How Second Language Writing Anxiety Influences Postgraduate Dissertation Writing

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ABSTRACT

Writing anxiety has been a topic in the SLA field for several decades; since the connection between writing anxiety and writing performance appear to be stronger in an ESL context. In this view, the purpose of the research is to explore how second language writing anxiety could influence postgraduate dissertation writing. In this qualitative case study, three Malaysian postgraduate students were interviewed and were asked to complete Cheng's (2004) Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory. Applying the thematic analysis method, the findings were generated based on the participants' responses to 91 in-depth interview questions and 22 statements in the inventory that supplies information regarding their cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and behavioural avoidance tendencies. The findings revealed that second language writing anxiety could disrupt overall writing progress and influence writing approach, writing process and written output. In addition, the findings also showed that the results of the participants' trait second language writing anxiety may not necessarily predict their state writing anxiety experience, which could include a form of social anxiety, and time anxiety experience. Therefore, the significance of the study lies in its attempt to promote greater understanding of the affective phenomenon and to inform efforts to improve postgraduate student-writer's motivation and dissertation writing performance. The study highlights theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical implications by offering insights on the complexity of second language writing anxiety in postgraduate dissertation writing.

Keywords: Second language writing anxiety; dissertation writing; ESL context; postgraduate students; and trait second language writing anxiety.

1. INTRODUCTION

Dissertation writing is a common problem among postgraduate student-writers with non-native English-speaking background (Li & Vandermensbrugghe, 2011; Jeyaraj, 2018); they struggle to produce a good quality text (Hinkel, 2011). They have been observed to have difficulties in constructing grammatically correct sentences, maintaining coherency, developing own writing voice, identifying relevant topics and sources, referencing (Al-Badi, 2015), developing ideas (Akhtar, Hassan, Saidalvi, & Hussain, 2019), reading academic text critically, and synthesizing information (Phakiti & Li, 2011). Although these student-writers should have met the university requirements and were assessed as qualified to enroll into the postgraduate programmes, it seems that they may not yet acquire the necessary textual, genre, and social knowledge (Paltridge, 2002) to thrive in the academic settings.

In efforts to assist the student-writers to improve their dissertation writing skills, most higher education institutions require their candidates to attend compulsory academic writing and research methodology courses and also offer dissertation-writing workshops, supplementary language classes, and 'how to' seminars (Badenhorst, Moloney & Rosales, 2015) throughout the semester. However, these interventions do not seem to reflect quite positively on the statistics on intake graduation on time (henceforth, as iGOT) because based on the 2013 and 2014 statistics released by the Ministry of Higher Education (2016), the average of the postgraduate's iGoT did not reach 50%. If the nation wishes to accomplish its goal of increasing the number of advanced degree holder in the country, to 60, 000 by 2023 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2015), it is urgent to empirically re-address the issues in dissertation writing by exploring other possible contributing factors such as second language writing anxiety.

In an existing study on second language writing anxiety involving Malaysian postgraduate students, the participants attributed their high levels of writing anxiety to dissertation writing (Huwari & Noor Hashima Abd Aziz, 2011). In this view, apart from being linguistically and academically demanding (Phakiti, Hirsh, & Woodrow, 2013), writing a dissertation in English can also be anxiety-provoking, particularly for student-writers who are not native English speakers (e.g., in Johanson, 2001; Hui & Ming, 2009). Therefore, with the weight of their academic success placed on their dissertation writing skills and English language proficiency, Malaysian postgraduate student-writers could be more disposed to second language writing anxiety experiences than readily realized by the academic community.

2. SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING ANXIETY

Writing anxiety could be a contributing factor affecting the student-writer's overall writing performance (e,g., in Smith, 2005; Woodrow, 2011; Limpo, 2018). Choi (2013) describes the phenomenon as affective, with physiological (e.g., headaches, sweating, and stomachaches) and psychological effects (e.g., anxiety and fear). Other researchers such as Martinez (2011) and Rankin-Brown (2006), specifically view writing anxiety as a negative affect that may disrupt the writing process. But Woodrow (2011) on the other hand, believes that writing anxiety is an inherent disposition that may recur upon encountering writing situations. Thus, based on these definitions, writing anxiety appears to have a relatively stable quality that could influence the student-writer's cognition, emotion, somatic, behaviours, and writing performance.

In the specific context of second language setting, Cheng (2004) links writing anxiety to specific sets of behaviours, physiological symptoms and disruptive thoughts. Her self-report instrument, the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (henceforth, as SLWAI), which describes student-writer's trait writing anxiety, identifies three dimensions; the cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance behaviours. Generally, these dimensions are reflected in existing empirical findings. In terms of cognition and behaviours, student-writers with writing anxiety have been reported to have negative perceptions towards writing (e.g., in

Noriah Ismail et al., 2010; Al-Sawalha & Chow, 2012; Abdel Latif, 2015; Badrasawi, Ainol Zubairi, & Faizah Idrus, 2016), low self-efficacy (e.g., in Sanders-Reio et al., 2014; Ho, 2016; Zabihi, 2018), low self-confidence in writing (e.g., in Choi, 2013; Tsao, Tseng & Wang, 2017), and exhibit decreased motivation (e.g., in Al-Khasawneh, 2010; Abdel Latif, 2015) and frequent procrastination (e.g., in Noriah Ismail et al., 2010; Hanna, 2010), as well as avoiding writing classes (e.g., in Huwari & Noor Hashima Abd. Aziz, 2011; Al-Sawalha & Chow, 2012; Jebreil, Azizifar, Gowhary & Jamalinesari, 2015) and writing activities (e.g., in Hanna, 2010; Huwari & Noor Hashima Abd. Aziz, 2011; Abdel Latif, 2015; Zabihi, 2018). Physiologically, apprehensive student-writers tend to experience distress associated with writing anxiety and it often manifests in the form of upset stomach, pounding heart, excessive sweating, numbness (Madigan, Linton & Johnson, 1996), blushing and perspiring (Worde, 2003, as cited in Hui & Ming, 2009).

However, in Rungruangthum's (2011) study involving postgraduate student-writers in writing research papers in English, a discrepancy between the results of the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (henceforth, as SLWAI) and the semi-structured interview data was reported. It appears that trait writing anxiety levels may not necessarily predict student-writer's state experience of writing anxiety during the process of writing. According to Spielberger's (1966) Model of State and Trait Anxiety, anxiety could be viewed as having both relatively stable trait (tendency to become anxious) and state quality (experience of anxiety), that may vary in intensity and also fluctuates over time. Moreover, the state anxiety also appears to exhibit distinct cognitive and somatic dimensions from trait anxiety (Ree, French, MacLeod, & Locke, 2008). This may explain the discrepancy in Rungruangthum's (2011) research findings. The semi-structured interview might have captured their state experience of writing anxiety which was contextually specific to the context of writing research papers in English, whereas the SLWAI results could represent their accumulated writing anxiety experience. Hence, this suggests a possible theoretical and methodological implication, which the present study has taken into consideration when designing the optimal data collection methods to explain how second language writing anxiety could influence dissertation writing.

As aforementioned, their lack of commitment and motivation in writing and their tendency to stay away from the very activity they need to do to improve their writing skills, it is explainable why apprehensive student-writers tend to be weaker writers with poor records of writing performance (e.g., in Mascle, 2013; Choi, 2013). In general, the existing literature often describes high apprehensive student-writer's written output as having lower quality (e.g., in Hanna, 2010; Huwari & Noor Hashima Abd. Aziz, 2011; Abdel Latif, 2015; Tsao, Tseng & Wang, 2017), lesser content, less structure (Noriah Ismail et al., 2010) and contains more grammatical and typographical mistakes (Abu Shawish & Atea, 2010; Noriah Ismail et al., 2010; Sabariah Abd Rahim et al., 2016). In terms of dissertation writing, their proposals tend to be underdeveloped, shorter, and less clearly written, (e.g., in Rungruangthum, 2011; Badrasawi, Ainol Zubairi, & Faizah Idrus, 2016). However, very little information is available regarding the underlying process that links second language writing anxiety to writing performance (Limpo, 2018). Therefore, based on qualitative research data from in-depth

interview and SLWAI as the supporting instrument, this paper discusses how writing anxiety could influence dissertation writing process.

3. METHOD

Using purposeful sampling method, three doctoral candidates from two local universities were selected as participants. As part of ethical considerations, they have been given pseudonyms and are addressed as Farra, Raisha, and Anna in this paper, to protect their identities. Before they were interviewed, they were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire and Cheng's (2004) Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory, as has been used in Rungruangthum's (2011) study.

3. 1 DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

The demographic questionnaire also collects information regarding the participants' dissertation writing progress, academic writing experience, and writer's block experience. Combining the data from the questionnaire and the inventory, the details of the participants' profiles are discussed in the findings and discussion section.

The SLWAI provides information on the dimensions of writing anxiety based on three different subscales: Cognitive Anxiety; Somatic Anxiety; and Avoidance Behaviours. The Cronbach's coefficient for SLWAI has reached a reliability estimate of .91 and for each of the subscales with .82 and .83 for Cognitive Anxiety, .85 and .88 for Avoidance Behaviours, and .87 and .88 for Somatic Anxiety (Cheng, 2004), respectively. Moreover, several studies have benefited from using SLWAI's results to describe the student-writers' writing anxiety experiences (e.g., in Rungruangthum, 2011; Lau & Nurhazlini Rahmat, 2014; Dar & Khan, 2015; Wahyuni & Umam, 2017; Jalil & Shahrokhi, 2017; David, Hazita Azman, & Thang, 2018; Zabihi, 2018; Nazari, Farnia, Ghonsooly, & Jafarigohar, 2019). Thus, as shown in Table 1, the SLWAI is used in the study to gather information regarding the participants' cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and behavioral avoidance tendencies.

TABLE 1: SLWAI Dimensions and Classifications

Dimensions:	Items:	Descriptions:
Cognitive Anxiety	1, 3, 7, 9, 14, 17, 20, and 21	Cognitive dimension of writing anxiety including fear of negative evaluation, negative perception and expectation
Somatic Anxiety	2, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, and 19	Physiological reactions including increased heart-rate and breathing, stomach discomfort, sweaty and shaky hands
Avoidance Behaviours	4, 5, 10, 12, 16, 18, and 22	Observable behaviours such as procrastinating, not acting on feedback, and avoiding writing situations

Overall, the data collection and the data analysis process expanded across 7 weeks. For the in-depth interview, two separate sessions were arranged with each participant in the first and the second week; considering the extensive number of questions and the mental stamina needed to

get through all of the questions. On record, all sessions did not exceed 90 minutes period and upon request, participants were allowed to take breaks in between. In situations where new topics had emerged during interviews, follow-up interview sessions were conducted in the third week to ensure that all participants had been given the same set of questions. The main questions focus on four main themes; (1) the participants' second language writing anxiety experience, (2) the effects of writing anxiety on dissertation writing, (3) the contextual factors influencing their writing anxiety, and (4) their perceived sources of writing anxiety in dissertation writing. The interview questions were constructed based on the findings of relevant literature and the internal and the external writing components, as proposed by Hayes (1996) in his Social-Cognitive Model of Writing. Since the effects of writing anxiety appears to be extensive but individually- and contextually-specific, it becomes necessary to explore an expansive research parameter.

Furthermore, since the data collection and the data analysis processes were conducted concurrently, each interview session was transcribed and initially analyzed immediately after recording within the first 3 weeks. Then, the second analysis stage took place 4 weeks later, where the researcher recoded more than 15% of the overall data again, to check for intra-rater reliability (Mackey & Gass, 2016). All data sources were deconstructed and scrutinized to identify comparable and different patterns before they were reassembled to form categories of relevant content (Mackey & Gass, 2016). Then, logical connections were formed between core categories in order to distinguish emerging relevant themes, within and across the constructed experience of the three research participants. Based on the themes, a general but representative explanation was later formed (Merriam, 2009) to describe and explain how second language writing anxiety could influence postgraduate dissertation writing. The findings are discussed in length in the following section.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The participants had considerably different demographic backgrounds, academic writing experiences, dissertation writing progress, and writer's block experiences, as shown in Table 2 (in the following page). Although all three participants are proficient users of English, yet they still experienced writer's block when working on their dissertations. Anna, who had considerable experience in academic writing compared to other two, seems to experience the most frequent writer's block. Based on existing literature, writer's block has been reported as reciprocally related to writing anxiety (e.g., in Lee, 2005; Landman, 2016).

Surprisingly, it was Farra who made the most progress in her dissertation writing, compared to the other two participants who were in the same cohort as her. Despite not having any experience in academic writing, as she had completed her master's degree through coursework and had not involved herself in research and publication since graduating, she seems to experience the least writer's block. Therefore, it appears that the participants' profiles do not fit the more common characteristics of apprehensive student-writers, as they are more often observed lacking the language proficiency (e.g., in Qashao, 2014; Al-Shboul & Huwari, 2015;

Tsao, Tseng, & Wang, 2017) and the necessary writing experience (e.g., in Kara, 2013; Ho, 2016).

TABLE 2: Participants' Demographic Profiles

	Participants	Farra	Raisha	Anna
1	Age	44	40	35
2	Gender	Female	Female	Female
3	Marital Status	Married	Single	Single
4	Programme Mode	Research	Research	Research
5	Scholarship	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	English Proficiency (CEFR)	C1	C1	C1
7	Publication	No experience	No experience	3 books, 1 book chapter, 2 journals, and 10 proceedings
8	Dissertation Writing Progress	Completed 3 chapters (was revising chapter 1-3)	Did not complete any chapter (was working on chapter 1)	Did not complete any chapter (was working on chapter 1-2)
9	Writer's Block Experience	At least once a week	At least 5 times a week	At least a few times in a day
10	Trait Writing Anxiety (SLWAI Scores)	67 (High) CA: 29 (High) SA: 20 (Low) AB: 18 (Low)	72 (High) CA: 30 (High) SA: 22 (High) AB: 20 (Low)	64 (Moderate) CA: 28 (High) SA: 23 (Low) AB: 13 (Low)

In addition, since Anna had the most frequent writer's block and was not making progress in her dissertation writing, it is only logical to assume that Anna would have high trait writing anxiety level. However, as highlighted in Table 2, Anna's trait level turned out to be moderate, whereas both Farra's and Raisha's SLWAI results showed high levels of trait writing anxiety. Similar to Anna, Raisha had made very little progress in her dissertation writing, but Farah on the other hand, had managed to complete three chapters of her dissertation at the time she was interviewed. Hence, it can be concluded that: (1) their trait writing anxiety levels may not necessarily predict their state writing anxiety experience; (2) the participants' state writing anxiety experience are individually-specific; and (3) factors such as language proficiency and academic writing experience may not be reliable predictors for both writing anxiety and writing performance. In this view, it is possible that state writing anxiety experience could fluctuate due to individual or contextual factors present in the immediate writing environment, influencing their writing performance.

4.1 How State Experience of Second Language Writing Anxiety Influences Dissertation Writing

Since writing anxiety seems to possess both trait- and state-like qualities, the possibility exists that it could fluctuate in the presence of individual and contextual factors and thus, influence

the student-writers' dissertation writing by disrupting the writing progress, and influencing the writing approach, the writing process, and ultimately, the written output.

4.2.1 Disrupting Writing Progress

As shown in Table 3, state writing anxiety experience could disrupt the apprehensive student-writer's writing progress because it triggers writer's block and influences emotional state, which causes avoidance behaviours and oftentimes, sleep deprivation and other health-related issues. Although avoidance behaviours such as procrastination, are commonly associated with writing anxiety (e.g., in Cheng, 2004; Abu Shawish & Atea, 2010), the findings suggest that the behaviours stem from recurring writer's block and unstable emotional states, which often rendered them unable to write and struggle to maintain focus while writing. These episodes could last for as long as two weeks or a few hours at a time, and as frequent as a few times a day. In this perspective, the emergence of writing anxiety interferes with the participants' efforts to maintain consistent progress in dissertation writing.

TABLE 3: Factors Disrupting Writing Progress

Aspects	Participants	Excerpts
Avoidance behaviours	Anna	*I tend to avoid a lot without realizing that I would just watch videos to avoid what I am supposed to do, without realizing that time just flies so quickly.*
i. Writer's block	Farra	*I think the most terrible block I've had was 2 months back, where for 2 weeks I couldn't write a single sentence. I even asked myself, hey what is so difficult about writing a sentence? I just couldn't bring myself to take my pen and write a sentence because it didn't make sense.*
ii. Unstable emotional state	Raisha	*Very low. I feel stupid. Why did I apply for this? The why, why, why will start to come up.*
	Farra	*My emotional state? Very unstable to the extent that sometimes I don't get good, sound sleep.*
Sleep deprivation & health issues	Farra	*My brain just doesn't want to process because I worry so much, something is at the back of my mind, I cannot get a sound sleep, that makes me more tired the following days.*
		I experienced this acute feeling of vomiting; gastritis and I feel like my world is spinning around me. I cannot open my eyes. I needed to lie down and I had to be like that for one day.
	Raisha	*When I can't sleep, normally I wouldn't be able to write, so I will write the next day. Because I'm anticipating what's going to happen. Because I don't want to upset my supervisor? So, I worry about them.*
	Anna	*...I had a very bad headache on and off. Probably, stomach ache and all.*

Additionally, since all three participants had high tendency for cognitive anxiety, they may have experienced intense state cognitive anxiety to an extent that it caused them to suffer from sleep deprivation and health-related issues. As reported in Table 3, all participants expressed difficulty to fall asleep at night. Constant worrying, anxiety about imagined consequences, and excessive stress could cause detrimental effects over time (Amirkhan, 2012); it decreases productivity and may lead to attrition among postgraduate students (Jairam & Kahl, 2012; Sosin & Thomas, 2014; Levecque, Anseel, De Beuckelaer, Van der Heyden, & Gisle, 2017).

Due to their writing anxiety, they seem to be stuck in a negative psychological loop where it causes them to avoid the very activity, they need to do to improve performance and by avoiding, it causes negative effects that continue to feed their writing anxiety. If the research findings were solely based on the results of SLWAI, we would not have been able to bridge the connection between student-writers' writing anxiety experience and wellbeing or health to their dissertation writing progress, nor would we be able to explore the intensity and the frequency of their avoidance behaviours, since such findings would not be reflected in the SLWAI results. Thus, it appears that student-writers' state experience of writing anxiety during the writing process may have higher arousal or intensity levels than represented by their trait writing anxiety levels, which could disrupt the student-writer's dissertation writing progress.

4.2.2 Influencing Writing Process

The state experience of second language could also influence the student-writer's writing process by causing cognitive interference involving different forms of negative or debilitating self-related thoughts. As presented in Table 4, examples of such thoughts include self-doubts, feelings of self-inadequacies (as a postgraduate student), negative self-perceptions, and perceiving gap between own writing ability and dissertation writing requirements. Based on this perspective, due to the limited capacity of working memory (Baddeley, 2003), the participants' task-related thoughts have to compete with self-related thoughts when they experience writing anxiety during writing (Eysenck, 1979). Since self-related thoughts contain emotional content that occupy thought processes and sustain attentional engagement (Hajcak, Jackson, Ferri, & Weinberg, 2016), self-related could gain more prominence than task-related thoughts; thus, resulting in cognitive interference and less efficient cognitive performance (Eysenck, 1979; Zabihi, 2018).

TABLE 4: Factors Influencing Writing Process

Aspects	Participants	Excerpts
Cognitive interference	Anna	*I guess fear that I just can't do it. There is this **negative thought that tells me that…Hey, you just can't do it**.*
	Raisha	*I overthink…**negative thinking**, even before writing it.*
	Farra	*If I'm **too worried**, I cannot get any work done.*
i. Struggle with information retrieval	Farra	***I struggle to find the accurate word**, the precise word. I know that there is a word for it, but because I am under a lot of stress or I am too anxious, I beat around the bush to translate one single thing.*
	Anna	*I think **I've read this before, but I can't really remember**. I experience such episodes quite frequently.*
ii. Preoccupation over accuracy	Farra	*…when I have that **habit of amending**, I felt that I have made mistakes. There was not a sentence where I felt really, fully, totally satisfied with!*
	Anna	*There is **no certainty at all**, so it really slows down my writing progress because when you are not certain, then, you just go around and round. I think of wanting to get information across correctly…Deep inside **I know that it can never be perfect** but somehow that thought, it complicates things and wastes time.*

This could also explain their difficulties to retrieve information from memory and their development of preoccupation over accuracy. This is reflected in Farra's and Anna's writing

anxiety experiences where they expressed that they often struggled to recall information that they have read and specific words from memory when writing. Writing as a multifaceted activity, engages many cognitive mechanisms (Olive, 2004) such as working memory, cognitive processes, long-term memory, and motivation and affect (Hayes, 1996). Also, since it involves a variety of interdependent skills that all seem to be prerequisite to one another, task-related information alone is enough to overload the information processing capacity (Scardamalia, 1981). In the case of apprehensive student-writers, they also process self-related cognitions apart from the task-related cognitions.

Moreover, when writing, student-writers need to pay conscious attention to spelling, punctuation, syntax, word choice, purpose, textual connections, clarity, rhythm, organization, readers' needs, ideas, relevant information, and others. As shown previously in Table 4, cognitive interference may also cause premature blocking, due to preoccupation over accuracy. Specifically, in Farra's case, where she expressed experiencing frequent writing anxiety during revision; she spent more time than necessary on local revision at a very early stage in her dissertation writing process (line 478-481):

> When I go back and re-read my literature review chapter, I feel anxious of whether I have written it correctly…have I written enough about a particular section? Was I critical…? So, if I keep going back and re-reading my drafts, I will feel anxious.

The premature blocking could influence her writing process, which in turn, disrupt her writing progress. Her fixation on accuracy and performance may have prompted her to delete some of the best parts of her writing during the drafting stage, due to her inability to identify anything good in her own writing (Reeves, 1997). Likewise, in the absence of progress, this could feed her cognitive anxiety, and in turn causing avoidance behaviours; thus, interfering with her efforts to maintain consistent progress. Given these points, the state experience of cognitive anxiety as part of the participants' second language writing anxiety, appears to be more profound than what is shown in their SLWAI results.

4.2.3 Influencing Writing Approach and Written Output

State writing anxiety experience could influence student-writer's writing approach and as shown in Table 5 (in the following page), the participants appear to develop fear of writing, which often leads to premature editing and fixating on quantity rather than the quality of writing. Perceiving self as lacking the necessary writing experience and the writing skills to successfully complete their dissertation writing, their fear seems to trigger frequent premature editing that often disrupts their fluency in writing. Additionally, it also causes them to struggle with extensive writing. Farra in particular, was fixated over the quantity of pages in her dissertation, instead of focusing on the quality of its content.

Accordingly, existing literature often describes apprehensive student-writers' written output as lacking quality (e.g., in Abu Shawish & Atea, 2010; Tsao, Tseng, & Wang, 2017), disorganized (Rungruangthum, 2011; Abdel Latif, 2015; Badrasawi, Ainol Zubairi, & Faizah Idrus, 2016), and poorly structured (Noriah Ismail et al., 2010). This is also reflected in the findings of this

study, as reported in Table 6. Based on the negative feedback they had received from their supervisors regarding their dissertation writing, they appear to have difficulties to follow academic writing conventions and to write critically.

TABLE 5: Factors Influencing Writing Approach

Aspects	Participants	Excerpts
Fixation on quantity	Farra	*Just like my thesis now, what I did was **I go through some of the completed theses**, and I looked at the number of pages that they have written for chapter 1, 2 and 3, and **I estimated how many words per section. I went to that extent**.*
Premature editing	Farra	*...you feel like you are no good at all and when you want to write, even after you have finished written a sentence, **you keep on reading it many, many times and you keep on changing it**.*
Fear of writing	Raisha	*Just put your pen to paper because my supervisor told me once that...you have a lot of ideas, but you don't put it to paper. That's my problem. Oh my God - basically, **I'm scared to write!***
	Anna	*Till today, I still have the **fear to write**. I still **don't have the confidence in what I write** and I am still...whatever I am doing now, I am still don't have the confirmation in terms of what I am doing and things – I am still just hanging.*

Moreover, in situations where they force themselves to write despite the anxiety, such as meeting an important deadline or attending a consultation session with the supervisor the next day, apprehensive student-writers may not prioritize the quality of their writing (as highlighted in Table 6). This could also possibly explain the lack of quality in their written output.

TABLE 6: Factors Influencing Written Output

Aspects	Participants	Excerpts:
Issues in dissertation writing	Farra	*She said that, it appears in my writing that I have not written for a long, long, long time, that I don't do academic writing. **I can't write academically**.*
	Anna	*She gives constant reminder. I mean, probably the way she puts it is a bit sarcastic...she would say, you are doing critical literacy but **you are not critical in your writing**.*
		*I always got this a lot from my supervisor where **she finds that most of my writing is pretty much abstract** because what I'm doing is very abstract. So, she finds it **very difficult to understand what I write**.*
Less priority on writing quality	Anna	*Sometimes, when I am stressed, **I just push myself to get it over and done with**.*
	Raisha	*What happened was, say the next day I have to meet her? **I would just write whatever that comes to my mind and I don't care**, not that I don't care whether it's perfect or not, **I just write whatever**. And I just hope that she's going to like it.*

Essentially, the overall findings have revealed an intricate network of interrelated individual- and contextual-specific factors in the emergence of second language writing anxiety, where it could trigger state experience that could disrupt student-writer's writing progress, and influences their writing process, writing approach and eventually, written output. The effects of state experience of second language writing anxiety appears profound, considering the lack of discussion on the topic in most existing literature.

4.2 Social Anxiety and Time Anxiety

Furthermore, based on the analysis of the in-depth interview data, the participants' state writing anxiety experiences appear to exhibit other dimensions of writing anxiety; apart from the already established cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance behaviours. The participants' writing anxiety experience seems to manifest into a form of social anxiety, due to their interactions with social agents such as supervisors, during consultations.

All three participants appear to have developed fear of evaluation and fear of receiving feedback from their interactions with their supervisors. As highlighted in Table 7, Farra prefers to receive a written feedback via email than to receive feedback in a face-to-face setting, whereas both Raisha and Anna confessed of opting to avoid meeting their supervisors altogether. In this view, the anticipation of being evaluated, whether in a real or imagined social situations, could result in social anxiety (Schlenker & Leary, 1982). To a degree, all three of them appear to experience a form of social anxiety as part of their state experience of writing anxiety, because they tend to perceive themselves as being evaluated, they dread interaction, and they fear their supervisors.

TABLE 7: Social Anxiety Experience

Aspect	Participants	Excerpts
Interaction with supervisor	Farra	*If it's just a feedback through email, I will probably feel sad if I feel like she's shouting with a lot of caps lock in her comments? I can hear her shouting in my ears, but I will also tell myself that I'm so fortunate that this doesn't happen face-to-face. It's just a written feedback. But **I do get scared when she said to come and see her to discuss the feedback**.*
	Raisha	*Because I've made her upset for not producing a lot of written work. She is frustrated, maybe. That's why **I am always scared to see her** because I know I don't have much to show her. That's why I'm afraid.*
	Anna	*I feel like she is playing the role of an examiner very well. Whatever I've written that is not convincing, she will prompt more questions and things like that. So, for me to accept those comments, it'll take some time to digest. It does **give me stress**. Although she gives fast feedback, it **always comes back as not being good enough. That stops me from seeing her frequently**.*

Naturally, they also tend to anticipate negative evaluation and negative feedback. Since their social anxiety could influence their appraisals of possible future outcomes, they tend to avoid from facing similar situations in the future, as a way to shield themselves from identity-threatening and anxiety-salient situations (Schlenker & Leary, 1982). This could explain the participants' fear or procrastination to meet their supervisors for consultations. For apprehensive student-writers, a slightly negative feedback may have stronger impact than a positive comment; it usually carries such force that it may even nullify past accomplishments (Leary, Terdal, Tambor, & Downs, 1995). Hence, receiving harsh criticism may inflict great damage on apprehensive student-writers.

Moreover, apart from social anxiety, the participants' writing anxiety experience is also indicative of time anxiety. As highlighted in Table 8 (in the following page), the participants demonstrated constant overwhelming feeling of being rushed and persistent feeling of anxiety,

fear, and/ or panic for lost time. In the interviews, they expressed perceiving a lot of pressure to complete their study on time, mainly due to their status as government-funded postgraduate students. In this context, the awareness of having a definite deadline and the possible consequences should they fail, the pressure of working under a time constraint over a stretch period of time can be intense. Thus, based on this perspective, it is possible that their state experience of second language writing anxiety may include a form of time anxiety experience as well.

TABLE 8: Time Anxiety Experience

Aspect	Participants	Excerpts
Perceives time constraint/ insufficient time	Farra	*...the surrounding pressure and also your own internal pressure...you keep on telling yourself that **you are a sponsored student**, that **you have a time limit** to complete your study.*
		*I have just managed to tie my three chapters together...**I felt like I have wasted**, no, **I used too much time***.
	Raisha	***There's always a time limit**, like GOT. I have to think about getting back to work and I also have to complete the study.*
	Anna	*Basically, what is causing my writing anxiety is that there are a lot more work to be done and **time is running out**.*
		*Because we are working within a **time constraint** that we are given, **I don't think it's enough.***

Their dissertation writing goals may have been imbued with concerns for time, since it is linked to their visual of success. This is reflected in existing literature, where apprehensive student-writers often identify time constraint (Rungruangthum, 2011; Ho, 2016) or fear for not having enough time as contributing factors to their writing anxiety (Badrasawi, Ainol Zubairi, & Faizah Idrus, 2016). Thus, due to their overwhelming concern for time, their state experience of second language writing anxiety in dissertation writing, could also include the manifestation of time anxiety. In view of this interpretation of data, you may argue that fear or worry, regardless of the context (be it social or related to time), can be considered as a form of cognitive anxiety and I agree with that notion. At its core, anxiety being a conscious emotion does involve to an extent, the individual's top-down processing in most appraisals (Barrett, 2017). However, dividing the cognitive anxiety to reflect contextual-specifics, such as social dimension and time constraint, could be informative in an attempt to explore and understand the underlying mechanism that link writing anxiety to writing performance.

5. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Second language writing anxiety is a complex, affective phenomenon. The existing view on writing anxiety is too simplistic because it can be the cause and the effect of poor writing performance. Although it is widely viewed as relatively stable trait consisting of cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance behaviours, writing anxiety may also exhibits state-like quality as shown in the study. This state experience may manifest into other dimensions such as social anxiety and time anxiety; transcending Cheng's three-dimensional framework. Hence, it is important to take into account the present individual and contextual factors when

student-writers are working on their dissertations, in order to improve understanding of their writing anxiety experience and dissertation writing issues.

With that said, it is vital that researchers in the field take into account both qualities or nature of writing anxiety when designing their research, in order to ensure an accurate and comprehensive reconstruction of student-writer's writing anxiety experience. As mentioned earlier, trait writing anxiety does not necessarily predict the apprehensive student-writer's state experience of writing anxiety. You could have low trait writing anxiety level but intense state experience. Therefore, it is highly advisable to implement both qualitative and qualitative data collection methods. Research instruments, such as Cheng's (2004) SLWAI and Daly and Miller's (1975) Writing Anxiety Test, while sufficient in providing information on trait writing anxiety, may have limitations to address the myriad of possible individual and contextual factors in the naturally occurring settings of student-writer's writing anxiety.

It is important that we improve our understanding of the phenomenon since writing instructors and supervisors could be holding on to inaccurate notions that apprehensive student-writers are among those with low language proficiency and low academic writing skills. As highlighted in this study, all three participants do not fit the common profiles of apprehensive student-writers as described in most literature. Despite having the experience and the language proficiency, they still experienced writing anxiety in dissertation writing. In this view, academic writing experience and language proficiency are not reliable predictors for dissertation writing performance, but writing anxiety experience is. Therefore, writing instructors and supervisors may have basic awareness of writing anxiety due to their experiences dealing with L2 student-writers, but such level of awareness may not translate as effectively when they are teaching or interacting with apprehensive student-writers. Thus, it is vital that they are well-informed of the complexity of the affective phenomenon and how it could influence dissertation writing, in order to take the appropriate actions to mitigate its debilitating effects and to avoid from using anxiety as a way to provoke writing performance (Horwitz, 2010).

6. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, second language writing anxiety highlights the affective aspect of dissertation writing, where its connection to writing performance appears stronger in a second language setting. State experience of writing anxiety could disrupt writing progress, and influence writing process, writing approach, and written output. As an affective phenomenon, it is individually and contextually specific that its state experience could manifest into other dimensions such as social anxiety and time anxiety, so trait writing anxiety may not necessarily predict state experience.

In this view, the underlying mechanism that links writing anxiety to writing performance seems to involve the individual's working memory, long-term memory, cognitive processes, and motivation, as well as affect. These are the internal components of writing process as proposed by Hayes (1996) in his Social-Cognitive Model of Writing. The recursive relationship between

these components could explain how writing anxiety is both the cause and the effect of poor writing performance. The aforementioned effects of writing anxiety as cognitive interference, unstable emotional states, difficulty to retrieve information from memory, preoccupation over accuracy and fear of writing are indicative of affective and cognitive operations in nature. In essence, second language writing anxiety is a contributing factor that could influence the student-writer's dissertation writing.

Nevertheless, this study has its limitations. Relying mainly on the data from in-depth interview, the inclusion of other triangulated methods that directly document the state experience of second language writing anxiety, may offer a more compelling case. For example, by requiring the participants to keep a daily journal throughout the duration of the dissertation writing process, the researcher would be able to record episodes of their state experience as it takes place. Likewise, the reconstruction of the state experience of writing anxiety were based on only three postgraduate students' emic perspectives; a bigger sample would have improved generalizability. However, since the aim of the study is transferability, the study offers in-depth findings on how state experience of writing anxiety could influence apprehensive student-writer's dissertation writing. Hence, in an attempt to further improve current understanding regarding the nature of the affective phenomenon, researchers may explore other groups of student-writers and other genres of academic writing to examine the contextual significance of second language setting and task conditions that could cause writing anxiety.

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