

Writing Anxiety in Prospective EFL Teachers: An Exploration into its Possible  
Alleviating Strategies

Kelly Johanna Coral Achicanoy

Submitted to the School of Human Sciences in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of B.A in  
the Department of Linguistics and Languages

Universidad de Nariño

Agosto, 2016

Writing Anxiety in Prospective EFL Teachers: An Exploration into its Possible  
Alleviating Strategies

Kelly Johanna Coral Achicanoy

Advisor: Ana Clara Sanchez

Submitted to the School of Human Sciences in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of B.A in  
the Department of Linguistics and Languages

Universidad de Nariño

Agosto, 2016

Las ideas y conclusiones aportadas en el siguiente Trabajo de Grado son responsabilidad exclusiva del autor.

Artículo 1ro del Acuerdo No. 324 de octubre 11 de 1966 emanado del Honorable Consejo Directivo de la Universidad de Nariño.

Nota de aceptación:

---

---

---

---

---

---

Firma del Presidente del Jurado

---

Firma del Jurado

---

Firma del Jurado

San Juan de Pasto, Agosto de 2016

### **Acknowledgments**

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for being the guide of my existence. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to my parents Carmen and Carlos for their unconditional love, support and help. Besides, I give special thanks to my beloved sisters Karol and María José and my relatives for giving me their constant encouragement. My family has always been there for me and I would like to dedicate this work to them.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to my advisor the professor Ana Clara Sanchez for her assistance and advice. I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the committee members, the professors Magda Caicedo and Vicente Araujo for their valuable comments and suggestions.

### Resumen

Este documento de investigación se centra en mostrar la posible utilidad de la escritura de diarios, la utilización de portafolios y la corrección entre pares como herramientas pedagógicas que podrían aliviar la ansiedad al escribir en futuros profesores del idioma Inglés como lengua extranjera. Además, este documento describe cómo el sentimiento de la ansiedad está relacionado al aprendizaje de idiomas y a la habilidad de escribir. Al mismo tiempo, se explican las formas más comunes en las que la ansiedad al escribir puede medirse. Este documento también explora las posibles causas y efectos de la ansiedad en la habilidad escritora de futuros profesores de Inglés, con el fin de proporcionar a los formadores de docentes algunas recomendaciones para que implementen las tres estrategias mencionadas anteriormente en la enseñanza de la escritura.

## Abstract

This research paper focuses on showing the potential usefulness of journal writing, portfolio keeping and peer reviewing as pedagogical tools that may alleviate writing anxiety in prospective teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Additionally, this paper describes how the feeling of anxiety is related to the language learning and to the writing skill. At the same time, the most common ways in which writing anxiety can be measured are explained. This document also explores the possible causes and effects of anxiety in the writing skill of English students- teachers in order to provide teachers-educators with some recommendations to implement the three above mentioned strategies into the writing instruction.

## Table of Contents

Writing Anxiety in Prospective EFL Teachers: An Exploration into its Possible Alleviating Strategies.....	8
Defining Anxiety .....	11
Understanding Writing Anxiety .....	13
Instruments to Measure Writing Anxiety.....	17
Writing Anxiety in Prospective EFL Teachers.....	19
Alleviating Strategies for Writing Anxiety in Prospective EFL Teachers.....	21
Conclusions.....	28
References.....	31



## Writing Anxiety in Prospective EFL Teachers: An Exploration into its Possible Alleviating Strategies

In the process of learning or acquiring a second language (L2), it is quite noticeable that there is wide variation among language learners in terms of their ultimate success in mastering the L2. The evident reason for this event is that people are not homogenous; each individual is different from the other. We are talking about Individual Differences (IDs), accounted for by individual learner characteristics, that greatly influence success or failure in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Among the IDs, anxiety is generally believed to negatively affect the learning process (Hortwitz, 2001) which the most part is concerned with speaking, since oral performance is assumed to be the most anxiety-provoking situation (Hortwitz, Hortwitz & Cope, 1986; Horwitz, 2001). However, in recent years, there has been a trend to look into the relationship between anxiety and the other language skills: writing as the focus of this paper, as well as reading and listening.

Let us understand that writing is the most difficult language skill to master in both the native language (L1) and the second/foreign language (L2) because it requires linguistic knowledge, cognitive and sociocultural factors (discourse and sociolinguistic knowledge) to convey meaning (Lombana, 2002). The complex nature of writing skill makes that both L1 and especially L2 learners can experience apprehension or anxiety while writing. This may lead to difficulties in producing effective and coherent written pieces. Eventually, students will quit writing courses or leave their studies due to their underestimation of competence and abilities.

It is worth mentioning here that most of the research on writing anxiety has been done with university students as subjects of study. This is because at tertiary education an increase in the level of writing anxiety is assumed to be perceived considering that writing is expected to be

used formally (academically) and needs strong critical thinking skills. Furthermore, let us not forget that academic writing has a defined audience: teachers and students from the academic community (Rodriguez, 2004), which can presuppose that writing anxiety level increases because of the fear of being judged. Taking into account that EFL academic writing is inherent to the training of student-teachers, it is assumed that they might also experience anxiety while writing academically.

Despite the fact that there are great research studies on writing anxiety on L1 settings, Cheng (2002) asserts that there has been only a few studies that directly deal with L2 writing anxiety. Those that exist have been done with English as Second Language (ESL) students. There is even less research on writing anxiety among learners studying in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context (e.g. Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999; Cheng, 2004; Hassan 2001).

Since teachers play an undeniable role in shaping students' notions about and attitudes towards writing (Palmquist & Young, 1992), there has been considerable research, again in L1 settings, which explores the relation between teachers' writing anxiety and their teaching practices. For example, from her study, Claypool, (1980) indicated negative correlations between teachers' writing anxiety and the number of writing assignments and instructional techniques used in teaching compositions. Gere, Schuessler and Abbott (1984) when investigating how teachers' writing anxiety was correlated with what they considered important and relevant about writing and writing instruction, found a significant negative correlation between teachers' writing anxiety and their use of a variety of instructional techniques in the teaching of composition writing. Moreover, they figured out that teachers with high writing apprehension tended to focus on grammatical correctness of writing (style), instead of the process of writing (self-expression).

Concerning the Colombian context, although there are not studies on the effects of English language teachers' writing anxiety, Lombana (2002) asserts that when teachers have to teach the writing skill, they feel anxious and threatened due to little training in both their own writing process and teaching strategies in this skill. Based on the results of the studies discussed above, it may be assumed that writing anxiety would affect the prospective English teachers' practices and attitudes towards writing instruction in a similar way. Thus, before writing anxiety is firmly established on prospective teachers (PTs) of EFL, it is necessary that teacher-educators have solutions at hand in order to cope with the issue in case their students experience it and therefore support successful Second Language Acquisition (SLA) at the Licenciatura level.

Following the previous ideas, this research paper intends to provide teacher-educators with three strategies: journal writing, portfolio keeping and peer reviewing/peer feedback that may help them in trying to alleviate writing anxiety in student-teachers. This aim will be attained by describing empirical studies that validate their effectiveness and by proposing suggestions for their implementation.

The possible solutions were proved to have positive effects in coping with writing anxiety of future teachers of EFL through studies conducted by Jahin (2012), Kurt and Atay (2007), Öztürk and Çeçen (2007), and Salem (2007). If they would be implemented in the Colombian context, they would not only help student-teachers to lessen their writing anxiety but also they would affect positively their professional life, given that the strategies have a lot of benefits in second language education from which their future students could benefit. Likewise, by implementing the strategies into the writing instruction, English teachers could help student-teachers to have better opportunities their writing abilities could influence their future career in

this globalized world where many companies require their employees not only to use oral but also written English proficiently (Robayo & Hernandez, 2013).

Furthermore, it should be said that when working with the proposed solutions, the teaching practices of teacher-educators might change for the better. Let us remember that the proposed strategies work as alternatives in assessment. Thus, language teachers themselves could improve both the way they teach and the way they assess the writing skill.

Understanding that this paper could be a good resource of information, it aims also to allow readers- teachers and future researchers to be aware of what writing anxiety implies and get interested in investigating it. Hence, useful information on how writing anxiety has been tackled in L1 and L2 contexts will be provided. By the same token, the two widely used ways to measure writing anxiety levels will be described. Relevant knowledge on writing anxiety in future EFL teachers, mainly on the effects and sources, is also addressed in this paper.

### **Defining Anxiety**

Before embarking on an examination of how anxiety has been treated in academic research especially related to the L2 learning and to the writing skill, it is important to consider a preparatory perception into anxiety and the types of anxiety in general terms.

Anxiety is generally understood as a normal and an inevitable part of the human experience from the workplace to the personal relationships. It is a common feeling that human beings face in their daily lives. Spielberg (1983) defines general anxiety as “an unpleasant emotional state or condition which is characterized by subjective feelings of tension, apprehension and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system” (p. 19). Usually, general anxiety has been considered to consist of “worry and emotionality” (Morris, Davis & Hutchings, 1981). Worry refers to “negative expectations and cognitive concerns about

oneself, the situation at hand and possible consequences” and emotionality concerns “one’s perceptions of the physiological-affective elements of anxiety experience, that is to say, indications of the autonomic arousal and unpleasant feelings states such as nervousness, pounding heart, sweating and tension” (Davis & Hutchings, 1981, p. 541).

As far as the type of anxiety is concerned, three types of anxiety are recognized: trait or global anxiety, state anxiety and situation-specific anxiety (MacIntyre & Garner, 1991; Spielberger, 1983). Trait anxiety refers to a general tendency to become nervous in a wide range of situations. State anxiety is the feeling of worry or stress that arises at a particular moment under a definite situation. Finally, situation-specific anxiety can be considered as trait anxiety, which is limited to a specific situation or context. It is the probability of becoming anxious in a particular situation.

The possibility that anxiety may be an obstacle in learning an L2 has long interested scholars, language teachers, and language learners themselves. According to Horwitz (2001) the form of anxiety experienced by people who are learning and/or using an L2 has been usually referred to language anxiety or Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA).

### **Language Anxiety/Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)**

Language anxiety has been classified as a situation-specific anxiety or a trait which recurs consistently over time within the given context of language learning situations, i.e. the language classrooms (Horwitz, 2001; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Language anxiety is experienced by learners of both foreign and second language and poses potential problems “because it can interfere with the acquisition, retention and production of the new language” (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, p. 86). Research (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Horwitz & Young, 1991) has consistently revealed that anxiety can impede foreign language production and achievement.

This affective factor constitutes a serious obstacle or mental block against L2 learning which negatively interferes and influences L2 learning, culminating thus in academic underachievement (Dörnyei, 2005; Horwitz, 2001). However, according to Dörnyei (2005), it has been observed that anxiety does not necessarily inhibit performance but in some cases can actually promote it. So, regarding its usefulness, two types of anxiety have been identified: debilitating anxiety or, also known as harmful, and facilitative or helpful anxiety.

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) were the first to treat Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) as a separate and distinct phenomenon particular to learning a language (Young, 1991). They defined FLA as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to the classroom language learning process arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128). In other words, they proposed conceptualizing second/Foreign Language Anxiety as a unique type of anxiety specific to the L2 learning context. Besides, to measure students’ FL anxiety levels, Horwitz et al. (1986) developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS).

Research on FLA has been almost entirely associated with the oral aspects of language use. However, there has been a recent trend to identify the relationship between anxiety and the other language skills (listening, reading, and writing). Since so little attention has been paid to language writing anxiety specifically, it is relevant to know more about this issue.

### **Understanding Writing Anxiety (WA)**

Tackling the nature of writing anxiety will not be worth if first we do not become aware of what is understood by writing. Some conceptualizations about writing are explained below.

In educational contexts, writing is considered to consist of complex abilities. Whether in

the native language (L1) or in a second/foreign language (L2), as a product-oriented language skill, writing is always considered as a cognitively complex and demanding task. Due to the intricate nature of writing, it is supposed to be difficult for both L1 learners but in particular for L2 learners. The student writer faces the arduous and time-consuming task of transmitting a piece of information in a wide variety of genres of writing.

We have to take into account that writing, according to Nunan (2003), is about recording words or ideas through using a ballpoint pen on a paper or typing into a computer. It is also the conception, expression and organization of ideas into statements and paragraphs that are comprehensible to a reader. Therefore, writing can be considered as both a physical and a mental act. Additionally, Nunan states that writing is a process and also a product. It is a process when the writer thinks, plans, write drafts, revises, reads, and rereads; the product is what the readers (also called audience) see which can be the final draft of an essay, story or research report. For Nunan (2003), writing has the purpose of expressing ideas or feelings as well as impressing the audience whether it is an instructor or a wider one; it needs to have expressed ideas in determined ways. That is why writers should be careful when choosing the type of writing (a report, a journal, a scholarly article, etc.) because each type has its own level of complexity. Hence, undoubtedly writing results in a very complex task that not only L2 writers but also native speakers find difficult to accomplish.

In regards to the difference between L1 and L2 composing processes, Silva's (1993) research highlighted the difficulties that many L2 writers encounter. Silva concluded that "clearly L2 is strategically, rhetorically and linguistically different from L1 writing" (p. 670). It can be thought that when writing, L2 students bring with them some tendencies that are influenced by their native language; as Brown (2007) states "...Native language patterns of

thinking and writing simply cannot be ruled out” (p. 338). For that reason, learners will probably find some difficulty in learning to write the L2 because they are going to think and express ideas using the native language structures. Considering this aspect, it is very likely that students also experience stress and anxiety looking at the blank sheet of paper and cannot start writing. This is the psychological attribute that has been known as writing anxiety/writing apprehension.

To better understand the construct of writing anxiety, following there is a brief description of how this apprehension has been addressed in both L1 and L2 contexts.

### **Writing Anxiety on L1**

According to Cheng (2004), since the 1970s, there was a wealth of studies related to L1 writing anxiety. One of the most important was conducted by Daly and Miller (1975) who, working with native speakers of American English, coined the term “writing apprehension” to describe first language writing anxiety. Writing apprehension was described as an individual difference characterized by “the general avoidance of writing and situations perceived by individuals to potentially require some amount of writing accompanied by the potential for evaluation of that writing” (Daly, 1979, p. 37). One could describe high apprehensive people as individuals who find writing unrewarding or punishing. Accordingly, they avoid situations where writing is required and their levels of anxiety are abnormal when they have to write. This uneasiness may manifest in one’s behaviors, attitudes, and written products. On the contrary, low apprehensive individuals do not mind writing, are confident in their abilities to accomplish a written task and often enjoy it (Faigley, Daly, & Witte, 1981).

### **Writing Anxiety on L2**

Since writing in an L2 is an acknowledged difficulty for a majority of English as a foreign language (EFL) students (Cheng, 2002; Lee, 2005), it is absolutely possible that it



increases the anxiety level of the students. However, in contrast to a large research on writing anxiety with native speakers of English, there have been few studies that directly address writing anxiety in EFL learners. Not until the late 1990s did researchers recognize the importance of investigating the relationship between language anxiety and the language skills, especially reading and writing in second language use (Cheng, Horwitz & Schallert 1999; Horwitz, 2001).

Cheng, Horwitz and Schallert (1999), working with university English majors in Taiwan, examined the relationship between L2 classroom anxiety and L2 writing anxiety. They found that L2 writing anxiety and L2 classroom anxiety are "two related yet relatively distinguishable anxiety constructs" (p. 436). Writing anxiety is a "language-skill specific anxiety" which is different from a general classroom type of anxiety (Cheng et al., 1999, p. 417). Research studies (e.g. Cheng, 2004; Cheng, et al., 1999) have demonstrated that while writing anxiety is related to general language anxiety, it is a separate, more specific construct.

In regards to the negative effects on writing anxiety, a lot of studies have considered investigating its relationship with writing performance. For instance, Hassan (2001) working with Egyptian college students, compared their English writing anxiety levels with their performance in a 40-minute writing task. Hassan concluded that low anxious students produced better quality compositions than their high anxious counterparts. Similarly, in her study, Cheng (2004) using a timed English essay writing task as a token of her participants' English writing performance found out a significant negative relationship between anxiety and writing performance. Besides, in 2011, Zhang examined the effects of EFL writing anxiety on English writing performance of Chinese English majors. The participants' grades on a 30-minute English composition and English writing course grades were both used as indices of their writing performance. Results suggested a negative relationship between their writing anxiety and their

writing performance (course grade and timed writing grade) which provided specific evidence for the negative effects of high levels of EFL writing anxiety.

Cheng (2004) also offers a three-dimensional conceptualization of writing anxiety including: somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and avoidance behavior which specify the physiological, cognitive, and effects of writing anxiety on writing processes and behaviors. Somatic anxiety refers to one's perception of the physiological effects of the anxiety experience, reflected in the unpleasant increase of feelings (nervousness and tension). Cognitive anxiety makes reference to negative expectations, preoccupation with performance and concern about others' perceptions. Avoidance behavior simply refers to the avoidance of writing. According to Cheng (2004) the three dimensions of anxiety represent the three types of Second Language Writing Anxiety (SLWA).

After reviewing the above findings regarding the relationship between writing anxiety and writing performance, it is suggested that more work is needed to better understand L2 writing anxiety and that research on the effects it may produce should be expanded by taking into account other factors associated with the writing skill in particular and with language development in general.

### **Instruments for Measuring Writing Anxiety**

As a way to measure writing anxiety levels, there are two main measures that need to be reviewed. They have been used extensively by many researchers and by writing instructors.

#### **Writing Apprehension Test (WAT)**

To contribute to the establishment of writing apprehension as a measurable construct, Daly and Miller (1975) developed the Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) for use with native English speakers. Originally, the scale included 63 items in Likert-type scale format and was

administered to 164 undergraduate students at West Virginia University. The scale then included 26 items. The researchers also suggested three levels of writing anxiety: high, moderate, and low level. Considering a translated version of the WAT, a few L2 scholars turned their attention to its potential utility for understanding L2 learners' writing anxiety and found that the WAT was a valid and reliable research tool to measure ESL/EFL writing anxiety (e.g., Cheng et al., 1999). However, there were some concerns about the effectiveness of the Daly- Miller WAT in measuring L2 writing anxiety. For example, it was developed originally for English native speakers, and some essential aspects of second language might not be considered (Cheng, 2004).

### **Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI)**

In an attempt to measure the degree to which a student feels anxious in (foreign) L2 writing, Cheng (2004) introduced a self-report measure entitled Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI). The SLWAI consists of 22 items which are divided into sub-categories (cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety and avoidance behavior) that represent the types of writing anxiety. Since the SLWAI was proven to be valid and reliable (Cheng, 2004), this inventory is considered as an excellent devised, self-report measure of ESL/EFL writing anxiety and has been adopted in many studies.

It is worth noting that the items of both measurement instruments are scored on a Five-point Likert response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Besides, it should be made clear that despite some concerns about the Daly- Miller Writing Apprehension Test on its utility for measuring L2 writing anxiety, it is still being used or adapted by many studies to measure writing anxiety levels in both ESL and EFL contexts.

### **Writing Anxiety in Prospective Teachers of EFL**

Studies on the writing anxiety in prospective teachers (PTs) of EFL are not enough. Nevertheless, by reviewing the available literature some empirical studies have researched the potential effects and potential causes that will be worth to bear in mind.

#### **Possible Effects**

Only one study on the effects of writing anxiety working with EFL future teachers could be found. It is the Susoy and Tanyer's study (2013). The researchers wanted to examine the relationship between writing anxiety and writing performance. To do that, they measured writing anxiety levels of EFL pre-service teachers and took their midterm grades as an indicator of their writing performance. The results of the study suggested a statistically significant negative correlation. In other words, writing grades seemed to be low when or where writing anxiety was high. The Susoy and Tanyer's findings are consistent with previous research which reported negative correlation between writing anxiety and writing performance in EFL contexts. (e.g. Hassan, 2001; Cheng, 2004; Zhang, 2011)

Researchers have also identified physical reactions of student-teachers while experiencing writing anxiety such as perspiring, blushing, trembling, foot tapping, rapid heart rate, stomachache, headache, tension, handshaking, and even fever (Atay & Kurt, 2006; Susoy & Tanyer, 2013).

#### **Possible Causes**

Determining the factors that generate writing anxiety on individuals holds a great utility in trying to overcome its negative consequences. Thus, factors that clearly provoke this uneasiness on prospective EFL teachers will be reviewed as follows:

The results of the research study conducted by Atay and Kurt (2006) revealed that among

the underlying causes of writing anxiety are: time limit/deadline, exams, classroom setting, peer effect, and topic. Yet, the researchers found that pedagogical practices of the teacher and the past writing experiences are the major sources of L2 writing anxiety.

Regarding the study's results of Kara (2013), other sources that can trigger writing anxiety in student-teachers are: lack of previous writing experiences, absence of writing habits, difficulty in expressing while writing as well as problems with organizing ideas, gathering information, and combining ideas. Given the lack of creativity when teaching and not offering enough examples, the instructor's teaching style can be a triggering factor for writing anxiety too. Likewise, the absence of encouragement, feedback and interest from the instructor on learners' writing weaknesses are considered causes of writing anxiety. The coursebook was also reported as a source of writing anxiety due to its insufficient examples and exercises and lacking explanations.

From the study carried out by Zerey (2013) various causes of writing apprehension emerged. They were linguistic difficulties such as lacking vocabulary and grammar, problems with topic selection, insufficient writing experiences, fear of negative evaluation and lack of self-confidence. Furthermore, time constraints, exams/quizzes and the coursebook were considered to have a negative influence in provoking writing anxiety.

Concerning the Susoy and Tanyer's study (2013), their analysis showed that the fear of negative evaluation, lack of previous writing practice and lack of vocabulary were the primary sources of writing anxiety. Other sources of writing anxiety that were rated by the participants of the study were peer comments and the teacher, time pressure, rules of academic writing, writing topics and high self-expectations.

More recently the results of the study conducted by Rezaei, Jafari, and Younas (2014) revealed three main causes of writing anxiety: 1) Instructional practices. For example, the teacher's assigning topics that students do not have enough knowledge about, and the inadequate time given to complete a task. 2) Feedback received from writing instructors. The analysis uncovered that students get anxious because of the fear of teacher's negative feedback. 3) Linguistics knowledge level because students thought that a perfect writing is one that is grammatically correct, and accuracy is more important than content.

It should be made clear here that the effects and causes reviewed above were the product of empirical research analysis while working with the most apprehensive individuals under study. Besides, it is worth mentioning that the findings of the studies resembled the ones that have been revealed by other studies working with EFL learners (not in training teacher degree programs).

If research in the Colombian context would be conducted, it would be possible to say that the factors and effects described here might not be very external to our setting. Regarding the causes we may find out that the lack of writing experience can be a great source of writing anxiety given the fact that the teaching of writing in elementary and high school is highly limited, students are generally asked to write guided or controlled sentences and paragraphs, they are even encouraged to memorized sentences. Hence, at tertiary level, student-teachers may feel nervous and experience writing anxiety as they are expected to really communicate their ideas through writing 'well-organized papers'.

### **Alleviating Strategies for Writing Anxiety in Prospective EFL Teachers**

As a way to deal with high-anxious student-teachers, it is now essential to consider some solutions that may have positive consequences in trying to alleviate their writing anxiety. Three

strategies, that were found to be valid by conducting empirical research studies, are suggested. They are: journal writing, portfolio keeping, and peer reviewing/peer feedback.

Below, each strategy and some suggestions for their implementation will be detailed. We have to take into account that when implementing the strategies, grading should be avoided.

### **Journal writing**

In simple terms, let us understand that journal is the concept of “free” writing. According to Brown (2004), a journal “is a log (or ‘account’) of one’s thoughts, feelings, reactions, assessments, ideas, or progress towards goals, usually written with little attention to structure, form or correctness” (p. 260).

Dialogue journals, which are known as the most classroom- oriented journals, seem to be an excellent way in trying to alleviate writing anxiety. Dialogue journals can be considered a special type of written interaction between a reader (the teacher) and the student through dialogues or responses being its purpose expressing meaning without worrying too much about form (Brown, 2004).

One of the ways to support the usefulness of dialogue journal in alleviating writing anxiety is by means of understanding the evidence that was obtained with the study conducted by Salem (2007) who investigated the effects of journal writing as a communicative technique on the writing anxiety of 50 third-year ELF male students at the College of Education, in Cairo, Egypt. It used the experimental design: Pretest- Posttest- Control Group Design. The experimental group was required to intermittently write a journal entry on topics of their interest once a week for ten weeks. The participants had to share their journal entries with their tutor who provided feedback directed to the content and meaning. The findings of the study revealed that journal writing have positive effects on decreasing writing apprehension.

Based on the study reviewed above, for the implementation of dialogue journal, you should take the following suggestions into consideration:

1. Introduce students to the concept of journal writing. For students to become comfortable with the process, they need to be given examples of dialogue journal entries.
2. Give clear directions on how to get started. Ensure students to communicate their ideas, personal feelings, and thoughts, without worrying about grammar or spelling while writing. They should write descriptions, explanations, arguments, narratives, or complaints regardless the topics. Besides, you should indicate that there is no limit for the length of each journal entry which may vary from few sentences to few pages.
3. Make clear that journals will not be evaluated for grammatical correctness and rhetorical conventions. By doing so, students will have the chance to write freely without being too anxious about their performance.
4. Provide feedback. After reading through the entry, you are expected to respond by providing open ideas based on your understanding of the student's needs, interests, and writing abilities. Narrative summary, comments and suggestions are in order.

Dialogue journals should be seen as a supportive tool to cope with writing anxiety because when teachers only focus on meaning in responding to journal entries, they help to create a supportive and non-threatening environment where students feel secure to develop their ideas. They then are able to really communicate their feelings and their thoughts.

### **Portfolio keeping**

As explained by Genesee and Upshur (1996, as cited in Brown, 2004, p. 256), portfolio is defined as "a purposeful collection of students' work that demonstrates...their efforts, progress and achievements in given areas". As Brown (2004) mentions, portfolio can include a range of



materials like essays, reports, artwork, journals, diaries, notes on lectures, among others, comments, evaluations and checklists. Among the potential benefits of portfolios we can find that they:

- foster intrinsic motivation, responsibility, and ownership;
- promote student-teacher interaction with teacher as facilitator;
- provide tangible evidence of a student's work;
- facilitate critical thinking, self-assessment, and revision processes;
- offer opportunities for collaborative work with peers; and
- permit assessment of multiple dimensions of language learning (Brown, 2004, p. 257).

Moreover, another potential benefit of portfolio keeping may be the lowering of writing anxiety levels. We can validate it by reviewing the action research carried out by Öztürk and Çeçen (2007) in Istanbul, Turkey. They aimed at finding out the effects of portfolio keeping as a self-growth tool on the writing anxiety of their 15 prospective teachers (PTs) of EFL. The researchers asked their students to create a portfolio, so that students had to take part in five familiar writing tasks. As two reflective sessions were documented, the participants not only mentioned the benefits of portfolio keeping regarding positive effects on overcoming their writing anxiety but also reported a language improvement.

Following there are some recommendations on how to implement portfolio keeping as a strategy that would help to reduce writing anxiety.

1. Acquaint students with the concept of portfolio. Show students examples of English portfolios prepared by previous classes. Explain students that they will work during certain period of time on a limited number of familiar written tasks (e.g. 3-6) in draft

and final forms, and that they will be evaluated regarding checklist and questionnaires. Moreover, give suggestions for the kinds of topics they can write about and specify how lengthy their written tasks should be.

2. Organize peer-assessments or small group conferencing. Students will be requested to work in peer or small groups to comment on one another's first draft of their written tasks by sharing copies and making use the checklist or questionnaires. Then, students will have to consider their classmates' comments to make a final version of their writing.
3. Specify portfolio content. As portfolio entries, students should include first drafts and revised versions of their written tasks. Besides, students, regarding their own points of view, should include a brief rationale for both the 'best' written task and the piece of work which gave trouble or one that was less successful. Furthermore, students will be required to include an overall appraisal of their work while considering checklists or questionnaires.
4. Provide feedback. When portfolios have been completed, it is helpful to provide feedback on the portfolios. One possibility is to write a brief narrative evaluation of perceived strengths and weaknesses.

When students are willing to share their writings with their classmates, they might relieve their writing anxiety from the fear of being criticized by the teacher on their first draft. Likewise, since the use of portfolio delays teacher's evaluation, the fear of evaluation may be removed in some way. Additionally, keeping portfolios can be very encouraging because it gives students themselves a chance to make better writers with each paper and revision. Due to the fact that portfolio keeping can foster a supportive relationship between teachers and students, it may

also become a motivational tool that can affect students' attitudes to continue writing.

### **Peer Reviewing/Peer-Feedback.**

Peer reviewing is referred to as “peer feedback”, which is an assessment form performed by equal status learners (Gielen et al., 2010, as cited in Jahin, 2012, p. 66). Regarding two studies that will be reviewed later on, peer reviewing/ peer feedback is meant to refer to the activity in the revising stage of writing in which L2 writing students ask questions, give comments and suggestions to one another's written composition.

The idea that peer feedback can be used to lessen writing anxiety is supported in the study carried out by Jahin (2012), who aimed to assess the impact of peer reviewing on the writing anxiety level of 40 EFL major prospective teachers (PTs) in Saudi Arabia. A quasi-experimental research approach was adopted, that is to say, the participants were divided into two groups: control and experimental. The participants of the experimental group were introduced to peer-reviewing essay writing sessions and were instructed to exchange some essays to do peer reviewing using a checklist of assessment rubrics. Results of data analysis showed positive impacts of peer reviewing in reducing the writing apprehension level for the experimental group than the control group participants who got teacher feedback. Moreover, findings of the study echoed the research study conducted by Kurt and Atay (2007) while working with 86 Turkish future teachers of English. The study also took a quasi-experimental research approach. Based on quantitative data, results showed that the peer feedback group experienced significantly less writing anxiety than the teacher feedback group.

Based on the studies reviewed above, to implement peer-feedback some suggestions are made:

1. Train students on the idea of peer-feedback/peer reviewing. It is suggested that you

hold class discussions on the strengths and weaknesses of a model essay assisting in giving appropriate feedback. You can also give students training worksheets with examples of actual peer review comments. Moreover, learners should be provided with examples of essays they have worked on in class for them to write their own comments using specific checklists of rubrics (regarding the content, development of ideas, structure, etc.). While you are observing you can help learners when necessary.

2. Encourage impartial evaluation. As a way to avoid subjectivity, you should consider inviting students themselves to construct part of the checklists in order to help them internalize assessment criteria, which in turn can help them get very involved when writing their drafts and give more effective written feedback to their classmates. You of course have to set parameters and be willing to help learners in designing the checklists.
3. Establish the types of writings that will be peer edited. Student might write essays they have worked on while choosing their own topics.
4. Make sure students briefly discuss their corrections. Once students have switched writings with a partner and edited their peer's writing using a checklist, a face-to-face discussion has to be held between the members of the peer over the corrections. Then the edited essays will have to be returned to their owners.
5. Conduct follow-up tasks. You might request students to hand in a second draft of their writing for you to give feedback taking into account the same checklist used by their peers. You might also provide feedback by holding a conversation with the students commenting on their drafts.

Taking peer-feedback as a peer assessment task, it is possible to realize that it is within

the domain of learner-centered and collaborative education (Brown, 2004). Thus, since student writers are required to co-operate and collaborate with each other in giving and receiving feedback, the learning environment can be less anxiety provoking and stressful while writing. Furthermore, by learning to evaluate one another's writing, students -readers may be relieved since they can see that other students make similar mistakes or go through the same difficulties. In turn, their apprehension decreases and their self-confidence increases (Kurt & Atay 2007).

### **Conclusions**

Writing as a communicative activity imposes that EFL learners have to face a number of obstacles, among those, writing anxiety is the difficulty that has to be addressed considering that communicating effectively through writing is very important nowadays to have greater possibilities to succeed in professional life.

Through this paper, it was possible to realize that research on L1 writing anxiety is large compared to research regarding language writing anxiety mainly in ELF settings. And, although there is a growing body of literature addressing writing anxiety on EFL contexts, it can be noted that research has its limitations mainly because studies have not taken into account future EFL teachers as participants and tended to center around the Middle East or Asia. Research on writing anxiety of future teachers of EFL within the Latin American context is insignificant with the exception of a study conducted in Venezuela by Rodriguez, Delgado and Colon (2009) who focus on the relationship between writing anxiety in both Spanish (L1) and English (L2).

Regarding the possible sources and effects of writing anxiety of prospective EFL teachers, we can find that for language learners, the main sources seemed to be the pedagogical practices of the teacher and the fear of negative evaluation.

Among the effects, writing performance appears to be affected by writing anxiety in a negative way. With this in mind, Colombian English instructors might acknowledge the existence of writing anxiety in their university students and so, they would play a key role by taking steps in trying to cope with their learner's anxiety.

Given the possible fact that English teachers may experience writing anxiety and that this situation may interfere with their pedagogical practices, let us remember that the main purpose of this paper was to reveal how the three strategies discussed in this piece: journal writing, peer feedback and portfolio keeping, should be effective for alleviating writing anxiety especially in prospective EFL teachers.

Bearing in mind the potential effectiveness of the strategies, it is quite advisable that Colombian teacher-educators consider them since they might help in reducing writing apprehension in their students and supporting success in learning the writing skill. Besides, we should mention that learners might be prepared at the end of their ELT (English Language Teaching) program to write their monographs or research projects in an easier way.

Considering that academic writing is part of the writing instruction of future teachers of EFL and that it supposed an increase in writing anxiety levels, it should be conducted in a way to be most beneficial for the learners in which they see writing as an enjoyable communication between a writer and a reader and do not feel afraid of avoiding writing in order that they have better opportunities in this very competitive world for English language students. The three suggested strategies seem to follow that recommendation.

We should bear in mind that the suggestions to implement the strategies presented here were made with the purpose of relieving the writing anxiety among future teachers of EFL, so grading was not considered. Nevertheless, since the suggestions were intended to be adaptable

and practical in case teachers want to grade students they obviously can do it by setting up grading criteria. It should be made clear here that although the proposed strategies were found to have positive effects; we should not generalize their effectiveness. However, teachers-educators who want to create meaningful and successful experiences for EFL students should not be discouraged in trying to change for the better when implementing the strategies. Teachers are invited to do classroom-based research replicating the reviewed studies related with the strategies on larger populations and thus, contribute to their validity.

After examining the available literature, it is possible to say that further research is needed for a deep understanding of EFL writing anxiety. Moreover, as a way to expand the literature related to writing anxiety in the Latin America setting, it is recommended that investigation be conducted in the Colombian context. It may be investigated searching for correlations of age, genre, level of English proficiency, etc. Furthermore, since most of studies have tended to investigate writing anxiety among university students, it is suggested that in the coming years research be carried out with primary and high school students. It should be noted here that even though the review of the literature in this work shed light on the effects and causes of writing anxiety, these variables should also be further investigated.

Taking into account the widespread availability of internet communication nowadays as well as keeping in mind that the suggested strategies can take on that new dimension, it would also be interesting to investigate if the strategies in their 'digital form', i.e., e-dialogue journal, electronic portfolio and online peer feedback may have positive effects in decreasing writing anxiety or not. Similarly, it is recommended that future research focuses on investigating potential strategies that learners may use to handle with their writing anxiety when taking their own perspectives. This undoubtedly could lead to noteworthy findings.

## REFERENCES

- Atay, D., & Kurt, G. (2006). Prospective teachers and L2 writing anxiety. *Asian EFL Journal*, 8(4), 100-118.
- Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. New Jersey NY: Pearson Education.
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Teaching by Principles of Language Learning and Teaching: An Interactive approach to language pedagogy*. White Plains, N.Y: Person Longman.
- Cheng, Y. S. (2002). Factors associated with foreign language writing anxiety. *Foreign Language Annals*, 35.647-656.
- Cheng, Y. S. (2004). A measure of second language writing anxiety: Scale development and preliminary validation. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 13, (4), 313-335.
- Cheng, Y.S., Horwitz, E.K., & Schallert, D. L. (1999). Language Anxiety: Differentiating Writing and Speaking Components, *Language Learning*, 49(3), 417-446.
- Claypool, S. H. (1980). Teacher writing apprehension: Does it affect writing assignments across curriculum? (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No: ED 216 387
- Daly, J. A. (1979). Writing apprehension in the classroom: Teacher role expectancies of the apprehensive writer. *OT 0TR* Research in the Teaching of English, 13 (1), 37-44.
- Daly, J. A., & Miller, M. D. (1975). The empirical development of an instrument of writing apprehension. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 9, 242-249.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*, New Jersey, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.



- Faigley, L., Daly, J., & Witte, S. P. (1981). The role of writing apprehension in writing performance and competence. *Journal of Educational Research, 75*, 16-2.
- Gere, A. R., Schuessler, B. R., & Abbott, R. D. (1984). Measuring teachers' attitudes toward writing instruction . In R. Beach & L. Bridwell (Eds.), *New directions in composition research* (348-361). New York: Guilford.
- Hassan, B. A. (2001). The relationship between writing apprehension and self-esteem to the writing quality and quantity of EFL university students. *Mansoura Faculty of Education Journal, 39*, 1-36.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M., & Cope, J. A. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *Modern Language Journal, 70*, 125-132.
- Horwitz, E. K. & Young, D. J. (1991). *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Jahin, J. H. (2012). The effect of peer reviewing on writing apprehension and essay writing ability of prospective EFL teachers, *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 37*(11), 60-84. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2012v37n11.3>
- Kara, S. (2013). Writing Anxiety: A Case Study on Students' Reasons for Anxiety in Writing Classes, *Anadolu Journal of Educational Sciences, 3*(1), 103-11
- Kurt, G., & Atay, D. (2007). The effects of peer feedback on the writing anxiety of prospective Turkish teachers of EFL. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED502015>
- Lombana, C. H. (2002). Some issues for the teaching of writing. *PROFILE Issues in Teachers' Professional Development, 3*(1), 44-51
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991). Methods and results in the study of anxiety and language learning: A review of the literature. *Language Learning, 41*(1), 85-117.

- Morris, L. W., Davis, M. A., & Hutchings, C. H. (1981). Cognitive and emotional components of anxiety: Literature review and a revised worry-emotionality scale. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 73*, 541-555.
- Nunan, D.(2003). *Practical English language teaching*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill
- Öztürk, H., & Çeçen S. (2007). The effects of portfolio keeping on writing anxiety of EFL students, *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 3*(2), 218-236
- Palmquist, M., & Young, R. (1992). The notion of giftedness and student expectations about writing. *Written Communication, 9*, 137-169.
- Rezaei, M.M., Jafari, S.M., & Younas, M. (2014). Iranian EFL Students' Writing Anxiety: Levels, Causes and Implications, *English for Specific Purposes World, 42*(15), 1-10.
- Robayo, A. M., & Hernandez, L. S. (2013) Collaborative writing to enhance academic writing development through project work. *How journal, 20*, 130-148
- Rodriguez, V. (2004). *Academic writing for prospective English teachers at Universidad de la Amazonia* (Unpublished master's thesis). Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá, Colombia.
- Rodriguez, Y., Delgado, V., & Colon, J. (2009). Foreign language writing anxiety among preservice EFL teachers. *Lenguas Modernas, (33)*, 21-31.
- Salem, M. S. (2007). The effect of journal writing on written performance, writing apprehension, and attitudes of Egyptian English majors. (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation), Pennsylvania State University.
- Silva, T. (1993). L1 vs L2 writing: ESL graduate students' perceptions. *TESL Canada, 10*, 27-47
- Spielberger, C. D. (1983). *Manual for the state-trait anxiety inventory*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.

- Susoy, Z., & Tanyer, S. (2013). A closer look at the foreign language writing anxiety of Turkish EFL pre-service teachers. Retrieved from [https://www.academia.edu/5158766/1\\_A\\_Closer\\_Look\\_at\\_the\\_Foreign\\_Language\\_Writing\\_Anxiety\\_of\\_Turkish\\_EFL\\_Pre-service\\_Teachers](https://www.academia.edu/5158766/1_A_Closer_Look_at_the_Foreign_Language_Writing_Anxiety_of_Turkish_EFL_Pre-service_Teachers)
- Young, D. (1991). Creating a Low Anxiety Classroom Environment: What does language anxiety research suggest? *The Modern Language Journal*, 75, 426-439.
- Zerey, Öz. (2013) Pre-service EFL teachers' foreign language writing anxiety: Some associated factors. Retrieved from <http://dergiler.ankara.edu.tr/dergiler/27/2026/21087.pdf>
- Zhang, H. (2011). A study on ESL writing anxiety among Chinese English majors - Causes, effects and coping strategies for ESL writing anxiety.(D-essay in English Didactics.) Kristianstad University, Sweden.