence contribute to students' WA. Hence, it becomes apparent that WA escalates among the participants if their linguistic incompetence is not met or improved.

It seems that the current study participants would be too concerned about the linguistic incompetence when writing English compositions and their perceived poor linguistic abilities

have a great impact on their affective responses to writing tasks. The excessive thinking and worries in this regard might spring from the overemphasis on accuracy rather than fluency and communication. Additionally, the poor Arabic linguistic abilities from which most of the UAE students suffer (Al-Najjar, 2005) might be closely linked to English linguistic deficiency. This matches the claim stating that highly anxious foreign language learners may also have poor native language skills which in turn, reduce performance and leads to anxiety (Sparks and Ganschow, 2007).

5.1.2.3 Teaching Practices, Evaluation Factors and Competitiveness

As for teaching practices as possible sources of students' WA, the survey and interview results in section [4.3.4] indicate moderate effects of them on students' anxiety. This result is different from the findings of other related studies (e.g., Abu Shawish, 2010; Atay and Kurt, 2006; Latif, 2007) which point to pedagogical practices as strong effective sources of WA. Compared to Latif's, the current study participants rarely complain about some negative teachers' practices such as severe criticism, harshness, unsympathetic treatment, and discouragement. This might be attributed to the rigid university bylaws which prioritize students' satisfaction and comfort in addition to the recruitment contracts which oblige teachers to greatly meet the students' learning needs and provide constant feedback by very tactful and motivating techniques. Nevertheless, some pedagogical practices seem to be anxiety producing acts for the study participants. For instance, excessive focus on accuracy and theoretical concepts of writing rather than fluency and practice, dealing with writing as a final product, and some improper error correction techniques are referred to by a considerable number of participants as stress and anxiety sources. In light of these results, it could be argued that exposing students to more writing theoretical aspects and terminologies such as cohesion, coherence, and fragmentation at the expense of practical ones

accounts for high levels of WA. This indicates that practicing writing compositions especially essays and receiving constructive feedback can trigger more motivation and less anxiety. In a similar vein, the findings of this study show that excessive concentration on writing accurate and correct grammatical sentences heightens students' anxiety since it might impede fluency and flow of ideas when writing. Importantly, the writing teachers need to understand that Arab EFL learners view mastering English grammar as tedious and an uneasy task. The frequent outcries about the difficulty of English structures among Arab learners are reported in different studies (e.g., Kambal, 1980; Khuweilah and Shomali, 2000). Some persistent grammatical errors such as deletion of verb to be, misuse of verb tenses and articles reached the state of fossilization among the Arab learners and Mukkatesh (1986) goes further when he asserts that even explicit grammatical explanation had a very little effect on these errors. Thus, much focus on accuracy when correcting student writings might frustrate learners and reduce their desire to learn English. Based on these findings, it could *be understood that some teaching/pedagogical procedures in the study's EFL context have anxiety provoking nature* for students in writing classes.

With regard to evaluation factors as possible sources of WA, the study results uncovered that 56.4% feel anxious when they know that their writings will be evaluated by teachers. This is congruent with the FL anxiety model (Horwitz et al, 1986) which considers test anxiety as an important component of L2 learners' anxieties and with Gregersen's (2003) study which concludes that anxious language learners tend to have much fear over negative evaluation and errors. The fear of teachers' negative evaluation may be due to the fear of losing face that has been found as a common feeling among language learners (Ohata, 2005). It could be said that this kind of fear is true for the learners who are very sensitive to criticism and have a low level of

self-confidence. Importantly, the interview responses in this study reveal that students feel that error correction, evaluation, and feedback are necessary, but the dilemma lies in the manner of evaluation and error correction. In relation to this, Koch and Terrell (1991) claim that students are more worried and anxious about ‘how’, ‘when’, ‘where’, ‘how often’ they are evaluated and how their mistakes are dealt with rather than whether evaluation should take place in the class. So, it could be argued that the social context set up by the instructors can have tremendous consequences and implications for the learners. In this regard, Young (1991, p. 428) mentions that “instructors who believe their role is to correct students constantly when they make any error,...and who think their role is more like a drill sergeant's than a facilitator's may be contributing to learner language anxiety.”

For affective factors, the study results show that students seem to be motivated to learn writing English compositions and have a moderate amount of self-confidence in their writing abilities. Only competitiveness seems to be an anxiety provoking affective element. Sixty three percent of the respondents think that the other students in the class can write better English compositions than them. In addition, highly-anxious interviewees express their frustration when they compare their writing abilities with those of the more proficient ones. Very often, L2 learners feel anxious when they compare their performances in a self-derogatory bias with those of their peers. Competitiveness as a major learner induced anxiety has been referred to by several educators (e.g., 1986; Price, 1991; Young, 1991). The over-thinking about grades, the traditional evaluation and testing systems in addition to some social considerations like parental intervention and expectations might be responsible for negative competitiveness among the UAE learners.

Generally speaking, a critical look at the potential sources of WA discussed above demonstrates how the current study participants refer their anxiety to a wide variety of factors. This emphasizes the nature of WA as a complex multifaceted psychological phenomenon caused by different learner, teacher, classroom and society related factors. Identifying the most effective factors ‘testing, cognitive, and linguistic related factors’ that seem to account more than others for students’ WA distinguishes the results of the current study from those of the related ones as stated earlier. Interestingly, the mixed method approach adopted in this study has enabled the researcher to explicate the WA sources, deeply explore how they contribute to students’ stress, and rank them according to their effect and significance. The sources of anxiety discussed above are so interrelated and intertwined that it is difficult to claim that WA completely stems from one source only. Importantly, the discussion has revealed that the study participants experience most likely situational anxiety rather than trait one. This suggests that the trouble is not so much in the learners themselves but rather in other factors such as evaluation system and cognitive factors caused by stressful teaching and learning practices/circumstances. These findings would be a cornerstone and a first step to identify the factors that make some learners in the UAE universities feel anxious when writing English compositions and draw stakeholders’ attention to act accordingly. After recognizing and discussing the possible roots of students’ WA, the next section will focus on a discussion of coping strategies adopted by learners and teachers to lower WA levels and mitigate its detrimental effects.

5.1.3. Alleviating Strategies for Reducing Writing Anxiety Levels

After the in-depth analysis of the possible causes of students’ WA, the coping and alleviating strategies were explored by engaging both low-anxious students and experienced English language instructors in phenomenological interviews and a focus group discussion. Compared to

the alleviating strategies which have been suggested by most of the researchers in the form of recommendations [2.5.1], the strategies discussed in this study could be distinguished since they reflect the participants' real lived experiences and perspectives in this regard. Research (e.g., Funkhouser & Gonzales, 1997) suggests that learners' perseverance and success in learning to a large extent is a shared responsibility between teachers and learners in particular. In other words, motivation and success take place if the teachers are able to mitigate and minimize the detrimental effects of anxiety and the learners are able to cope with the anxiety that cannot be prevented (Oxford, 1999; Young, 1991). In this study, most of the coping strategies from the learners' and teachers' perspectives lend support to other scholars' suggested coping strategies in [2.5.2]. For example, they are in agreement with affective strategies (O Malley and Chamot, 1990), cognitive strategies (Oxford, 2001, Salim, 2007), and pedagogical strategies (Cheng, 2002; Hassan, 2001) which have been suggested or used to reduce WA in L2 classes. Importantly, the suggested strategies in the current study go beyond the existing related literature when the participants have suggested and added test related and linguistic alleviating strategies.

In terms of affective coping strategies, the study results show that low-anxious students are aware of the significance of being self-confident in English classes. The affective component is considered by a large body of research (e.g., Gardner, 1985; Spolsky, 1989) as a major player in language learning. Emphasizing the integration between cognition and emotion, LeDoux (1996, p. 25) claims that "minds without emotions are not really minds at all." The low-anxious students in this study promote self-confidence by convincing themselves that writing tests are not the end of the world and committing mistakes during writing English compositions is a part of a learning process. Teachers also suggest inculcating self-confidence by tolerating students' slight spelling

and grammatical mistakes. As indicated in the focus group results, some instructors try to create ‘a mistake happy zone’ which helps to change the negative attitudes towards committing mistakes and error correction. This suggestion would be very practical as lack of self-confidence and fear of committing mistakes have been referred to in many studies (e.g., MacIntyre et al,1998; Zhang, 2011) as main WA sources. Increasing students’ confidence in their writing abilities is largely correlated with the types of the corrected errors and the amount of feedback given in writing classes. To let students generate ideas and thoughts fearlessly, writing teachers should minimize their focus on accuracy particularly at the early stages of the writing courses and tolerate slight grammatical and spelling mistakes. This might create a non threatening writing environment. Based on anecdotal evidence from teaching experience in Arab EFL contexts, it has been observed that students are more confident in their writing abilities when grammatical accuracy is not the main concern when correcting errors. In this regard, it has been reported (e.g., Casanave, 2004; Hyland, 1998) that student confidence is the most noticeable among the affective consequences when fluency is emphasized before accuracy in L2 writing classes since it enables students to explore more in their writing without being worried about grammar errors. Meanwhile, it has been revealed that L2 learners feel more comfortable when they receive both form and content focused feedback as they are different from L1 learners in their linguistic and pragmatic knowledge (Ferris, 1995; Hedgecock and Lefkowitz, 1996). To sort out this dilemma in the UAE context, teachers had better weigh and tailor their choice of comments or corrected errors to meet the student needs which in turn increase confidence and reduce the levels of worries and frustrations.

Concerning test-related coping strategies, great awareness has been shown by the low anxious interviewees of the roles of test anxiety and its effects on their writing performance. Nowadays, assessment and evaluation tools are unavoidable parts in our life since classroom tests, proficiency and entrance tests are considered as determinant factors in our schools and post school period. Given that tests are inescapable, the only way for alleviating test anxiety is to ‘sugar the pill’ by finding strategies to reduce the negative effects of test anxiety. The suggested strategies in this study include pre test tactics such as training on test formats, answering IELTS mock exams and being well prepared. During the writing test, the low anxious interviewees divide the prompts, guess the meaning of the difficult words, make outlines and focus on fluency rather than accuracy. In addition, some relaxation exercises and self-encouragement are also used to cope with test fear and stress. In addition, the focus group results demonstrate that teachers mitigate writing test anxiety by clarifying the marking system which considers the flow of ideas more than grammatical accuracy, training students to write English compositions within a time limit, and reviewing some common grammatical mistakes with students before any formal writing test.

To reduce the anxiety emerging from difficult writing prompts during tests, the participant teachers suggest limiting the key words in the prompt to the list of one thousand common English words and provide synonyms to the words which are not included in the list. These suggestions are of great significance since they comprise cognitive, affective, and pedagogical coping strategies to deal with test anxiety in addition of being suggested by both low-anxious students and experienced teachers. Admittedly, it cannot be claimed that the suggested strategies will totally eliminate anxiety from one’s academic and evaluative situations. However, if these

strategies are adopted to increase students' and teachers' awareness towards writing test anxiety, the severe fears resulting from writing tests could be lowered. Pointing to the necessity of reducing test anxiety, some educational institutions like the College of Lake Country (Ross, 1992) offer anxiety reduction programs as credit hour classes. In such programs, students are taught about the possible causes and symptoms of test apprehension. They are also trained on relaxation skills, effective time management, and test taking strategies.

Importantly, the strategies used for reducing test anxiety should take on different forms depending on whether anxious learners are low or high achievers. Based on the rule 'one size doesn't fit all', Birnbaum and Nasser (1994) state that training in how to deal with different test formats would benefit high achieving anxious students more than low achieving highly-anxious students who should be trained on learning and test taking strategies. Therefore, sources of support and suggested strategies should fit each anxiety situation since test anxious individuals are affected differently by many factors such as motivation level, intellectual giftedness, and parental effects and so on.

Concerning the fears resulting from IELTS writing tasks particularly topic or prompt unfamiliarity, it might be a difficult task for IELTS designers to account for a common knowledge base of all students from diverse cultural background (Kroll and Reid, 1994). Nevertheless, several educators (e.g., Kachru, 1997; Taylor, 2002) call IELTS, as an international test, to raise awareness of cultural differences and consider '*World Englishes*' and rhetorical conventions rather than imposing a single norm of writing on all international English learners when constructing writing tasks or determining rating criteria. So, considering learners' cultural differences and their rhetorical styles when teaching them how to write argumentative essays,

which is a basic part in IELTS or TOEFL writing tests, might lower the anxiety resulting from essay writing. Emphasizing the cultural dimension in IELTS writing tasks, Uysal (2010, p. 318) points out that “published literature presents evidence that genre is not universal, but culture specific; and people in different parts of the world differ in terms of their argument styles and logical reasoning,... and rhetorical norms and perceptions of good writing.”

The suggested strategies and efforts for reducing test anxiety can be enriched and activated by cooperation of administrators, parents, students, teachers, counselors and educational policy makers in combating the deleterious cognitive and physiological effect of test anxiety. To be realistic, it cannot be claimed that the proposed strategies are a magic prescription for totally eliminating students’ test fears and concerns. Nevertheless, they will be more beneficial if they are incorporated into student study plans and university programmes.

On the other hand, different cognitive strategies are also used and suggested by the study participants (low-anxious students and teachers) to facilitate the learners’ English writing development and reduce their WA. Most of the suggested cognitive strategies are in line with Oxford’s (2001) and Hyland’s (2003) strategies for reducing FL anxiety. It could be understood that the current study low-anxious learners are, to some extent, cognitively mature since their suggested strategies range from the very general, such as practicing much English writing and imitating models, to the very specific, such as increasing the number of vocabulary needed to write English compositions and reviewing a list of common spelling mistakes. Importantly, students mention that the use of these and other coping strategies enable them either to reduce the levels of anxiety or channel them productively.

Adequate preparation, practice and training could create an optimistic attitude about writing in L2. When students train themselves on writing English compositions at their convenience, the amount of certainty and confidence might be increased. One of the easiest ways to practice writing is imitating writing models which is an effective strategy for unlocking the writer's block since imitators notice how other writers start or end their compositions, choose their vocabulary/cohesive words, organize and shape their writings (Gorrell, 1987). As a basic type of imitation, controlled composition enables unskilled student writers to practice writing confidentially. In this type of imitation, students should be taught how to change their copied passages syntactically and semantically to internalize the written language and overcome some grammatical and spelling deficiencies. Generally, reading to improve writing skills and imitating others' writing models might allow L2 learners to relieve themselves from striving for appropriate writing styles and correct forms, help in generating new ideas, increase the number of vocabulary and lessen the potential spelling mistakes.

Cognitively, teachers also suggest various strategies and techniques to help students develop their writing abilities and reduce fear and stress when writing English compositions. Their suggested strategies include applying the process approach to writing, teaching students how to write in chunks, providing lists of common English words, encouraging reading, and providing set phrases to certain writing tasks. The process approach is suggested as a good pedagogical practice that leads to writing development which in turn reduces the widespread fear of writing English compositions in the UAE universities. Traditionally, the product approach to writing prioritizes linguistic accuracy, style, and well structured product and does not view writers as persons with emotional interests in what they write (Ramies, 1985). However, the efficiency of

the process approach in reducing WA and developing students' writing abilities stems from the fact that it is a stage-based view of writing. According to this principle, writing is viewed as a non linear activity carried out through stages. Going from a prewriting stage to the final editing one enables writers to focus on communication and expression without fear of accuracy and style (Holmes, 2001). So, the authentic engagement in writing, which could be achieved through planning, generating ideas, drafting, reviewing and editing, could change the negative attitudes towards writing English compositions and enable them to break their writing into manageable chunks. From personal experience and observation, it has been observed that the prewriting activities which engage students in writing without much concern about grammar/spelling correctness or the final product help them write without excessive hesitation and stress.

Concerning the students' fears and anxiety resulting from the lack of vocabulary needed to produce well written English compositions, teachers suggest two different ways to increase the students' vocabulary knowledge which is a major component in writing skills. Firstly, they propose that students read English articles, stories and newspapers to improve their vocabulary knowledge and help in generating new ideas. This suggested method is of great importance as it exposes students to the real usage of the sophisticated English vocabulary and how they are collocated with other words. It could be claimed that reading is a very effective way to help L2 learners acquire new vocabulary unconsciously (Krashen, 1989). The teachers' suggestion in this regard is in agreement with Willis (1996, p. 8) when he points to the importance of extensive reading in enabling successful learners to extend vocabulary, learn new phrases, and "provide rich exposure to language in use." Secondly, they suggest providing students with lists of most common English words. Memorizing such lists might help students understand the writing prompts and get basic words which are needed to start writing English compositions. However,

just memorizing the lists of common English words is not enough to overcome the students' weakness in vocabulary knowledge. Instead, students should be encouraged to use these lists of words in meaningful sentences, practice dictations to memorize spelling and use them in daily conversations. In the same vein, other participant teachers suggest reducing WA through providing certain words/expressions that suit certain writing tasks. Over the years of teaching, it has been noticed how comfortable the students are when they are provided with set phrases to describe the graph in IELTS writing task one or the expressions which are used to write an introduction or a conclusion in the argumentative essay which is a main writing task in standardized proficiency tests.

To sum up, it could be understood from the above discussion that teachers suggest eclectic cognitive coping strategies to alleviate students' fears and stress in writing classes. They adopt the process writing approach to relieve students from the accuracy concern and they improve vocabulary knowledge indirectly by encouraging extensive reading and directly by providing lists of common words. The above discussed strategies would help language teachers in the study context to create a low if not a free anxiety English writing classes. Importantly, teachers need to understand the nature of their students' anxieties as they vary from one to another. As such, they could prepare activities, design lessons and adopt teaching techniques which best fit in with the strategies utilized by their learners. In the next section, students' and teachers' perceptions about the role of computer use in reducing WA in English classes are discussed.

5.1.4. Perceptions about the Role of Computer in Writing Anxiety Reduction

The role of computer use in alleviating WA among the study student participants has been investigated through the open ended question on the SWAQ, the interviews with low-anxious

students, and the focus group discussion. The results in section [4.5] indicate that the participants are aware of the role of computer and technology in learning languages, but they do not prefer to use computer in writing English compositions particularly in evaluative tests and situations. As this result emerged only from self-reported data, inferences and conclusions should be interpreted cautiously and more investigation is needed to find out the reasons standing behind such attitudes towards the computer use in writing tests and classes. Here, it is highly recommended to further investigate the role of computer use in writing classes through other data collection tools such as observing the effect of computer use on controlled and experimental groups. However, the interviewees and teachers mention that obliging students to take computer based writing tests increases WA and reduces motivation in writing classes. These findings contradict Davis et al's (2009) and Shen's (1999) which point to the positive role of computer use in reducing students' WA and increasing their written output. However, they are in harmony with Logan (1988) and Zaid (2011) who have observed that their students exhibited less positive attitudes and greater WA when they used computers in their writing classes. In those studies, it was also observed that when students had an option to choose between writing by hand or on the computer they selected the traditional way. In addition, Phinny & Khouri (1993) and Zaid (2011) claim that computer-based writing might trigger some negative writing behaviors among EFL writers such as excessive focus on form and editing rather than content particularly at the early stages of writing compositions.

The current study findings in this regard might be attributed to different factors. For instance, the government schools in the UAE might rarely train their students on writing computer based English compositions. As such, students feel that they are relatively slow word processor users.

In spite of the big number of computers in the UAE schools and universities, application of them in English writing classes is still in its embryonic stages Ismail et al (2010). In this study, Ismail et al investigated language teachers' perceptions about the utilization of technology in UAE's K-12 school classes and revealed that integration of technology (computers) in Arabic and English language classes is still below expectations. In addition, students who are used to writing English compositions by hand for a long time might face difficulties in mastering the word processor and acquiring the keyboarding skills. So, adjusting to the computer use takes a considerable amount of energy from students which could influence the writing quality, increase the cognitive load of L2 writers, and heighten the dread of writing instead of facilitating it (Crafton, 1996). The attitudes towards computerized writing classes and compositions could also be formed and affected by the previous experiences of some learners with computer use, the intimate habitual relation between paper and students in writing classes, and by the level of typing accuracy (Kahn & Freyd, 1990). Pennington (1993) concludes that the outcomes of computer use in writing are largely affected by quality, quantity, type of instruction offered to learners. Based on these findings related to computer use in writing classes, teachers in the study context should respond appropriately and tactfully to the students who have strong negative feelings about the use of computers when writing English compositions. Additionally, it is necessary for the teachers to think of other supportive ways and ice breaking activities for changing the negative perceptions about computer based compositions. For instance, they could assign non-judgmental compositions to be written only on computer, cooperate with information technology teachers, and explain the merits of word processor. Pedagogical implications and suggestions that are hopefully expected to help students cope and deal with their anxieties while writing in English are presented in the next sections.

5.2. Pedagogical Implications

Based on the study findings and the above discussions, the following pedagogical implications for mitigating students' WA and developing their writing abilities have been derived:

- i. **Existence of English writing anxiety:** As the results indicate that ELLs in the three UAE universities encounter high levels of anxiety when writing English compositions, English instructors should acknowledge the existence of anxiety as an intricate aspect of the learning process among their students. This requires them to pay more attention to the affective factors when teaching English in the UAE L2 context. The first critical step is to raise awareness about the detrimental effects of anxiety on writing performance and learners' motivation. This awareness could lead teachers to develop proper writing lesson plans and classroom activities to meet students' emotive needs, reduce anxiety levels, and confront some students' erroneous beliefs about the characteristics of a good English composition. In addition, teachers can address the issue of anxiety with students directly and explicitly (Crookall and Oxford, 1991) by asking them to talk about their concerns and insecurities when writing English compositions or by designing questionnaires to gather more detailed information about the difficulties students encounter. When teachers set up a 'personal link' with their students from the beginning of the writing course, they feel that there are people on earth care about their concerns and fears. As such, potentially relaxing conversation between teachers and students enables teachers to discuss the anxiety impact and show students how to work out practical ways for confronting it. It should not be forgotten that teachers' respect, warmth and other positive characteristics are major keys in promoting success in language learning and alleviating L2 anxiety. In this regard, Abu Rabia (2004) concluded that the students' level of anxiety in L2 learning

situations becomes lower when teachers are evaluated as being encouraging and supportive by students.

- ii. **Test anxiety:** Writing test anxiety could be alleviated when the instructors realize that a test is not a means of authority and punishment. Instead, students should be informed about the test content, format, aim, and the number of questions. The situation would be better if the students are exposed to a trial version of a test (mock exams) before its official application for the sake of making students familiar with time limit and pressure. For two IELTS writing tasks, teacher had better provide students with a variety of test formats and let them imitate some essays that can be obtained from the websites of internationally recognized proficiency tests. In addition, the big reliance on high stake formal tests in evaluating students' writing performance should be lessened and other assessment tools could be considered. For instance, homework assignments and the use of portfolio are considered less anxiety provoking assessment tools since they can be done without pressure of time and at the students' convenience. Fear of negative evaluation has to be minimized by providing positive remarks and avoiding negative harsh comments. Based on the related results, it could be claimed that some fears of test failure are easily alleviated on the condition that teachers explain to the students the objective scoring and marking systems which not only focus on grammar, spelling and form, but also on content and the development of ideas. Concerning the prompt of the writing tests which is considered one of the most effective factors increasing writing test anxiety, teachers could minimize the fear that results from encountering difficult prompts by choosing topics related to test takers' background with familiar topics. Prompts should be accessible to all

test takers and some variables such as proficiency level and linguistic competence should be considered by teachers or test providers. Importantly, the prompt should be stated in relatively simple and direct words with a very limited number of tasks to be completed by the test takers since long prompts scatter their attention and overload them with extra requirements (O' Loughlin and Wigglesworth, 2007).

Importantly, educational institutions and designers of standardized tests can cooperate with teachers and help students overcome test anxiety effects by teaching them effective methods to address test anxiety. For instance, counselors can help students identify the problem and determine the exact factors leading to the discrepancy between ability and performance. It could be claimed that anxiety is one factor among many elements like demotivation, frustration and social difficulties that contribute to the individual's underperformance. Students should be encouraged to focus on the material before taking an exam by teaching them good study habits (e.g., time management, scheduling work, taking breaks, seeking help from other experienced people) and training them on effective study skills. Furthermore, test designers can diversify the ways students can take tests in order to enable test takers to opt for the technique and format they prefer. For example, the selection could take place between objective and subjective tests, individual and group interviews, timed or untimed tests. Interestingly, TOEFL designers consider students' desires and preferences when they give the test takers a choice to sit for computer-based test or paper-based one.

- iii. **Pre-writing activities:** To mitigate the anxiety caused by poor cognitive writing abilities, teachers could instill the habit of English writing in students by engaging them in

prewriting activities and adopting the process approach to teach writing. Giving students a chance to participate in prewriting activities such as brainstorming, outlining, selecting the purpose for writing, revising, and drafting might help students overcome the writing block and help them start writing fearlessly. Among these activities, brainstorming is the initial step that enables reluctant writers to focus on the assignment and generate more ideas. At this stage, it is helpful to train students on how to utilize graphic organizers or T-charts to state main and supporting ideas (Farrell, 2006). In the revising stage, teachers should promote 'peer conferences' in which students can read each others' papers and suggest corrections through checklists. This could be undertaken in a friendly atmosphere without fear of teachers' evaluation or criticism. In the same vein, it should not be forgotten that the process writing approach is so effective for lowering students' WA that it makes students focus on the cognitive process of writing rather than thinking of grammar and spelling correctness. In addition, engaging students in the prewriting activities through the process approach makes students realize in a way or another that writing is a process of discovering ideas and thoughts rather than just a finished product (Farrell, 2006, Mara & Marra, 2000).

- iv. **Linguistic enhancement:** As lack of vocabulary and a fear of committing numerous grammatical/spelling mistakes have been revealed as main sources of students concern and anxiety, teachers could help in boosting students' linguistic knowledge by emphasizing the importance of memorizing lists of the most common English words, integrating reading in writing classes, and reviewing repeatedly basic spelling rules and some frequently committed grammatical mistakes. Teachers should not only provide

students with word lists but also ask them to use those words in meaningful sentences of their own. To take giant steps forward, teachers could guide students to write these words on vocabulary flash cards, dictate them, arrange timely repetitions of memorized words, and practice them in daily conversations with friends. Respectively, students should be encouraged to build a more advanced vocabulary repertoire by dividing the list of common words into common verbs, adjectives or nouns. For instance, when students memorize and learn a list of common adjective words, they can efficiently describe things such as surroundings, feelings, and hobbies. Pointing to the importance of learning lists of words consciously, Nation (1990) asserts that rote memorization of word lists helps language learners develop their vocabularies effectively and in a short time.

For the average students, teachers should arm them with non-traditional vocabulary learning strategies and a variety of techniques to word learning and development. One of these effective ways is integrating reading in writing classes which presumably increases incidental vocabulary learning and broadens students' perspectives. The beneficial by-product of reading, 'improving vocabulary knowledge' has been described as one of the most vital ways that enables language learners to acquire new lexis (Krashen, 1989). Furthermore, it has been suggested that teachers could profitably assign more reading exercises in their writing classes and leisure reading outside classes to enhance vocabulary learning and writing performance. Convincing evidence has been shown in research that college students who read more have higher writing performance (Lee and Krashen, 2002). To enhance spelling/grammatical correctness and reduce the fears emerging from committing numerous spelling and grammatical mistakes, students could

be provided with lists of common English spelling rules and explanations of grammatical points which have been previously determined as frequent obstacles to students. These rules and explanations could be reviewed with students in a timely manner before sitting for formal writing tests.

- v. **Computer use:** Due to the potential benefits of computer use on the quality and process of writing, teachers could start working on changing the students' negative stand towards the use of computer in writing tests and classes. As the most frequently used writing tool, the word processor offers its users a wide range of options such as addition, modifying, insertion, and formatting, which in turn lead to increased levels of motivation and better attitudes (Cumming & Li, 200). Teachers also should draw students' attention to the ability of computers in helping them revise their composition not only in the final editing stage, but also anytime during the writing process. It has been concluded in some related studies (Hyland, 1993; Knapp, 1986, p. 7) that students who use the word processor revise and change what they write more than those who use paper and pen, so they are "more willing to correct errors and attempt all levels of revisions." Although the findings of this study do not support this, instilling positive attitudes towards the importance of computer in developing writing abilities should be emphasized.

It should be understood that the continuous exposure to computer based writing with appropriate training could alter students' negative thinking about composing on the computer and make them feel how it ameliorates the writing process. However, it should not be understood that obliging students to dramatically change their composing style and use only word processor as a writing tool is always a good idea. Instead, the use of

computer in writing English compositions particularly in standardized proficiency tests should be presented as an option since most students even those with high levels of computer literacy still prefer composing by hand as revealed in the study results. However, as an escapable tool in the era of technology, incorporating the use of computer into writing classes has become a necessity and a change in students' negative attitudes could be achieved through the teachers' enthusiasm in creating a new culture towards computerized writing. Teachers' role is so vital in this regard that the word processor is described by (Rubin and Bruce, 1986) as 'teacher dependent software.'

- vi. **Error correction:** For anxiety stemming from the fear of negative evaluation and error correction, teachers should understand that this is a widespread phenomenon among L2 learners especially those who have less self-confidence. Students become more apprehensive when their mistakes are corrected in public or in a harsh manner. So, it is a pressing necessity to carefully manage the instructor-learner interaction. In this regard, Oxford (1999a, p. 65) states that "ridicule and uncomfortable handling of mistakes in front of a class are among the most important instructor-learner interaction issues related to language anxiety." Despite the controversy about effectiveness of grammar error correction in students' writings, the positive role of such corrections in honing writing skills and increasing writing accuracy cannot be denied. Teachers should not spend much time thinking about correcting or not correcting grammatical errors in students' writings. Instead, the question which should be focused on is how grammar correction could be applied without arousing much anxiety among students. In this respect, teachers need not exhaust themselves and their students doing all sorts of grammar corrections. They should

give organized feedback on selected or serious mistakes since intensive and detailed grammar correction might frustrate students and make them lose confidence for future writing. Additionally, it should be realized that the type and amount of grammar error correction must be determined by the learners' needs and levels of proficiency.

5.3. Limitations of the Study

Despite being one of the rare studies addressing the potential factors associated with writing anxiety in the Arab EFL university context and the noteworthy results which had been yielded by the use of different data collection tools, several cautions should be taken into account when interpreting the results. Firstly, as in many self-reported questionnaires and interviews, the validity of respondents' answers might be affected by the possibility of unreliable answers, the halo effect or a certain bias (Dornyei, 2003). In this study, some respondents might overstate or understate their levels of WA for psychological motives. So, it could not be claimed that the exact levels of anxiety among the participants are fully verified. In this respect, the validity of the results could be verified more clearly in future studies by utilizing other data collection tools such as observation and a think aloud protocol method. Given the nature of qualitative interviews with twenty students from only three universities, the generalisability of results beyond the study settings might carry little justification. Additionally, the interviewed female students might not fully reveal their feelings and perspectives in front of a 'stranger' particularly the time for being acquainted with the researcher was short. As such, a full picture of WA (its levels and sources) could be achieved when the findings of this study are combined with future studies investigating the same issue from different perspectives and considerations.

A third limitation stems from the statistical procedures and analysis in this study. Lack of correlational and causal analysis between sources of WA with other variables like gender, years

of studying English, learning strategies and self-rated proficiency may result in an incomplete understanding of the investigated phenomenon. Another limitation is the reliability and validity of students' grades as a measurement of writing performance. The fact that the writing final exams are marked by different teachers in addition to different exam formats and grading criteria could also make the outcome far from certain. Future researches are recommended to use more standardized writing tests which assess writing performance more accurately. The final limitation stems from exploring the anxious students' perspectives and experience concerning the sources of their writing anxiety solely through interviews. Possibly, the data obtained would give a more comprehensive picture and expressive thoughts if the researcher could have delved more deeply into the participants' feelings through the use of a think-aloud protocol. Specifically, this research tool could be used while students are writing an English composition to get concurrent thoughts and more authentic data (Hurd, 2008).

5.4. Suggestions for Further Studies

In addition to the extension of existing knowledge in the field of writing anxiety, the findings of the current study indicate several issues waiting for further exploration. As the number of participants is relatively small, the current study could be replicated with a larger number of ELLs and EFL instructors. It would be beneficial and worthwhile to investigate and explore the experiences of more participants from all the UAE universities and colleges. Furthermore, it would be interesting to examine the impact of certain variables such as gender, age, and years of studying English on students' anxiety in writing classes. Through such a study, some major research questions could be answered such as whether writing anxiety increase or decrease when learners become advanced learners or gender and academic levels correlate significantly with students' WA. It would also be interesting to find out if levels of anxiety higher among the

students in the public universities than those in the private ones. Further longitudinal studies and investigations are needed to examine the impact of the coping strategies which have been revealed in this study to deal with WA levels. It might also be interesting to investigate whether or not lists of common English words provided for students were helpful in minimizing writing anxiety stemming from the lack of vocabulary knowledge. It would be necessary to find out if there is a significant correlation between the mode of grammar error correction and the level of WA. In this respect, action researches could also be carried out to apply some of the coping strategies and examine their effectiveness in improving writing performance and decreasing anxiety.

As a matter of urgency, future research is also needed to investigate the effect of computer use on English university students' writing performance and anxiety. Moreover, the possible reasons why students dislike using computer in their writing classes and tests need to be examined and explored. As a relatively small number of the participants were interviewed in this study to get their experiences and perspectives about the computerized compositions, it would be interesting and beneficial to conduct a comprehensive study using controlled and experimental groups with additional data collection tools.

Because of the dynamic nature of language anxiety, the exact reasons for students' fears and stress in English classes are still open questions requiring further exploration. It could not be claimed that the questionnaires and interviews used in this study to identify the possible sources of WA are able to completely cover the all aspects. So, it is recommended that further studies should employ and incorporate additional data collection tools such as think-aloud protocols.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

Over the last few decades, interest has been increasingly paid to the role of affective variables in second language learning (e.g., Arnold & Brown, 1999; Gardner, 1985; Horwitz et al, 1986). As it is one of the most reliable predictors of success in learning languages, anxiety has been researched and investigated for the sake of creating a low anxiety learning environment. Providing motivating and low-anxiety foreign language classes has been one of the greatest challenges encountering L2 teachers. Later, the concern transferred to the language skill-specific anxieties. In the context of writing, highly anxious student writers tend to avoid writing situations, lose confidence in their writing abilities, abandon jobs requiring writing, and get lower scores in standardized tests (Daly and Miller, 1975). However, reducing language anxiety and alleviating its detrimental effects could be unattainable without fully understanding why and how learners feel anxious in L2 classes (Spielman and Radnofsky, 2001). Thus, this study has mainly explored and investigated the possible sources of writing anxiety and the strategies for alleviating it among the ELLs in UAE universities. It has also investigated the levels of such anxiety and its effects on writing performance.

The findings of this study provide evidence for the existence of high levels of writing anxiety and fears among the study participants when writing English compositions. Also, it has been revealed that the cognitive anxiety is the most common type of WA encountered by the participants. Concerning the impact of anxiety on writing development, the findings point to a negative correlation between levels of anxiety and students' writing course grades. This demonstrates to the detrimental negative effects of anxiety on language learning and writing performance in particular. The results also indicate that WA is associated with different possible

sources and factors. Test related factors are reported to be the most apparent effective sources of anxiety among the participants. Other cognitive, linguistic, affective, and pedagogical factors have also been found to be amongst the main possible sources of anxiety. In addition, the findings obtained from analyzing the data collected from the interviews with low-anxious participants and EFL instructors provide some learning and teaching strategies which could be used to lessen the levels of anxiety and facilitate writing English compositions.

Researching issues related to language anxiety should be encouraged as recognizing the roots of such phenomenon helps learners to be more responsive and “make language learning a much more enjoyable experience” (Tsui, 1996, p. 165). Being more aware of the anxiety provoking situations and factors would inevitably help students cope with such situations positively. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the research about English writing anxiety in Arab EFL context by drawing teachers’ and learners’ attention to the distinct role that it plays in foreign language learning. Importantly, the findings of this study could help in guiding the policy in relation to teaching and testing writing in the UAE EFL context. The detailed information about the study’s context, participants, and methodology could help the readers and respective stakeholders in terms of applicability or transferability. This has been clearly put by Stake (2006, p. 90) “...because the reader knows the situation to which the assertions might apply, the responsibility of making generalizations should be more the reader’s than the writer’s.” Teachers are also expected to continue their attempts to find out the causes standing behind their students’ WA and experiment the coping strategies to help them turn the process of writing into an enjoyable event. In addition, the study findings will be of special interest to test designers, and curriculum developers as they have drawn their attention to the necessity of creating other

assessment tools to make writing classes less stressful. The current study expands the literature related to English writing anxiety in the Arab contexts and contributes to creating a low anxiety learning environment since it has identified some of the causing factors and presented some practical coping strategies. In this respect, Young (1991) mentions that creating an effective learning environment is dependent on recognizing the sources of language anxiety.

Being a foreign English language learner, I myself have encountered many writing challenges before completing this dissertation and saw a younger version of myself during the interviews with the highly-anxious learners. Producing academically coherent writing which would be accepted by the readers has been one of the main concerns. As a researcher, I acknowledge that only the tip of the iceberg has been discovered during this long researching journey and research on writing anxiety is still so underdeveloped that much investigation is needed to get a better understanding of this complex psychological phenomenon. As a teacher, this long journey has given me an impression that learners are not born anxious but the learning environment could contribute to their stress and negative attitudes when learning foreign languages. Whatever the level of students' anxiety is, teachers' appropriate teaching strategies, their tactful constructive feedback that considers students' levels and backgrounds would inevitably lessen anxiety detrimental effects. Hopefully, the positive lessons and coping strategies I learned from conducting this study will be applied to my writing classes to enable my students produce well written English compositions in an enjoyable free anxiety environment. I am absolutely convinced that the warm-hearted interaction with students and the real awareness of their concerns in language classes will make them believe in the slogan '*success comes in 'cans' not 'cant's'*'.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A- Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory developed by Cheng (2004)

دراسة حالة الخوف والقلق المرافقة للكتابة باللغة الأجنبية (اللغة الإنجليزية) التي وضعها تشنغ .

Please read the below statements about writing in English and circle the most suitable choice for you among the choices 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. While answering the questions, you are kindly requested to be honest as the findings are going to be used for research.

الرجاء قراءة البيانات أدناه التي تعنى بموضوع الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية، ووضع دائرة حول الاختيار الأنسب لك من بين الخيارات الآتية: 1 و 2 و 3 و 4 و 5. كما يرجى أن تتوخى الصدق والأمانة عند الإجابة على الأسئلة ؛ هذا لأن نتائج هذا الاستبيان ستستخدم لأغراض البحث.

1. *I strongly disagree.* لا أوافق بشدة
2. *I disagree* لا أوافق
3. *I have no strong feelings either way* لا انحاز لأي من الطرفين
4. *I agree* أوافق
5. *I strongly agree* أوافق بشدة

1	While writing in English, I am not nervous at all.	لا أشعر بالتوتر على الإطلاق عند الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية	1 2 3 4 5
2	I feel my heart pounding when I write English compositions under time constraint.	أشعر بأن قلبي يخفق بقوة عند كتابة موضوع باللغة الإنجليزية في إطار زمن معين .	1 2 3 4 5
3	While writing English compositions, I feel worried and uneasy if I know they will be evaluated.	تساورني مشاعر القلق وعدم الارتياح من كتابة مواضيع باللغة الإنجليزية، إذا ما علمت أنه سوف يتم تقييمها	1 2 3 4 5
4	I often choose to write down my thoughts in English	غالبا ما أختار تدوين أفكاري باللغة الإنجليزية.	1 2 3 4 5
5	I usually do my best to avoid writing English compositions.	عادة ما أبذل قصارى جهدي لأتجنب كتابة المواضيع باللغة الإنجليزية	1 2 3 4 5
6	My mind often goes blank when I start to work on an English composition	غالبا ما تنتطير الأفكار من ذهني فور كتابتي لموضوع باللغة الإنجليزية.	1 2 3 4 5
7	I don't worry that my English compositions are a lot worse than others.	لا تؤرقني فكرة أن المواضيع التي أكتبها باللغة الإنجليزية هي أسوأ بكثير من مواضيع زملائي .	1 2 3 4 5
8	I tremble or perspire when I write English compositions under time pressure.	أرتعش وأتصبب عرقا عند كتابتي لمواضيع باللغة الإنجليزية تحت ضغط الوقت	1 2 3 4 5
9	If my English composition is to be evaluated, I would worry about getting a very poor grade.	أقلق من فكرة الحصول على درجة سيئة للغاية إذا علمت أن المواضيع التي أكتبها باللغة	1 2 3 4 5

		الإنجليزية سيتم تقييمها.	
10	I do my best to avoid situations in which I have to write in English	أبذل قصارى جهدي لتجنب المواقف التي أضطر فيها إلى الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية.	1 2 3 4 5
11	My thoughts become jumbled when I write English compositions under time constraint	تختلط الأفكار في ذهني نظرا لضيق الوقت المخصص لكتابة المواضيع باللغة الإنجليزية	1 2 3 4 5
12	Unless I have no choice, I would not use English to write compositions.	لن أستخدم اللغة الإنجليزية لكتابة المواضيع والمقالات إلا في الحالات الاضطرارية	1 2 3 4 5
13	I often feel panic when I write English compositions under time constraint.	كثيرا ما أشعر بالذعر عندما أكتب المواضيع باللغة الانجليزية تحت ضيق الوقت	1 2 3 4 5
14	I am afraid that the other students would deride my English composition if they read it.	أخشى أن يسخر الطلاب الآخرين من المواضيع التي أكتبها باللغة الانجليزية إذا قرؤوها	1 2 3 4 5
15	I freeze up when unexpectedly asked to write English compositions.	أتجمد بذهول في مكاني عندما يطلب مني بغير سابق إنذار كتابة مواضيع باللغة الإنجليزية	1 2 3 4 5
16	I would do my best to excuse myself if asked to write English compositions	سوف أبذل قصارى جهدي لأبحث عن مسوغات تبرر عدم قدرتي على كتابة ما يوكل إلي من مواضيع باللغة الإنجليزية .	1 2 3 4 5
17	I don't worry at all about what other people would think of my English compositions	لا أشعر بالقلق على الإطلاق من كيف سيقم الآخريين المواضيع التي أكتبها باللغة الإنجليزية.	1 2 3 4 5
18	I usually seek every possible chance to write English compositions outside of class.	أنتهز أي فرصة سانحة لكتابة المواضيع باللغة الإنجليزية خارج الصف	1 2 3 4 5
19	I usually feel my whole body rigid and tense when I write English compositions.	أتجمد وترتعد فرائصي من الخوف عند كتابة مواضيع باللغة الإنجليزية.	1 2 3 4 5
20	I am afraid of my English composition being chosen as a sample for discussion in class	أخشى أن يتم اختيار أحد المواضيع التي أكتبها باللغة الإنجليزية كعينة للمناقشة في الصف.	1 2 3 4 5
21	I am not afraid at all that my English compositions would be rated as very poor.	لا أخاف على الإطلاق من أن ما أكتبه من مواضيع باللغة الإنجليزية سيحصل على درجة سيئة للغاية.	1 2 3 4 5
22	Whenever possible, I would use English to write compositions.	لن أتردد في استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية لكتابة المواضيع كلما سنحت الفرصة.	1 2 3 4 5

Appendix B. Sources of Writing Anxiety Questionnaire

ثانيا : استبيان يتناول مصادر الخوف والقلق التي ترافق الكتابة باللغة الانجليزية

Please read the below questionnaire statements about writing English compositions and indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by ticking (√) whether you strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree or strongly disagree with the statement.

الرجاء قراءة البيانات أدناه من الاستبيان التي تتمحور حول موضوع الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية والإشارة إلى ما يمتلكك وذلك بوضع علامة (√) أمام الخيارات أوافق بشدة ، أوافق ، لم أتخذ قرارا بعد ، لا أوافق ، لا أوافق بشدة.

Factors العوامل المؤثرة	No. الرقم	Items مادة البحث	Strongly Agree أوافق بشدة	Agree أوافق	Undecided لم أقرر بعد	Disagree لا أوافق	Strongly Disagree لا أوافق بشدة
Affective عوامل نفسية	1-	I have no self-confidence in my writing abilities. لا أثق في قدراتي التعبيرية					
	2-	I feel stressed when I write English compositions. أشعر بالضيق والتوتر عندما أكتب مواضيعا تعبيرية باللغة الإنجليزية.					
	3-	I feel that other students in the class can write better than I can. أشعر بأن بإمكان الطلاب الآخرين في الصف كتابة وصياغة مواضيع أفضل مني.					
	4-	Taking a writing course is a frightening experience. إن التسجيل في مساق للكتابة هي تجربة مخيفة.					
	5-	I have no motivation to write English compositions. ليس لدي رغبة ودافع حقيقي لكتابة مواضيع باللغة الإنجليزية.					
cognitive عوامل فكرية	6-	I lack the ability to generate and organize ideas. أفتقر إلى القدرة والمهارة على توليد وتنظيم الأفكار.					
	7-	I find it hard to write what I mean. تواجهني صعوبة في كتابة ما أعنيه.					
	8-	I find it hard to start writing English composition.					

		تواجهني صعوبة بالغة في البدء في كتابة مواضيع باللغة الإنجليزية.					
	9-	It is difficult for me to write good compositions. إن كتابة مواضيع ومقالات ذات قيمة هو أمر يصعب إدراكه.					
	10-	I know little about the features of good writing. أعرف القليل عن مواصفات الموضوع الجيد.					
	11-	I lack the habit of writing in English. إن الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية هو أمر لم أعتاد عليه بعد.					
	12-	I find it difficult to handle the topic within the required length. إن كتابة الموضوع في إطار زمن معين يبقى أمرا صعبا للغاية.					
Linguistic عوامل لغوية	13-	My constant grammatical mistakes make me upset when writing English compositions. تزعجني اخطائي القواعدية المستمرة عند كتابة مواضيع التعبير بالإنجليزية.					
	14-	My inadequate vocabulary knowledge makes me stressed. المامي غير الكافي بالمفردات والمعاني يجعلني متوترا.					
	15-	I lack the skills of writing coherent essays with complex sentences. لا أمتلك ما يكفي من المهارات اللازمة لكتابة المقالات مترابطة الأفكار باستعمال جمل قواعدية مركبة.					
	16-	I do not know how to use conjunctions properly. لا أعرف كيفية استخدام أدوات الربط بشكل صحيح.					
	17-	My spelling mistakes frustrate me. إن كثرة أخطائي الإملائية تتسبب لي بالإحباط.					
Teaching practices طرق التدريس	18-	I have not got adequate teaching of different writing genres. لم أتلق تعليما كافيا حول أنواع المواضيع المختلفة.					
	19-	Writing teachers focus on theoretical concepts of writing rather than practical aspects. غالبا ما يركز معلمو التعبير على المحاور النظرية للكتابة أكثر عن المحاور العملية.					
	20-	Teachers only concentrate on my writing as a final					

		product. يصب المعلمون اهتمامهم فقط على الشكل النهائي للمواضيع التي أكتبها.					
	21-	I have not been given instructions about writing conventions. لم أتلق أي إرشادات وتعليمات تذكر حول تقاليد وأعراف الكتابة.					
	22-	Writing teachers focus on accuracy more than fluency يركز معلمو التعبير على الدقة أكثر من الطلاقة.					
	23-	Writing teachers keep telling us that writing is an art; writers are born. يردد المعلمون على أذاننا أن الكتابة هي فن وأن الكاتب يولد لا يصنع.					
Feedback تنغذية راجعة	24-	Writing teachers do not give individual feedback. لا يعطي معلمو التعبير تغذية راجعة فردية لكل طالب.					
	25-	The feedback I get on my writings is almost unclear غالبًا ما أحصل على تغذية راجعة غير واضحة .					
	26-	The feedback I get is often negative. أحصل على تغذية راجعة سلبية في كثير من الأحيان.					
	27-	Teacher's red color comments make me anxious. إن استخدام المعلم اللون الأحمر في كتابة تعليقاته يجعلني قلقًا.					
	28-	My colleagues say that my writings are poor. يقول زملائي لي بأن مواضيعي ضعيفة المستوى					
Evaluation تقييم	29-	I get anxious when I know that my writings would be evaluated by teachers. ينتابني القلق الشديد عندما أعرف أن معلمين عدة سيقومون بتقييم مواضيعي.					
	30-	Discussing my writings with my peers makes me anxious. إن مناقشة المواضيع التي أكتبها مع زملائي تجعلني قلقًا.					
	31-	I get anxious if my friends read what I write in English. أشعر بالقلق إذا قرأ زملائي ما أكتبه باللغة الإنجليزية.					
	32-	I fear of losing my face when committing many mistakes in my compositions. أخشى من فقدان ماء وجهي عندما أرتكب الكثير من الأخطاء في مواضيعي .					

الاختبارات Tests	33-	I fear the negative consequences of failing writing tests. أخشى من العواقب الوخيمة المترتبة على فشلي في اجتياز اختبارات الكتابة.					
	34-	I get upset when I do not understand the prompts in the writing tests. أشعر بالانزعاج عندما لا أفهم ما يطلب مني في اختبارات الكتابة.					
	35-	I feel my heart pounding when I sit for writing tests. أشعر بقلبي يخفق في اختبارات الكتابة.					

1- In your opinion, what are the other causes of writing anxiety that apply to you? (You can use Arabic to express your ideas).

1. في رأيك، ما هي الأسباب الأخرى التي تتسبب لك بالقلق من الكتابة الذي ينطبق عليك؟ (يمكنك استخدام اللغة العربية في التعبير عن رأيك)

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.....

.....

2- In your opinion, what should be done to reduce writing anxiety? (You can use Arabic to express your ideas).

2 - في رأيك، ما الذي ينبغي عمله للحد من مشاعر القلق التي تصاحب الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية؟ (يمكنك استخدام اللغة العربية في التعبير عن رأيك).

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Appendix C. Sample of Interview and Focus Group Questions

- What worries you most when writing English compositions?
- How do you usually feel during English writing tests? Why?
- What exactly upsets you in writing tests?
- How do you feel when teachers correct your mistakes?
- Do you mind if your peers review your compositions and correct mistakes? Why?
- You mentioned that some teaching practices upset you in writing classes, would you clarify how this happens?
- How do grammar and spelling mistakes make you more anxious when writing English compositions?
- How do you feel when you encounter unknown words in the writing prompts?
- How do you feel when you are tested under strict timed exams?
- What is the most difficult type of writing for you (reports, letters, essays, etc)?
- What frightens you most when writing English essays (organizing ideas, the topic, word count...)?
- Your responses to the questionnaires show that you are not confident in your vocabulary competence, how does this contribute to your writing anxiety?
- Which is more comfortable for you, taking paper-based tests or computer based ones? Why?
- What else would you like to add before we finish?
- Could you suggest any ideas to make writing classes or tests less stressful? (*in focus group*)
- What strategies do you use to reduce English writing anxiety? (*in focus group*)
- What strategies do you use or suggest to make your students cope with stress resulted from difficult prompts and poor vocabulary knowledge? (*in focus group*)
- How do you perceive the computer use in writing tests and classes? (*in focus group*)

Appendix D. Consent Form

An Investigation into the Factors That Cause Writing Anxiety for EFL Learners in the UAE Universities.

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in an investigative exploratory research project. My name is Sulaiman Hassan Hussein, and I am currently a doctoral student at the British University in Dubai in the faculty of education (English Language Teaching). While a significant body of literature has been created concerning English language writing anxiety, no related studies have been conducted in the UAE universities. The purpose of this research is to investigate and explore the causes of writing anxiety and the strategies for alleviating it among the Emirati university students when writing English compositions. This research will occur in two stages: (1) During the first phase you will complete two questionnaires, which are being used to gather information about your attitudes toward writing in English and about the possible causes of writing anxiety (approximately 30 minutes). In addition, your writing final exam grade will be collected from your instructor at the end of the course. During the first stage of the study you will be asked if you are willing to participate in the second stage. (2) If you are selected to participate in the second stage, you will be involved in a face-to-face audio taped interview (approximately 20 minutes).

The data collected from the questionnaires and the interview will be compiled into a report and your identity will not be revealed in the final report or in any conference presentations and articles. I will replace your name with a pseudonym during coding and in the final report to ensure confidentiality. The transcribed audio files will not be used for any other purpose without your written consent. Your participation in this study will be confidential, and there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts. Your real name will not be linked to any written or verbal responses in the research study.

Your contribution will be of great significance since finding out the roots of writing anxiety is not only beneficial to the learners but also to the higher educational institutions which suffer from the small number of students in English departments as a result of language anxiety. Additionally, your contribution is expected to draw attention towards anxiety as an essential element which should be taken

into consideration when teaching English writing in the UAE universities. If you have any questions about this study you can contact me by e-mail, baqa55@gmail.com or by mobile number 0506495689. This research report will be submitted as a final project for my dissertation study at the British University in Dubai. My director of study for this research project is Dr. Amanda Howard whom can be reached via her email *Amanda.howard@buid.ac.ae*.

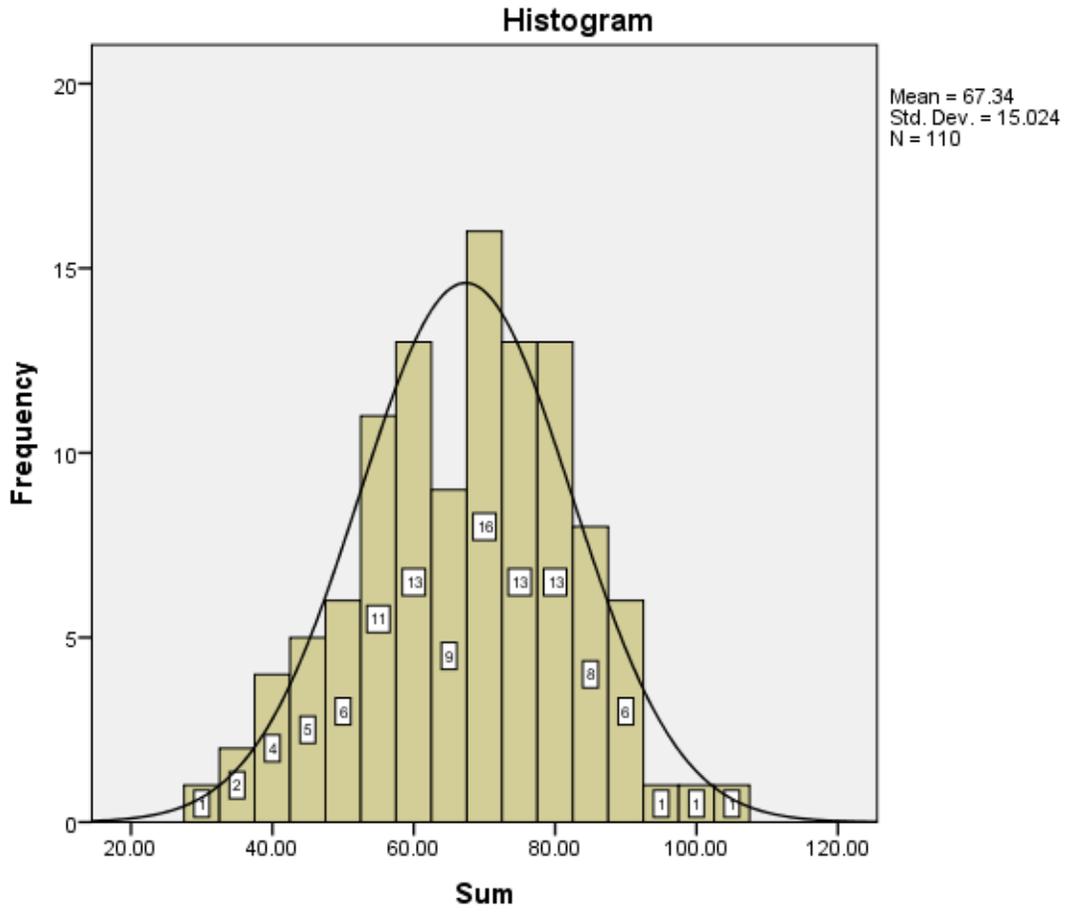
Your signature indicates that you have read the information in this letter and have decided to participate in this study. You may withdraw from this study at any time. Please notify me verbally or in writing if you decide to withdraw from this study. Please contact me via my email or mobile number in case of any inquiry or a wish read your interview summaries or a copy of the report. If you are willing to participate please write your name and date in the space provided.

Name of Participant:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix E. A histogram of SLWAI scores



Appendix F. Descriptive statistics of SWAQ seven categories

Statistics							
	Affective	cognitive	linguistic	teaching practices	feedback	evaluation	tests
N Valid	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	2.8545	3.2013	3.1309	3.0227	2.6964	2.9545	3.4970
Median	2.8000	3.3571	3.2000	3.0000	2.8000	3.0000	3.6667
Std. Deviation	.86816	.85261	.97546	.69821	.63865	1.10107	.97966
Range	3.80	3.43	4.00	3.50	3.00	4.00	4.00
Minimum	1.00	1.43	1.00	1.33	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	4.80	4.86	5.00	4.83	4.00	5.00	5.00

Appendix G. Percentages and mean scores of affective, teaching practices, feedback and evaluation factors of SWAQ.

Factors	No.	Items	Percentages					M
			SD	D	U	A	SA	
Affective	1-	I have no self-confidence in my writing abilities.	21.8	39.1	14.5	17.3	7.3	2.49
	2-	I feel stressed when I write English compositions.	11.8	33.6	10.0	34.5	10.0	2.97
	3-	I feel that other students in the class can write better than I can.	7.3	20.0	10.0	36.4	26.4	3.55
	4-	Taking a writing course is a frightening experience.	20.9	30.0	16.4	22.7	10.0	2.71
	5-	I have no motivation to write English compositions.	20.9	38.2	11.8	22.7	6.4	2.55
Teaching practices	18-	I have not got adequate teaching of different writing genres.	10.0	30.0	12.7	26.4	20.9	3.18
	19-	Writing teachers focus on theoretical concepts of writing rather than practical aspects.	6.4	19.1	33.6	23.6	17.3	3.26
	20-	Teachers only concentrate on my writing as a final product.	8.2	29.1	21.8	30.0	10.9	3.06
	21-	I have not been given instructions about writing conventions.	11.8	50.0	14.5	16.4	7.3	2.57
	22-	Writing teachers focus on accuracy more than fluency .	2.7	29.1	29.1	26.4	12.7	3.17
	23-	Writing teachers keep telling us that writing is an art; writers are born.	17.3	25.5	20.0	26.4	10.9	2.88
ed ba ck	24-	Writing teachers do not give individual feedback.	17.3	37.3	23.6	18.2	3.6	2.54

	25-	The feedback I get on my writings is almost unclear.	10.0	31.8	15.5	33.6	9.1	3.00
	26-	The feedback I get is often negative.	8.2	40.0	21.8	25.5	4.5	2.78
	27-	Teacher's red color comments make me anxious.	23.6	31.8	11.8	21.8	10.9	2.65
	28-	My colleagues say that my writings are poor.	26.4	27.3	22.7	15.5	8.2	2.52
Evaluation	29-	I get anxious when I know that my writings would be evaluated by teachers.	10.9	28.2	4.5	30.9	25.5	3.32
	30-	Discussing my writings with my peers makes me anxious.	16.4	37.3	4.5	29.1	12.7	2.85
	31-	I get anxious if my friends read what I write in English.	16.4	37.3	9.1	23.6	13.6	2.81
	32-	I fear of losing my face when committing many mistakes in my compositions.	17.3	33.6	10.9	23.6	14.5	2.85

Appendix H: A sample of the quoted extracts (Arabic version).

- 4.1** أول شيء عادة يلعوزني ويفلقني في امتحانات الكتابة هو نص السؤال أكون قلق جداً اذا لم أفهم معنى بعض الكلمات في السؤال... في امتحان الايلتس الأخير لم أنجح لأنني لم أفهم معنى كلمة الأماكن الأثرية بالمقارنة أكون مرتاحة جداً عندما يطلب مني أن أكتب عن مواضيع مفهومة مثل الرياضة.
- 4.2** أكثر لحظات الخوف في امتحانات الكتابة تكون بسبب الفلق من عدم فهم نص السؤال الذي يمكن أن يقطع أفكاري تخيل كم أكن متوتر عندما أضيع وقت طويل في التفكير في معاني الكلمات الصعبة في نص السؤال ... لكن أنا عادة أبدأ الكتابة بسرعة إذا كانت كلمات السؤال مفهومة
- 4.3** لا أحب اختبارات الكتابة لأنها تجعلني متوتراً للغاية! لأن دراستي في الجامعة مرتبطة بها... في محاضرات مساقات الكتابة أكون قادر على كتابة مواضيع جيدة ولكن في الامتحانات تكون أفكاري مشتتة، هذا ما جعل أساتذتي أن يلفت نظري إلى أنني عادة أكتب مواضيع جيدة خلال التدريبات الصفية بينما تكون مختلفة تماماً في الامتحان.
- 4.4** ... كتابة مواضيع في امتحانات رسمية مثل الايلتس تخليني افقد تركيزي وأغيب افكاري كذا مرة، خوفي من نتيجة الامتحان على مستقبلي في الجامعة بوترني. مرة ما قدرت اكتب زين في امتحان الايلتس .. ما عرف ليش لكن بس رديت البيت كتبت عن نفس الموضوع واساتذتي امتدح كتابتي... أتمنى لو يريحونا من رعب هالامتحان ويبدلونه بتقييمات اخرى
- 4.5** بالرغم من استعدادي لامتحانات الكتابة إلا إنني أكون وايد متوترة بسبب الوقت القصير المحدد حقنا لكتابة موضوعين في ساعة... أنا مب عارفة كيف الواحد يقدر يكتب ويراجع أربعية كلمة في الموضوعين في امتحان الايلتس.
- 4.6** دايماً أحس بخوف وقلق لما اكتب المواضيع في وقت محدد أحس اني في سباق جري. أكيد انو معظم الطلاب بيون علامات أحسن ويكون توترتهم أقل إذا عطوهم وقت زيادة عن المحدد.
- 4.7** أكثر لحظة مزعجه في الامتحان لما المراقب يقطع أفكارنا وينبهنا للوقت المتبقي أكثر من ثلاث مرات في الامتحان... لما الاستاذ يقول متبقي 10 دقائق أو... أشعر بالتوتر لدرجة اني ما اقدر أركز أو أكتب عدل... كل طالب يعرف الوقت المحدد للتوفل والايلتس لذلك ما يحتاج نخوف الطلاب ونخليهم يحسون كنهم في مسابقة.
- 4.8** أي وقت أكتب مقالات أو مواضيع بدون تحديد وقت معين في الصف أحصل على علامات زين وبدون توتر بالمقابل الكتابة تحت ضغط وقت محدد يخلي قلبي يدق ويطيّر الأفكار.
- 4.9** ... دايماً أفكر في الوقت أشعر اني بحاجة لوقت زيادة لتنظيم أفكاري وأقدر أكتب عدد الكلمات المطلوبة في الموضوع اللي يعقد الأمور الطلاب بزيادة هو تذكيرهم بالوقت المتبقي كل فترة. أنا متأكد ان علامتي في الكتابة تكون أحسن لو عطوني وقت زيادة.
- 4.10** الجزء الأكبر من توترتي يعود لعدم قدرتي على عمل أفكار وهذا ما يعيقني عن اني اعبر عن افكاري بوضوح. أشعر بقلق كبير عند كتابة المقالات النقاشية لأنو كتابة المواضيع بالانجليزي تختلف عن بالعربي.
- 4.11** كتابة مواضيع جيدة بالانجليزي صعبة بالنسبة لي لأن دايماً الاستاذ يقول لي طريقة كتابة المقالي تختلف عن طريقة كتابة الرسالة أو وصف الرسومات البيانية... مو سهل معرفة مواصفات الموضوع الجيد لأن كل نوع من المواضيع يحتاج ترتيب وسياق معين.
- 4.12** بالنسبة لي سهل اني أجيب أفكار وأكتب عن المواضيع اللي عندي عنها خلفية لكن أشعر بالتوتر اذا طلبو مني أكتب عن مواضيع ما عندي خلفية.

- 4.13** أحس بالقلق عندما يطلبون مني أن أكتب عن مواضيع أسمع فيها لأول مرة، المواضيع الصعبة تمنعني من استحضار الأفكار وإيجاد الكلمات المناسبة للموضوع.
- 4.14** صدق أنا أكتب مواضيع بالانجليزي خارج الجامعة أقول انو الكتابة خارج الصف عادة ما موجودة عندي. أعتقد انو كل ما اتدرب الواحد أكثر في وقت فراغه يكون توتره أقل.
- 4.15** الكلمات اللي أعرفها محدودة وما تكفي للتعبير عن أفكاري وأرائي في الكتابة خاصة في الامتحانات الرسمية لأن الانجليزي بالنسبة لي لغة أجنبية، الصعوبة اللي تواجهني في إيجاد الكلمات المناسبة للتعبير عن أفكاري تخليني أكره كتابة المقالات الكتابية.
- 4.16** أكثر شي يخليني محبط في امتحانات وحصص الكتابة العدد الكبير من الأخطاء الاملائية، أفكر وايد في الأخطاء الاملائية وهذا يقطع أفكاري ويخليني ما اكتب العدد الكامل للكلمات المطلوبة في المواضيع.
- 4.17** أحياناً أقضي وقت طويل وأنا أحاول أفهم وأخمن بعض معاني الكلمات في سؤال الكتابة في الامتحانات الرسمية... والسبب الممكن للفشل في احتمالية عدم القدرة على كتابة المواضيع في الامتحانات ممكن تكون بسبب عدم فهم بعض العبارات في النص نفسه.
- 4.18** صعوبة فهم بعض قواعد اللغة الانجليزية تخليني محبطة، أشعر انو مستحيل بالنسبة الي أفهم استعمال بعض كلمات الربط وحروف الجر واللي يسمونه "بريزنت بيرفيكت" و "المستمر" ... عادةً علاماتي القليلة في امتحانات الكتابة تكون بسبب أخطائي القواعدية.
- 4.19** شدة وصرامة المدرسين تربكني خاصة عند تصحيح مواضيع الرايتمنج ووضع خطوط باللون الأحمر تحت الأخطاء الكثيرة بدون مناقشتها... العدد الكبير من الرموز والملاحظات السلبية من قبل مدرسي الكتابة يخليني ما أحب كتابة المواضيع الانجليزية.
- 4.20** يرحمني ويفلقتي وايد عندما يقيم الأستاذ كتاباتي أو يعلن نتيجة الامتحان أمام الكل، أنا أعرف انا نتعلم من الأخطاء لكن ما احب الانتقاد أمام الآخرين.
- 4.21** أتوتر جداً لما أعرف اني أكتب مواضيع عايزين يصححوها ويعملوها تقييم، أي وقت أكتب مقالة أو موضوع في البيت يكون سهل علي تنظيم واستحضار الأفكار. أجد فرق كبير بين كتاباتي في الامتحان وبين كتاباتي التي لا يتم تقييمها.
- 4.22** أحس بالقهر لما أشوف زملائي يكتبو وأنا أطالع الورقة فارغة ومش عارف كيف أبدأ أو ماذا أكتب.
- 4.23** أحس اني مختلف عن الآخرين ومتوتر عندما أرى الآخرين يسلمو مواضيعهم وواجباتهم بوقت قصير.
- 4.24** دايماً أحاول أثق بقدراتي لأنني أعرف أثر الخوف والتوتر على كتاباتي، قراءة بعض الأدعية قبل أن ابدأ في الكتابة في الامتحانات تساعدني أن أكون هادي وواثق من نفسي ... دائماً أقول لعمري إذا رسبت في الامتحان ما هيحصل شي. الفشل مش نهاية العالم.
- 4.25** أعتبر الكتابة بالانجليزية شي سهل أستمتع بالكتابة سواء بالانجليزي أو بلغتي لأن الكتابة وسيلة للتعبير عن الأفكار والآراء.
- 4.26** ... أقتنع نفسي بعدم الخوف من ملاحظات وتصحيح المدرسين لأنو أتعلم من ملاحظاتهم وتصحيحهم ... أستاذي قال لنا مرة انو الناس يتعلمو من خلال المعاناة أنا ما يهمني اذا زملائي عرفو عن أخطائي لأنو أكيد بنتعلم من بعض.

- 4.27** لا أخاف من الأخطاء أحياناً أناقش أخطائي مع أساتذتي أمام الجميع لهذا أحد مدرسي علّق على شجاعتني وقال لازم تكوني صحفية.
- 4.28** قبل ما أدخل الامتحان وأبدأ أفكر وأكتب أخذ نفس عميق واغلق عني لثواني بسيطة. التعود على تمارين الاسترخاء في هاي الأحوال تجعلني أركّز على أسئلة الامتحان.
- 4.29** ... أعمل حسب نصيحة الاستاذ بعمل بعض تمارين الاسترخاء قبل الامتحان مثل اغلاق عيوني وتخيل مكان هادئ أحبه هذا يخفف من دقات قلبي والتوتر.
- 4.30** في وقت الفراغ أخصّص وقت للتدريب على أنواع مختلفة من المواضيع الكتابية مثل المقالات والرسائل. كل ما الواحد اتدرب أكثر خارج الصف كل ما خف التوتر اللي يشعر فيه الناس في الامتحانات وحصص الكتابة.
- 4.31** أستعمل بعض المواقع التعليمية المعينة علشان أعرف مواصفات المواضيع الجيدة، قبل ما اتقدم لامتحان الايلتس تدربت وايد على كتابة المقالات النقاشية ووصف الرسوم البيانية على اساس كآني في امتحان رسمي.
- 4.32** عادةً أقرأ قصص ومقالات ليس فقط من أجل القراءة ولكن لأتعلّم طريقة تنظيم الكتابة والفقرات أفقد بعض النماذج للمقالات والرسائل الموجودة على بعض المواقع لأتعلّم كيف تنظّم وتكتب الأفكار.
- 4.33** منذ أن كنت طالب مدرسة حتى اليوم وأنا استعمل مفكرة أو دفتر ملاحظات أدون فيهن أي كلمة جديدة تمر علي... في وقت فراغي صار عندي عادة استخدم بعض الكلمات في جمل صحيحة لذلك أحس انو عندي كلمات كافية للتعبير عن ما اريد من خلال الكتابة.
- 4.34** علشان أريح عمري من بعض أخطاء القواعد اللي بتحبطننا عند تعلّم اللغة الانجليزية اتفقت مع أستاذ الكتابة انو يفهمني بعض الأخطاء خاصة المتعلقة بالأفعال واستعمال "a" و "The".
- 4.35** عمل قائمة بالأخطاء الإملائية الشائعة باللغة الانجليزية خفّف من الأخطاء اللي تعودت أعملها في مواضيع اللغة الانجليزية.
- 4.36** من أجل اني اتخلص من التوتر في امتحانات الكتابة وبعد فهم نموذج الامتحان ابدأ التدريب على كتابة الفقرات والرسائل والمقالات عدة أيام قبل الامتحان الرسمي، أستعمل أحياناً بعض القوائم لمراجعة كتاباتي. أعتقد كل ما اتدرب الطالب أكثر كل ما أصبح مرتاح وقليل التوتر.
- 4.37** قبل ما أدخل الامتحانات مثل الأيلتس اتعودت أجاب امتحانين أو ثلاثة تجريبيات بوقت محدد وكآني في قاعات الامتحان.
- 4.38** أسهل طريقة لبدأ امتحان الرايتمنج وتوفير الوقت اني اعمل "ملخص" على خلف الورقة. عمل ملخص أو نموذج معين يوفر وقتي ويخليني مركز أكثر.
- 4.39** ... أقرأ نص السؤال وأقسمه إلى ثلاثة أجزاء. عندما أواجه كلمات صعبة ما أعرف معانيها أحاول أتوقع المعنى من خلال معاني الكلمات الأخرى في بعض نصوص الاسئلة في امتحانات الكتابة بفهم النص من خلال الأفكار المساعدة اللي عادة تأتي مع السؤال.
- 4.40** أنا لا أجعل الخوف من أخطاء الاملاء والقواعد يمنعني من الكتابة. أستاذي دائماً يقول انو التركيز على الأفكار وطلاقة الكتابة أهم من تضييع الوقت وأنا أفكر فقط في كيفية كتابة جمل بدون أخطاء قواعد.

Appendix I: A sample of teachers' responses during the focus group discussion.

Researcher: *Most of the interviewees expressed their fear of numerous spelling and grammatical mistakes they commit when writing in English. As teachers, what are you doing to minimize anxiety emerging from this?*

Teacher A: *I think that many students fear making mistakes, especially grammatical mistakes. I often tell them even if you make whatever spelling or grammatical mistakes you will get scores on the other parts of your composition. I let them know that they are only penalized for language part but not the whole writing. I sometimes ask students in pairs to pick out some spelling or grammatical mistakes and discuss them in public to make them believe that making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process.*

Teacher B: *In addition to what has been mentioned, I always secure students that slight spelling mistakes are tolerated unless they change the meaning or make the word unrecognizable. For grammar, if a sentence is written without a subject or verb, I do not tolerate that and I deduct marks for this...but if the adverb is misplaced, I let them learn the correct use without penalizing them for this.*

Teacher C: *personally, I suggest teachers to create the so called mistake happy zone which enables students to write non judgmental compositions at least once a week. This lets ideas flow without being hindered by the fear of spelling or grammatical mistakes. In this way, students get used to paying more attention to the content.*

Researcher: *Would you like to add something more in respect of students' mistakes?*

Teacher E: *Yes. I think thattension develops from the concern about numerous numbers of spelling and grammatical mistakes could be decreased by making students celebrate their mistakes. To activate this suggestion, once I asked my students to record the spelling and grammatical mistakes they committed during the writing course. Eventually, students were asked voluntarily to display the common*

mistakes in the class and present how they benefitted from them. By doing so, I am trying to make learning from errors a sign of pride instead of a source of embarrassment.