

**ENGLISH WRITING ANXIETY AMONG UNDERGRADUATE
EFL STUDENTS IN SAUDI ARABIA**

BADAR ALSHAMMARI

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Department of Language and Linguistics

University of Essex

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to address the phenomenon of English anxiety and writing anxiety in Saudi undergraduate students in their first year and second year of studying English language at university level. The level of foreign language anxiety and the factors leading to English writing anxiety among English undergraduate students were explored using a sequential mixed method design with a survey and semi-structured interviews. Data were collected quantitatively via an online self-reported survey to determine the level of foreign language anxiety and anxiety in English writing classrooms among EFL undergraduate students. The semi-structured interviews were used to learn about students' and teachers' strategies in dealing with English writing anxiety, as well as provide additional information about factors associated with the writing anxiety of undergraduate students. The questionnaire and the interview questions were adapted from Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and Cheng (2004) Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI). The most common factors emerged from the interviews associated with the writing anxiety of EFL undergraduate students were "time limit", "fear of negative evaluation", "lack of students' understanding", "classroom environment", "exam", "lack of preparation", "work team in writing class", "previous writing experiences", and "lack of motivation in writing classroom". Furthermore, the most common coping strategies used by undergraduate students were positive thinking, relaxation techniques, working in groups, preparation, motivation, and peer seeking. The study discusses practical and instructional implications and suggested several strategies based on pedagogically sound approaches to help reduce writing anxiety in apprehensive language learners.

Keywords: foreign language anxiety, writing anxiety, FLCAS, SLWAI, Saudi Arabia

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables.....	xi
List of Figures.....	xiii
List of Appendices	xiv
List of Abbreviations.....	xv
CHAPTER ONE	1
Introduction.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Background of Study	5
Brief Context of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia.....	14
Problem Statement.....	20
Research Objectives.....	24
Research Questions.....	25
Research Motivation and Significance for the Study	26
Method.....	29
Organization of the Thesis	30
CHAPTER TWO	32
Literature Review.....	32
Introduction.....	32
Anxiety.....	32
Anxiety Definitions.....	32
Foreign Language Anxiety	36

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)	41
Specific Anxieties Related to Foreign Language Anxiety.....	42
General Foreign Language Anxiety in EFL Learners.....	48
Sources of Foreign Language Anxiety	50
Past Studies of Anxiety of Learning Foreign Languages in Saudi Arabia.....	52
General Findings on FLA Levels and Causes.....	53
Academic Impact and Pedagogical Implications.....	54
Skill-Specific Anxiety: Reading and Speaking.....	56
The Effects of FLA on Language Performance	58
Writing Anxiety	59
Writing Anxiety Definitions	59
Foreign Language Writing Anxiety (FLWA)	62
Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI).....	63
Types of Writing Anxiety in Second Language Learning (SLWAI)	64
Causes of Writing Anxiety.....	66
The Effect of Second Language Writing Anxiety on Students' Writing Performance.....	69
Previous Studies on L2 Writing Anxiety	70
Theoretical Framework	84
Chapter Summary	87
CHAPTER THREE	88
Research Methodology	88
Introduction.....	88
Research Paradigm.....	88
Pragmatism	93
Research Methodology	98

Sequential Explanatory Design.....	101
Participants.....	103
Research Site.....	107
Linking Site and Sample to Research Objectives	108
Timeline of Research Phases	109
Data Collection Instruments	110
The FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986)	113
The SLWAI (Cheng, 2004).....	115
Semi-Structured Interviews: Students' Interview	117
Semi-structured interviews: Teachers' interview	120
Research Ethics	121
Data Collection Procedure	122
Pilot Study.....	122
Main Study.....	124
Data Analysis	126
Data Quality	129
Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings	131
Chapter Summary	131
Findings.....	133
Introduction.....	133
Response Rate	134
The FLCAS Students Questionnaire.....	135
Overall Level of Foreign Language Anxiety	135
Specific Anxieties Related to FLCA.....	136
Description of Individual FLCAS Statements	138
Description of Communication Apprehension	141

Description of Test Anxiety.....	143
Description of Fear of Negative Evaluation	144
The SLWAI Students Questionnaire	145
Overall Students' Writing Anxiety Level	145
Types of Writing Anxiety	146
Note. This figure is based on the researcher's data	148
Description of Individual SLWAI Statements	148
Description of Cognitive Anxiety	151
Description of Somatic Anxiety.....	153
Description of Avoidance Behaviour.....	154
Data Analysis and Results of the Qualitative Phase Two.....	155
Factors Contributing to English Language Writing Anxiety	157
Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings	186
Coping Strategies	188
Chapter Summary	203
CHAPTER FIVE	204
Discussion of the Findings.....	204
Introduction.....	204
Discussion of the Findings.....	204
Discussion on Findings of Research Question 1: Levels of Anxiety.....	205
Discussion on Findings of Research Question 2: Levels of Writing Anxiety	212
Discussion on Findings of Research Question 3: Contributing Factors.....	219
Discussion on Findings of Research Question 4: Student Coping Strategies.....	220
Discussion on Findings of Research Question 5: Teacher Strategies.....	225

CHAPTER SIX.....	230
Conclusion	230
Introduction.....	230
Conclusion	230
Implications of the Study	233
Teaching Pre-writing and Drafting Strategies	239
Relaxation Methods	240
Participation and Collaboration	241
Responding to Students' Errors	242
Peer Feedback	242
Motivation and Receiving Praise	243
Development and Expansion of the Curriculum.....	243
Methodological Contributions	244
Limitations of the Study.....	245
Recommendations for Future Research	247
References.....	250
Appendices.....	277

List of Tables

Table 1	Summary of FLA Definitions.....	38
Table 2	Comparison of Research Philosophies	92
Table 3	The Teacher Interviewees' Profile	106
Table 4	Research Questions and Instruments	111
Table 5	The classification of FLCAS	113
Table 6	Results of Cronbach's Alpha coefficients (n=21)	123
Table 7	Research Response Rate	135
Table 8	Descriptive Statistics for Student Overall English Language Anxiety	136
Table 9	Descriptive Statistics of Related Anxiety Types	137
Table 10	Descriptive Statistics for the Scores of the Highest Four Items on FLCAS.....	139
Table 11	Descriptive Statistics for The Frequency of The Highest Three Items on FLCAS.....	141
Table 12	Descriptive Statistics of Communication Apprehension.....	142
Table 13	Descriptive Statistics of Test Anxiety	143
Table 14	Descriptive Statistics of Fear of Negative Evaluation.....	144
Table 15	Descriptive Statistics for Student Overall English Writing Anxiety	146
Table 16	Descriptive Statistics of the Type of Writing Anxiety (SLWAI).....	147
Table 17	The Mean and Std. Deviation of Each Category of Writing Anxiety	149
Table 18	Descriptive Statistics for The Frequency Of The Highest Four Items On (SLWAI)	150
Table 19	Descriptive Statistics of Cognitive Anxiety	151
Table 20	Descriptive Statistics of Somatic Anxiety	153
Table 21	Descriptive Statistics of Avoidance Behaviour	154

Table 22	Main Themes, Sub-Themes, and Sub-Subthemes from Phase Two.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
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List of Figures

Figure 1	Classification of FLA (Adapted from Horwitz et al., 1986)	37
Figure 2	The Basic Elements of the Research Process (developed by the researcher)	89
Figure 3	The Three Types of Anxiety.....	138
Figure 4	The Three Types of Writing Anxiety	148
Figure 5	Themes of the Semi-structured Interview	158
Figure 6	Participants' perceptions of common experiences of time limits	161
Figure 7	Participants' Perceptions of Fear and Negative Evaluation	166
Figure 8	Participants' Perceptions of Their Lack of Understanding	172

List of Appendices

Appendix 1	Participant Information Sheet.....	277
Appendix 2	Survey of the main study link: https://questionpro.com/t/AWUrgZxcyc	279
Appendix 3	The sample of translated scale of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety	281
Appendix 4	Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale	282
Appendix 5	The main questionnaire of the study: https://questionpro.com/t/AWUrgZxcyc	287
Appendix 6	Interview Questions: Students.....	289
Appendix 7	Interviews for Teachers	290
Appendix 8	The coding scheme of the qualitative data analysis (Student and Teacher).	291
Appendix 9	Kondo and Ying-Ling's Coping Strategies as applied by this study's participants	304

List of Abbreviations

CA	Communication Apprehension
CWAI	Causes of Writing Anxiety Inventory
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
FLA	Foreign Language Anxiety
ELC	English Language Centre
FLCAS	Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale
FLWA	Foreign Language Writing Anxiety
ESL	English as a Second Language
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
HEIs	Higher Educational Institutions
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
ESL	English as a Second Language
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoE	Ministry of Education
NTP	National Transformation Plan
SLWAI	Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Introduction

The English language is a global language and is used as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) within formal education (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Within Saudi Arabia, English is a foreign language rather than the nation's mother tongue, which is Arabic. According to Ullah (2017), English has long been the most used language globally. As such, English has become an essential skill for students who desire to earn degrees in technical fields, and, in many cases, access to employment in these fields is restricted by language ability (Tanielian, 2017). One in five people on the planet speaks English, comprising an estimated 1.75 billion speakers (Al-Rojaie, 2023). According to Alnasser (2022), almost 70% of scientific and linguistic publications published globally are in English. English is also the primary language used for international conferences and debate panels. In addition, English has been firmly established as the international language of science and technology, as well as the language of the Internet and virtual communication (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).

Saudi Arabia was placed 68th out of 70 countries in recent research that indexed the competencies of non-native English-speaking nations (Education First, 2015). This analysis indicates that English language proficiency in Saudi Arabia and other nations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is much lower than the worldwide average (Aldossary, 2024). Along with this historical event, Saudi Arabia has undergone another historic transformation, i.e., the strategic growth of EFL learning in

the domain of education in the second decade of the twenty-first century (Al-Mwzaiji & Muhammad, 2023). The Saudi Ministry of Higher Education is committed to achieving excellence in effective English language teaching and learning in education. However, progress has been slow and continues to be insufficient, particularly at the college level (Alshammari, 2021).

It has been extensively documented that Saudi learners of EFL encounter challenges in attaining proficiency in the English language. Alshanrani (2016, as cited in Alsalooli & Al-Tale, 2022) has illustrated that despite efforts by the Saudi government to reform EFL education by introducing English in primary schools in 2001, Saudi EFL learners still struggle to reach a satisfactory level of competence. The significance of English in the Saudi community is underscored by a variety of social, cultural, historical, and economic factors (Moskovsky & Picard, 2018). Moreover, in recent times, official Saudi higher education institutions exclusively offer English as a foreign language (Alharbi, 2019). Research publications from the last few years demonstrate that Saudi universities now focus more on teaching English as a foreign language, according to multiple studies. Almuhammadi (2024) studies how teachers can include 21st-century skills into their EFL teaching methods. Alnasser (2022) studies how educators create language policies that help teach English as a Foreign Language. The authors Alzhrani and Alkubaidi conducted research about the shift between English as a Foreign Language and English as a Second Language in Saudi Arabia during 2020. Alharbi (2019) delivers a complete evaluation of EFL programs, together with Alqahtani (2019), who studies how different stakeholders view the learning results of these programs. Als-Seghayer (2014) evaluated ineffective teaching methods, and Alrashidi and Phan (2015) studied English education in Saudi Arabia. Their study

reveals how the nation seeks to enhance English education for cultural and economic modernization while maintaining its established social norms (Almuhammadi, 2024). According to Waked et al. (2024), EFL university students in Saudi Arabia are currently preparing for their future during a period of unprecedented rapid cultural and economic transition. Although the country still strongly maintains its collectivist and communally hierarchical social structure (Alrabai, 2018), Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 plan aims to shift the primary national revenue source from oil to more sustainable means. Vision 2030, a national transformation plan, prioritizes English proficiency for economic diversification and international communication, technology, trade, and business (Alshehri, 2024).

As a result, English is the only obligatory foreign language as a medium of teaching at higher education institutions, bridging the gap for knowledge exchange and involvement. However, Alrabai (2018) indicates significant gaps, such as limited professional development opportunities and the gap between English and Arabic medium instruction, indicating the need for continuous improvement in language education to meet the evolving demands of a changing society. Efforts to enhance 21st-century skills acquisition among English teachers in Saudi Arabian universities are crucial to align educational practices with the country's vision for sustainable development and economic growth (Arabia, 2018; Almuhammadi, 2024).

A review of the literature has revealed that students in foreign language contexts, such as in Saudi Arabia, are most likely to demonstrate below-average English skills (e.g., Al Alqahtani, 2019; Alshammari, 2021). Hopkyns (2014) explored the attitudes and perceptions of female Emirati undergraduate students and primary school teachers regarding global English and its impact on local culture and identity. After analysing

data from open-response questionnaires filled out by 35 undergraduates and 12 teachers, the results revealed a range of concerns and perspectives. While English was seen as essential for global communication and career advancement, there were fears it could erode Emirati traditions. Younger students embraced English more, while older teachers were more cautious. Participants called for a balanced approach to education that promotes bilingualism while safeguarding cultural heritage.

Despite having studied English for a minimum of six years, students who take language proficiency assessments, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), tend to perform poorly and are unlikely to possess the necessary level of competence for university (Alsaloohi & Al-Tale, 2022; Alqahtani, 2019; Alshammari, 2021). Consequently, students might demonstrate reduced capacity in terms of planning, writing, proofreading, and revising due to insufficient lexical resources and/or compositional skills. Yet, problems in language proficiency could be due to language anxiety (Alshammari, 2022). While general anxiety refers to the state of nervousness that something bad is going to occur (Oxford, 2010), language anxiety is “the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning a second language” (McIntyre, 1999, p.27). Such emotions led some students to feel like a ‘failure’ (Hopkins & Gkonou, 2023).

Moreover, language anxiety is delineated from other manifestations of anxiety under its intricate amalgamation of concepts, beliefs, self-assessments, and conduct commonly observed within language educational settings. This phenomenon emerges as a consequence of the multifaceted nature of the learning process (Syahrul et al., 2018). Foreign/second language anxiety (FLA) associates anxiety with foreign/second language learning (James et al., 2020). This form of anxiety arises due to negative

emotional responses toward the acquisition of a foreign language (Hopkins & Gkonou, 2023; Horwitz, 1986). College students' foreign/second language skills are still developing. When they are required to communicate in this language, they tend to feel anxious (Yan & Liang, 2022). Language anxiety is encountered by university students, leading to debilitating levels of anxiety (James et al., 2020).

Similarly, students in Saudi Arabia with limited English proficiency and communication tend to experience anxiety (Alshammari, 2022). Although there is limited awareness of language anxiety and writing anxiety as specific factors contributing to poor English proficiency among Saudi students, and despite insufficient research to fully confirm this, anxiety may still hinder students' progress in learning English within the classroom. On the other hand, writing anxiety is an emotional factor that is more researched with adults than with young learners (Nilsson, 2019). Due to its proven negative impact on writing performance, it needs to be identified and reduced in the classroom (Cheng, 2004; Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021). My current research investigated the influence of EFL anxiety and writing anxiety among Saudi undergraduate students, as well as strategies for mitigating such anxieties. The content of this chapter is outlined in the following order: introduction, background of the study, problem statement, the purpose of the study, research questions, definition of terms, significance, assumptions, and a chapter conclusion.

Background of Study

It has been argued that FLA is not simply general classroom anxiety but rather involves a complex range of sentiments, beliefs, and behaviours associated with acquiring a language in an educational environment (Waked et al., 2024). Horwitz et al.

(1986) argue that FLA is an independent type of anxiety, which is traumatic for many students attending foreign language courses. Research on FLA consists of several studies addressing the influence of anxiety on performance in the classroom, speaking, language testing, listening, reading, and writing skills (Alazeer & Ahmed, 2023; Alsalooli Al-Tale, 2022; Naibaho, 2022). According to Horwitz et al. (1986) and Gkonou et al. (2017), FLA is conceptually like three other performance-related anxieties: communication apprehension (CA), fear of negative social evaluation, and test anxiety. CA is a shyness related to fear of communicating, including difficulty speaking in groups or public, and listening to verbal messages. Fear of negative evaluation differs from test anxiety as it focuses on perceptions of others rather than objective evaluation. Foreign language test anxiety occurs during formal evaluation or real-time language use by the student. However, early studies on FLA have primarily focused on examining the FLA in the classroom in three distinct forms of performance anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986; Horwitz, 2017). In addition, there is a lot of evidence showing that FLA has detrimental effects on achievement and enjoyment, which highlights how important it is to handle anxiety in EFL classes (Alazeer & Ahmed, 2023; Naibaho, 2022). Further, research has examined the interplay between enjoyment and anxiety in learners, emphasizing the mutual impact of positive and negative emotions (Gkonou et al., 2017; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).

According to Horwitz et al. (1986), anxious students may avoid classroom activities they are afraid of due to a lack of preparation, skill, background, or motivation. Foreign language anxiety may influence students' courses and major selections in the US context, as well as their eventual career paths. FLA may also play a role in student

resistance to foreign language requirements. Horwitz et al. (1986) go on to say that in a foreign language classroom, learners may feel unable to convey their thoughts. In essence, FLA can affect academic performance, success, and motivation in foreign language tasks (Abdel Latif, 2015), students are likely to exhibit poorer performance in foreign language writing (Cheng, 2002, 2004; Gawi, 2020), and has negative impacts on foreign language writing, such as motivation (e.g., Abdel Latif, 2015; Gannoun & Deris, 2023), self-efficacy in writing (e.g., Cheng, 2004; Abdel Latif, 2019), and both high and low evidence-based correlations (Li, 2022).

Moreover, enrolment in the US in foreign languages has decreased since 2013, as well as overall collegiate enrolment, which declined by 5% from 2020 to 2021 in higher education (Nadworny, 2021). Higher levels of FLA are accompanied by lower academic outcomes in EFL classes (Altınmakas & Bayyurt, 2019), including poor writing quality, e.g., increased use of concrete words, and brevity of exposition (Waked et al., 2023). Studies have shown that anxiety negatively impacts the writing outcomes of first-language learners (Csizér & Piniel, 2013; Daly & Miller, 1975; Leki, 1990, as cited in Sabti et al., 2019). Empirical evidence suggests that high-anxious learners are acknowledged to attain poorer foreign language command (e.g., Abdel Latif, 2015), including lower writing performance (e.g., Cheng, 2002). Other studies found that test and communication anxieties were found to be major sources of anxiety, followed by classroom and negative evaluation anxieties, respectively (Jamshed et al., 2024).

The goal of writing in English, according to the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Saudi Arabia, is “considered [to be] achieved when the student can communicate by producing correct grammar and proper written organization” (Aljafen, 2013, p. 1). Therefore, within this context, EFL students from Saudi Arabia may possess

insufficient knowledge regarding the appropriate and necessary skills associated with English writing, leading to difficulties in both written and verbal communication in English (Alamri et al., 2021; Aljafen, 2013; Albaqami, 2023). There has been a recent interest in the literature to identify the FLA and writing anxiety in EFL classrooms and to determine the factors associated with the writing anxiety of EFL undergraduate students (Jamshed et al., 2024; James et al., 2020).

Several factors influence the emergence of anxiety in students, including fear of assessment and criticism from teachers, the superior performance of classmates, high expectations, fear of poor outcomes, and linguistic challenges (Gatcho & Hajan, 2019; Hidayati, 2018). In addition, various factors contributing to students' anxiety in the process of acquiring the English language encompass deficiencies in vocabulary, challenges in pronunciation, inadequate preparation, grammatical uncertainties, and insufficient prior knowledge regarding classroom activities. These included apprehensions related to the potential of making errors, concerns about receiving unfavourable evaluations, trepidation regarding ridicule from peers, and a notable lack of self-confidence (Alazeer & Ahmed, 2023; Alshehri, 2024). Meanwhile, Zemni and Alrefaee (2020) noted that textual resources, such as obscure vocabulary and unfamiliar pronunciation, played a more significant role in generating reading anxiety compared to individual sources of reading anxiety, like the fear of making errors and challenges with pronunciation. These anxieties can significantly impact students' speaking competence and communication skills, hindering their language learning progress. Research suggests that students' anxiety can negatively affect the quality of their writing, highlighting the importance of addressing emotional factors in the language learning process (Cheng, 2004; Abdel Latif, 2015). Thus, this study aims to contribute to the

body of descriptive research on FLA in EFL classrooms among Saudi undergraduate students.

Studies have investigated writing anxiety in foreign language classrooms (Cheng, 2002), and they have found that FLA and foreign language writing anxiety (FLWA) are “related but distinguishable constructs” (Cheng et al., 1999, p. 436). FLA can occur during the learning process in speaking, writing, reading, and listening skills, with a particular emphasis on writing due to its intricate nature, involving a multitude of stages such as pre-writing, drafting, receiving feedback, revising, editing, and ultimately submitting (Nurkamto et al., 2024). Studies also found that the main causes of foreign language reading anxiety are difficulty in grasping the meaning of new words, pronunciation, difficulty reading extensive texts, and the fear of making mistakes (Alsaleh, 2018; Gawi, 2020). The composition skill poses the greatest challenge for many EFL learners, as feelings of uncertainty, unease, and apprehension often arise when tasked with producing written work in a second language within an educational setting (Nurkamto et al., 2024). Writing has always been regarded as playing an essential role in language learning. Students commonly face some difficulties, such as deficient writing abilities and inadequate support from instructors, inability to organize paragraphs, grammatical problems, and psychological problems (Nurkamto et al., 2024; Syarifudin, 2020). Those problems lead to another serious problem, so-called writing anxiety.

FLWA generally occurs when students are faced with foreign language writing assignments and are understood to have negative consequences, such as nervousness,

fear, and worry (Cheng, 2002; Syarifudin, 2020). According to Bai (2017), English writing anxiety stems from individual variables or poor performance in the classroom when acquiring and practicing writing skills. FLWA has been a research subject for many years, since anxiety has been an important research subject in EFL studies (Afdalia et al., 2023; Paramarti et al., 2023; Sabti et al., 2019; Kusumaningputri et al., 2018; Rohmah & Muslim, 2021). For many EFL students, anxiety can occur in writing when students feel full of doubt, uncomfortable, and worried when they are required to write by using a foreign language in the classroom environment (Waked et al., 2024).

According to English learners, the writing skill presents the greatest challenge to acquire, and Arabic speakers who learn English encounter extra difficulties because Arabic writing uses a separate alphabet system from their native language (Aldossary 2024; Al-Rojaie 2023). The major differences between Arabic and English language structures create additional problems because their phonological systems and syntactic patterns, and morphological structures vary widely (Swan & Smith, 2001). Earlier studies have identified different factors contributing to writing anxiety, such as cognitive anxiety (worry or fear of negative evaluation), somatic anxiety (physiological arousal symptoms), and avoidance behaviour (Albaqami, 2023; Aljafen, 2013; Alrabai, 2018; Al-Shboul, 2015; Cheng, 2004).

Anxiety in EFL writing has been associated with various contributing factors, including insufficient motivation for writing, deficiencies in writing instruction, apprehension towards feedback from teachers, limited understanding of the writing process, skills, and vocabulary, inadequate linguistic proficiency in their native language, and psychological aspects like self-assurance and self-efficacy (Fareed et al., 2016; Nurkamto et al., 2024; Syarifudin, 2020). Research supports that the reasons for

students facing writing problems include limited knowledge of writing aspects, and comparison and contrast essays. Personal reasons such as writing dislike, lack of practice, negative perception, anxiety, low motivation, inadequate teaching process, and limited time in tests also contribute to FLWA (Syarifudin, 2020). Pilotti et al. (2024) found that FLWA occurs due to concerns about appraisal/evaluation and state of mind, e.g., thoughts related to writers' negative expectations. Language learners may experience a considerable amount of writing anxiety when they are unfamiliar with topics that require productive skills compared to familiar ones (e.g., Quvanch & Si Na, 2022).

There are also several potential factors contributing to writing anxiety, including apprehension towards receiving negative evaluations and facing tests, time constraints, diminished self-assurance, inadequate writing skills, language barriers, limited topical understanding, lack of exposure or inadequate writing exercises, striving for flawless outcomes, and a high volume of assignments (Paramarti et al., 2023). Among these, linguistic difficulties are particularly significant, as they often reflect learners' limited language proficiency, which can hinder their ability to express ideas effectively and increase anxiety during writing tasks. Linguistics is recognized as a common challenge faced by learners when it comes to writing (Wahyuni & Umam, 2017). There is evidence in the literature, on the other hand, that suggests that language learners' prerequisite knowledge of a topic plays a major role in the accomplishment of its relevant writing task and enhances their language skills (Zhang, 2011). Limited empirical investigations, nonetheless, have substantially overlooked the phenomenon of writing anxiety within the context of Saudi undergraduate students and the various determinants that contribute to this skill-specific anxiety (Albaqami, 2023).

Consequently, it is imperative to ascertain the extent of writing anxiety prevalent among undergraduate students and to identify the factors that influence it.

Coping strategies are behavioural and psychological efforts employed by people to reduce and enable them to tolerate any unfavourable events (James et al., 2020). In addition, the effective use of writing strategies will enhance writing abilities and reduce writing anxiety, as stated by Flowers and Hayes' (1981) notion of the recursive writing process (Rezaei & Jafari, 2014; Canada & Miralles, 2022). There has been research on the writing process that has clarified teaching techniques and developed instruction and strategies to assist learners in overcoming problems they have when writing (Canada & Miralles, 2022; Masriani et al., 2018). Furthermore, according to Belyaeva (2022), writing strategies that prioritize student involvement, foster positive attitudes toward writing, and enhance exposure are pivotal elements of effective writing education. In Saudi Arabia, at Saudi University, where the study was done, researchers have discovered that certain English as a second language (ESL) students tend to write short and incorrect content; other writing issues have also been noted, such as avoiding writing tasks (e.g., Alqahtani, 2019; Alharbi, 2020). Though there have been various useful types of research on writing anxiety, the thesis is currently looking to investigate if writing instruction and students' writing strategies have a substantial impact on students' writing anxiety. The results and implications derived from this study are expected to contribute to educational enhancement, mainly, it will take place within the target institution (Saudi University) in the first place. Teaching staff and course designers at universities will be more aware of such challenges and better understand how to help students improve their writing skills and minimize their writing anxiety.

The targeted population of the present study was undergraduate students and teachers of English within the College of Arts and Letters at Saudi University in Saudi Arabia. Data were collected from first-year and second-year male students from Saudi Arabia who were pursuing their undergraduate studies in the English courses within the English Language department within the College of Arts and Letters at Saudi University. The English program has a four-year duration, with each year divided into two semesters. The department delivers academic courses that culminate in a bachelor's degree.

The preparatory year program's primary objective is to equip first-year students with the necessary skills to transition successfully from high school to the academic challenges of university. The curriculum focuses on enhancing students' linguistic proficiency, knowledge in linguistic and literary studies, critical thinking abilities, and fostering independent thought. These competencies position English language graduates as uniquely qualified to pursue careers across various sectors and settings, including education, government agencies, corporate enterprises, media organizations, and roles in language instruction and translation services. In this study, the researcher used close-response questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as supporting tools to collect information on students' responses to their writing anxiety in academic writing classes.

Concerns regarding FLWA are predominant among some Saudi students studying English as a foreign language in higher education, especially in Saudi Arabia, as proficiency in English as a foreign language is increasingly crucial for both professional and academic success. Alshammari (2022) revealed several possible underlying reasons why Saudi EFL learners perform poorly in English. A major issue

was the gap between theory and practice. Anxiety was also noted to play a significant role in this phenomenon. Therefore, how to assist students in relieving the pressure of EFL writing has become an urgent problem to be solved. The purpose of this study is to assist English students in understanding their level of language anxiety, causes concerning writing anxiety, coping strategies that reduce students' anxiety in English language writing, and ultimately improve their writing performance.

Brief Context of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia emerged as a nation in 1932 and experienced major economic and social changes after oil discovery because the government directed funds toward educational development and infrastructure construction (Alsayyad & Nawar, 2017; Alghamdi, 2017). The country advances toward a knowledge-based economy through Vision 2030, while education receives the majority of its national budget (Alshareef, 2023). Arabic functions as the official language, although English serves as the primary language in business operations and medical services, and educational institutions (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). The social framework of this community is based on Islamic principles, which determine how men and women interact through separate spaces and preserve established social customs (Almalki, 2023). The English language learning experience of Saudi students depends on three main elements, which include linguistic factors and cultural aspects, and policy-related components, because these elements influence their EFL writing anxiety.

Saudi Arabia has heavily invested in higher education, allocating significant government funding and scholarships to support students and institutions. Saudi Arabia's National Transformation Plan (NTP), introduced under the broader Vision

2030 initiative, places education reform at the centre of its strategy to diversify the economy and reduce reliance on oil revenues (Alyami, 2014; Vision 2030, 2016). A major objective of this reform is to improve teacher training, modernize curricula, and foster innovation, with a specific focus on closing the skills gap between university graduates and labour market demands (Oxford Business Group, 2020). These priorities reflect a national commitment to aligning educational outcomes with the evolving needs of a knowledge-based economy. The MoE, which oversees both K–12 and higher education, plays a critical role in coordinating these reforms and managing the country's extensive public university system. Currently, the MoE supervises more than 29 public universities across approximately 140 campuses, each contributing to the national goal of building a globally competitive and innovation-driven education system (Ministry of Education, 2023). These institutions focus on infrastructure, academic quality, and technology development aligned with Vision 2030 goals, including ambitions to place Saudi universities in the global top 200. Together, these initiatives signal a strategic shift in Saudi Arabia's approach to human capital development, positioning education as a foundational pillar of socio-economic transformation.

Saudi higher education is also expanding internationally through scholarship programs like the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP), sending thousands of students abroad to acquire advanced skills (Brutt-Griffler et al., 2020). Additionally, partnerships with foreign universities and the promotion of English as an essential academic and professional tool reflect the Kingdom's strategic emphasis on English proficiency as part of its knowledge economy transition (Barnawi&Al-Hawsawi, 2017). This educational context is crucial for understanding the challenges and opportunities

faced by Saudi EFL university students, particularly in mastering the English skills necessary for academic success and national development.

Saudi higher education institutions encounter multiple essential obstacles, which include weak research output and scarce academic personnel, and insufficient educational materials, while student numbers continue to grow. The research output becomes limited because researchers struggle with English proficiency and a lack of awareness, which hinders Vision 2030 internationalization and modernization goals (Alnasser, 2022). The educational content, together with instructional approaches, face criticism because they fail to reach quality benchmarks, while faculty development programs receive inadequate funding and have insufficient planning, according to Al-Seghayer (2014). The process of matching educational targets with employment sector requirements faces major obstacles that demand improved predictive abilities and strategic planning methods. The educational system faces direct effects from these problems, which demonstrate the necessity for specialized programs to enhance language ability and academic achievement for Saudi students in higher education (Hailemariam & Gebeyehu, 2020; Kovanen et al., 2020).

English has become an essential foreign language in Saudi Arabia, despite initial resistance due to cultural, linguistic, and religious factors. Since its introduction in the 1930s, English teaching has expanded steadily, now starting from primary school and becoming integral to higher education, aligned with Saudi Vision 2030 (Alrabai, 2018). Almost all Saudi universities have English departments staffed with faculty, many of whom hold degrees from English-speaking countries. However, language use policies in universities remain unclear, leading to inconsistent application of English on campus.

Saudi learners face several challenges, including interference from Arabic, cultural concerns about English diluting Saudi identity, limited authentic practice opportunities, and anxiety related to language learning (Alrabai, 2018). In particular, it is believed that teachers of English oversee encouraging or discouraging students from learning the language, as Alrabai (2018) asserts. An additional challenge, as highlighted in several studies, is that students studying English in classroom settings often lack opportunities to use the language in authentic contexts outside the classroom (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Alrabai, 2018). The term *authentic settings* refer to environments where learners engage in real-world, meaningful communication that mirrors how the target language is naturally used. However, as scholars such as Gilmore (2007) and van Lier (2014) note, authenticity is a contested and context-dependent concept. While some define it through the nature of the task or material, others emphasize learner perception and interaction as central to what constitutes authenticity. Teaching methods and attitudes toward English also significantly impact student motivation and proficiency. Overall, English language education plays a critical role in Saudi Arabia's economic diversification and international engagement goals.

English writing at the university level in Saudi Arabia presents significant challenges due to differences between spoken and written English, as well as structural and stylistic contrasts between Arabic and English (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Students struggle with organizing ideas, avoiding repetition, and adapting to academic writing conventions. Large class sizes and limited teaching resources often hinder personalized feedback and effective writing instruction (Ankawi, 2023). While some innovative methods like computer-assisted writing and process-oriented approaches have shown promise, traditional teaching methods, such as grammar-translation and rote copying,

still dominate (Alenezi, 2022). This limits students' development of communicative and writing skills. Teachers often focus on stronger students, neglecting weaker ones who may require more support (Alharbi, 2017). Many instructors come from diverse educational backgrounds and nationalities, which adds complexity to instructional approaches. Addressing these challenges through positive feedback, scaffolding, and curriculum reform is crucial for improving English writing proficiency to meet Saudi Arabia's educational and economic goals.

EFL bachelor students face numerous writing challenges, including language mechanics (grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation) issues, content organization, and academic writing skills such as topic selection and literature review writing. Writing anxiety, which is often linked to ineffective teaching practices and a lack of practice, negatively affects students' performance (Batubara & Fithriani, 2023). These are particularly severe in settings where English is learned as a foreign language, and the students receive little exposure to authentic academic writing. As a result, the students can be challenged not only to produce coherent text but to build confidence and to maintain motivation throughout the writing process. Various studies highlight how such stress can lead to procrastination, avoidance behaviour, and poorer scholarly outcomes (Cheng, 2004; Xu et al., 2025). Furthermore, the absence of direct instruction of academic genres as well as poor feedback from instructors may amplify students' anxiety, making them incapable of handling university-level writing tasks. Understanding such challenges is important for the development of effective pedagogic approaches that address both cognitive and affective needs of EFL students. This study, therefore, examines not only the ethology of writing anxiety among Saudi EFL

undergraduate students but also the coping mechanisms that they employ, illuminating how instruction and support can be more effectively aligned with learner needs.

Studies on EFL writing across various contexts, Oman, China, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia, document common struggles that university students face. These include limited vocabulary, difficulty with paraphrasing and summarizing, cohesion and coherence problems in written texts, and psychological barriers such as anxiety and low confidence (e.g., Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2018; Wang, 2020; Paramarti et al., 2023; Alqahtani, 2019). Effective methods suggested to improve writing are extensive reading, several drafts, use of dictionaries, teacher comments, and peer assistance (Altınmakas & Bayyurt, 2019; Bian & Wang, 2016; Febriani, 2023; Mustafa et al., 2023). These findings suggest adopting linguistic and affective assistance in EFL writing courses. While technical proficiency in the sense of vocabulary mastery and text structure is critical, emotional factors like motivation and anxiety are equally essential to guaranteeing students' accomplishment. For Saudi EFL students, these steps may need some adjustment to consider cultural norms, organizational culture, and students' scarce chances of practicing English beyond the class environment. By determining which of these methods are most effective or underemphasized among Saudi undergraduates, this study aims to contribute to more context-sensitive and student-centred teaching of writing.

In Saudi Arabia, research shows that ineffective teaching strategies and a lack of resources contribute to poor writing proficiency. Teachers identify limited vocabulary and sentence structure challenges influenced by the differences between Arabic and English orthography (Alkodimi & Al-Ahdal, 2021). Additionally, students who manage to overcome writing anxiety tend to prefer creative approaches such as

brainstorming and collaborative writing, which improve their confidence and performance (Al-Ahdal & Abduh, 2021).

Problem Statement

English language learners situated in nations where English functions as a second or foreign language frequently grapple with anxiety that adversely influences their language acquisition processes. Empirical studies indicate that approximately 30% of individuals engaged in second or foreign language acquisition exhibit varying degrees of anxiety (Horwitz, 2001, as cited in Jamshed et al., 2024). The issue at hand in this specific thesis is that university students in Saudi Arabia encounter significant levels of anxiety within the context of foreign language instruction (Gawi, 2020). Such anxiety has the potential to result in diminished participation in foreign language courses and adversely affect language skills encompassing listening, reading, and writing (Hopkyns & Gkonou, 2023; Yan & Liang, 2022). Although the demand for proficiency in foreign languages is on the rise in Saudi Arabia, the pervasive anxiety associated with foreign language education poses a substantial threat to the prospects of successful foreign language acquisition (Alrabai, 2018; Almuhammadi, 2024).

Many Saudi students at the university level can write, read, listen, and speak, but they are not able to yield good results due to anxiety (Alshehri, 2024). FLA may also impact students' performance (Al-Ahdal & Abduh, 2021). Additionally, FLA in EFL Saudi university students is a consequence of several factors, including making mistakes in English class, fear of their peers' evaluation, their lack of self-confidence, motivation, proficiency in English, which is low even after graduation, and self-efficacy (Abdala & Elnadeef, 2019; Al-Mwzaiji & Muhammad, 2023). Although several studies

have examined EFL learners in Saudi Arabia, there is still limited research that provides a comprehensive understanding of anxiety in general, and particularly skill-specific writing anxiety, among Saudi undergraduate students. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by exploring writing anxiety within this population.

Anxiety in foreign language writing, particularly in EFL contexts, has garnered significant attention in recent literature due to its profound impact on learners' writing performance and language (Canada & Miralles, 2022; Sabti et al., 2019). This is because writing anxiety, characterized by tension, nervousness, and worry experienced during the writing process, leads to unpleasant writing experiences, boredom, and diminishes the quality of their writing tasks (Wern & Rahmat, 2021). However, writing anxiety research among undergraduate students in Saudi Arabia is limited, as highlighted by Albaqami (2023). The lack of exposure to the English language, limited opportunities to practice English in the real world, and insufficient writing skills that cause challenges to EFL learners have been highlighted in previous studies (Alamri et al., 2021). EFL university learners are sometimes unmotivated and anxious in their attempts to engage in the writing process because of difficulties in demonstrating accurate, relevant, and readable content and ideas, spelling words correctly, showing consistent punctuation, and constructing grammatically correct sentences and paragraph structures (Alamri et al., 2021).

Albaqami (2023) indicates that English major students at Taif University in Saudi Arabia have high writing anxiety in class but low anxiety outside. In-class factors causing anxiety include fear of judgment, time pressure, unfamiliar topics, perfectionism, lack of practice, past negative experiences, and lack of resources. Additionally, Alsowat reported moderate levels of anxiety in Saudi female students

linked primarily to worrying about failing and testing. Alharbi (2019) and Aloairdhi (2019) reported that Saudi EFL learners are unwilling to write and seem confused, anxious, and lack self-confidence during writing classes.

Saudi EFL students' writing weakness has long been attributed, among other things, to a lack of incentive to write, fear of evaluation, and low confidence, as well as the complex nature of the task of writing itself (Aloairdhi, 2019; Waked et al., 2024). Regardless of the anxiety-inducing context or situation in which students are expected to write, little attempt has been made to investigate the potential sources of SLWAI in EFL contexts. Many studies on English writing anxiety have also been conducted with EFL students from various universities in Saudi Arabia (Albaqami, 2023; Alzahrani & Alshaikhi, 2023; Jamshed et al., 2024; Waked et al., 2024). To date, some studies have investigated writing anxiety; however, there remains a paucity of evidence detailing Saudi EFL university learners' perceptions about their anxieties with writing at Saudi University. The underexplored nature of writing anxiety in Saudi Arabian research provides a rationale for the present investigation. Jamshed et al. (2024) measured levels of writing anxiety among Saudi undergraduate students and concluded that the majority of the learners had an average level of writing anxiety. The insufficient research on the factors contributing to writing anxiety among EFL undergraduate students, as perceived by both students and teachers, remains a gap in the field of second language acquisition. Therefore, this study aims to fill a gap in the current EFL literature by investigating the factors contributing to writing anxiety among EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University in Saudi Arabia, an area that has not been thoroughly explored.

To this point, scholarly investigations into language anxiety have sought to elucidate the underlying factors contributing to writing apprehension across various

dimensions of writing proficiency (Fareed et al., 2016; Jawas, 2019; Nurkamto et al., 2024; Syarifudin, 2020). In this study, qualitative methods including interviews, diaries, and think-aloud protocols were employed to explore writing anxiety and its influence on EFL writing performance (Aripin & Rahmat, 2021; Sun et al., 2024). Research suggests that the feeling of writing anxiety in the foreign language classroom could also be present simply because of the instructor, limited time, peer competition, pressure, perfectionism, and fear of negative instructor evaluation and the classroom environment (Jawas, 2019; Sun et al., 2024). FL learners also experience linguistic challenges, limited topical knowledge, stress due to the pressure to produce flawless essays, a lack of confidence, and inadequate writing techniques (Syarifudin, 2020). The issue at hand has been far from satisfactory for the students in the first and second years, who experience anxiety in new classes and subjects they may not have previously studied.

Despite increasing interest in investigating the effects of second/foreign language writing anxiety on learners' writing performance and attitudes over the last three decades, the potential sources of this phenomenon have not been widely researched and identified, with limited attention paid to exploring writing anxiety in the writing process and the sources in depth. Moreover, despite certain scholarly investigations attempting to identify coping strategies for language anxiety (James, 2020; Rasool et al., 2023), there exists a notable deficiency of studies that have examined strategies specifically focused on alleviating writing anxiety from the perspectives of both students and educators. In light of the considerations, this research focuses on first- and second-year English students at Saudi University in Saudi Arabia and aims to investigate the perceptions of EFL writing learners and their instructors

regarding writing anxiety, the coping strategies they use to manage it, and the underlying factors contributing to this issue.

Research Objectives

The central purpose of this study is to contribute to the growth of FLA in general and writing anxiety among Saudi undergraduate students in particular. More specifically, the study aims to investigate the levels and dimensions of writing anxiety among English Language department students at Saudi University. By examining some cognitive, somatic, and avoidance aspects of writing anxiety, this research strives to seek the primary factors governing students' writing performance and affective responses. The research also seeks to determine what factors are associated with writing anxiety in this context and the potential coping strategies and solutions thereto. This study aims to investigate the level of FLA and FLWA among EFL students. It aims to investigate both the students' and teachers' perceptions of the causes of writing anxiety and the coping mechanisms used to deal with it. Understanding these factors will inform effective approaches to reduce anxiety and improve writing performance in EFL classrooms. The objective of this study is to reach these goals.

1. To investigate the level of foreign language anxiety among EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University.
2. To investigate the level of anxiety in English writing classrooms among EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University.
3. To determine factors associated with the writing anxiety of EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University.

4. To determine strategies employed by EFL undergraduate students to reduce their English writing anxiety.
5. To determine strategies employed by EFL teachers to reduce their students' writing anxiety.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this thesis aim to explore undergraduate students' experiences of general FLA, the factors contributing to writing anxiety, and the coping strategies employed by EFL teachers to alleviate students' writing anxiety. Considering the problem statement that forms the basis of the investigation, the following research questions were formulated based on the objectives of the study:

1. To what extent do EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University experience foreign language anxiety?
2. To what extent do EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University experience anxiety in English writing classrooms?
3. What factors are associated with the writing anxiety of EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University?
4. What strategies are employed by undergraduate students to reduce their English writing anxiety?
5. What strategies are employed by EFL teachers to reduce their students' English writing anxiety?

Research Motivation and Significance for the Study

At this stage, students are initially introduced to the responsibility of not just learning English writing as a skill but also using it for daily writing in and out of the classroom. The objective of this research is to contribute to the understanding of EFL teaching and learning by addressing gaps in the existing literature, with a focus on the Saudi context. I came to choose this topic for the following reasons. First, I have been involved in some instructional activities at Saudi University in Saudi Arabia for some time. As an instructor, I have observed that a considerable number of my students consider writing anxiety a major barrier to reaching their maximum potential as EFL students. What I observed is that the transformation of these students from writing in their first language, Arabic, in high school to creating academic writing in their second language, English, at the university stage indicates an important shift in these students' academic journeys. The experience of writing varies between high school and university levels. Most English writing classes just cover the fundamentals of sentence structure and how to write very short paragraphs. In high school, students are only involved in the basics of writing, whereas at the university level, they are expected to produce a high level of composition and meet the demands of academic essays. Also, brief paragraphs for the college's more advanced written assignments are very significant. Supervision, along with assistance, is needed during this rapid adjustment, which typically increases writing anxiety.

Secondly, several researchers (Cheng, 2004; Rezaei & Jafari, 2014; Al-Shboul & Huwari, 2015) have considered writing anxiety levels, sources, and impact on learning, but few have highlighted the important factors causing writing anxiety and proposed solutions to help future learners. Studies have indicated that undergraduate

students in Saudi Arabia encounter challenges related to FLWA due to their limited exposure and opportunities to practice English in an academic setting (Albaqami, 2023; Alzahrani & Alshaikhi, 2023; Waked et al., 2024).

Consequently, it is imperative to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the levels of foreign language writing anxiety (FLWA) to develop effective strategies for apprehensive writers within EFL contexts in Saudi Arabia. This study focuses on first- and second-year students in the English department at Saudi University because these early university years are critical periods for developing foundational writing skills and adjusting to academic demands.

Upon the opportunity to pursue my master's degree, I encountered the concept of FLA. I was aware that students learning a second language might encounter emotions of unease, apprehension, or concern upon commencing their second language acquisition. Thus, my master's thesis focused on researching the levels of writing anxiety experienced by undergraduate EFL learners studying in a British English instruction centre when writing in a foreign language. It was discovered that, despite most of the students having achieved an intermediate level of proficiency in English, their performance was still significantly affected by writing anxiety, either in or out of the educational environment. Hence, this realization has motivated me to explore the roots of the issue of writing anxiety during the initial phases of Saudi learners' learning process, namely during their undergraduate studies in English. Furthermore, this study examines the impact of writing anxiety on the foreign language learning process and explores strategies for managing this specific challenge.

Further, this study investigates the influence of writing anxiety on the process of foreign language learning. In the initial phase, the study will explore strategies for managing writing anxiety among learners. Further, being an EFL learner myself, I am familiar with and can relate to those who participated in both studies and their struggles, especially when it comes to writing in English. Learning the skill of writing properly in a foreign language can be particularly hard and overwhelming. As an English language student at college or university, it is essential not only to communicate effectively and earn academic qualifications but also to develop strong writing skills and overcome writing-related anxiety. Furthermore, the academic achievement of a learner is frequently reliant upon their ability to effectively express their ideas and thoughts through writing. Therefore, when studying a foreign language at this level in Saudi Arabia, as well as in a variety of other countries, it is common to have higher levels of stress and writing anxiety primarily connected to writing tasks.

Furthermore, this investigation is already complicated enough without adding the cultural background of Saudi Arabia. As a teacher in this setting, I am well aware of the specific difficulties that Saudi EFL students have, such as language and cultural barriers that could amplify their fear of writing. Developing appropriate strategies to overcome writing anxiety may be achieved by investigating these setting elements, which this study offers the potential to do. Subsequently, I am driven by an ambition to make a positive impact on the wider domain of English as a foreign language instruction and can make use of the cultural knowledge I have to interpret the findings of the present study. Writing anxiety has been the subject of a lot of research studies, but there needs to be more study that drills in on certain cultural settings and pedagogical stages. My objective is to help enlighten teachers in Saudi Arabia and throughout the world by

filling a knowledge gap in the literature through my studies at the College of Arts and Letters of Saudi in Saudi Arabia on English as a foreign language (EFL).

Method

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data collection to investigate writing anxiety among first- and second-year English majors at a Saudi university. Quantitative data were gathered through an online self-administered questionnaire, while semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into the causes of writing anxiety and the coping strategies used by students and instructors. Further methodological details are provided in Chapter 3.

This study used a sequential mixed-method sampling strategy (184 students) for the quantitative part (scale), and purposive sampling (10 students and 5 teachers) for the qualitative part of the study (semi-structured interviews). Respondents were tasked with completing a novel survey tool, devised by the investigator to address the study's inquiries. Elements of this survey were derived from FLCAS by Horwitz et al. (1986) and the SLWAI by Cheng (2004). Participants received the survey link via email, with the online questionnaire and informed consent form being translated into the participants' native language (Arabic).

Further details about instrument design, pilot testing, data collection procedures, and analysis are provided in Chapter 3. Additionally, to elicit the students' perceptions of language writing anxiety, a semi-structured interview was used. As proposed by Apsari and Satriani (2016), a semi-structured interview is designed to gather in-depth responses from respondents while also setting clear limits on questions to avoid broad student responses.

A semi-structured interview was employed to gain in-depth insights into the participants' perspectives and experiences regarding writing anxiety, allowing for follow-up questions to clarify and expand on their responses. The principal goal of using in-depth interviews as a qualitative data source for EFL learners is to fully comprehend their impressions and record their ideas and opinions (Patton, 2015). To address the research questions, semi-structured interviews were conducted in English with both students and teachers. Participants were asked about the factors contributing to their writing anxiety and the strategies they use to manage it.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is structured into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the background and provides a brief overview of higher education in Saudi Arabia, followed by the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, and the significance of the study. It concludes with a comprehensive discussion of the methodology. The second chapter presents an in-depth examination of the literature review and framework on FLA and writing anxiety. Chapter 3 details the methodology and the approach employed for conducting the research and collecting data. The analysis of the findings is carried out in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 addresses the discussion of findings. Chapter 6 provides the conclusions, implications, directions for future research in this field, limitations and recommendations.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), with a particular focus on writing anxiety and its impact on EFL learners' academic performance, motivation, and language acquisition. It highlighted that nearly 30% of

language learners experience some level of anxiety (Horwitz, 2001, as cited in Jamshed et al., 2024), emphasizing the vulnerability of Saudi university students. The chapter discussed how writing anxiety manifests through tension, fear of negative evaluation, low self-confidence, and perceived linguistic difficulties, which collectively hinder effective academic writing. Despite the growing importance of English proficiency in Saudi Arabia, writing anxiety remains a significant barrier to success (Alrabai, 2018; Almuhammadi, 2024).

Moreover, the chapter identified gaps in existing research, particularly the limited studies focusing on Saudi undergraduate EFL learners and their coping strategies within the unique cultural and educational context of Saudi Arabia. By outlining these issues, the chapter sets the foundation for the current study's aims to explore students' and instructors' perceptions of writing anxiety, contributing factors, and coping mechanisms.

The next chapter will build on this foundation by reviewing the relevant literature on FLA and writing anxiety, examining their types, causes, and the strategies used to reduce writing anxiety in EFL settings.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review targets both theoretical and empirical research on writing anxiety and language anxiety in EFL contexts with special focus on the higher education environment. The chapter begins with language anxiety and writing anxiety definitions and then moves on to discuss their various types as well as the main contributory factors. The aim is to present useful insights and implications for research and practice within the realm of EFL education. Subsequently, the review criticizes the psychological foundations of anxiety, differentiating between FLA and general anxiety. The review also criticizes the coping strategies used in the classroom to minimize writing anxiety among Saudi EFL learners. In addition, this review investigates the areas of research gaps, in this case, for writing anxiety among Saudi university learners and how cultural and instructional elements influence their experience. By synthesizing these findings, the review offers a vision towards developing context-specific strategies to counteract writing anxiety in Saudi EFL contexts.

Anxiety

Anxiety Definitions

Although the current study focuses on foreign language writing anxiety, it is vital to understand the general concept of anxiety in psychology. The term anxiety describes an unpleasant emotional state in which individuals exhibit feelings of tension,

worry, apprehension, and nervousness (Sieber et al., 1977). Anxious people are often tense, worried, frustrated, nervous, and apprehensive (Alnahidh & Altalhab, 2020). However, since anxiety is a psychological construct made up of numerous distinct components, it is challenging to come to a consensus on an accurate definition (García Marín, 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, Horwitz et al. (1986) conceptualized anxiety as a phenomenon involving subjective experiences of nervousness, fear, uneasiness, and worry, which are associated with the activation of the autonomic nervous system. As a result, they recognized three associated performance concerns, which are said to "provide useful conceptual building blocks for a description of foreign language anxiety" (Horwitz, 1986, p. 128): communication apprehension, test anxiety, and dread of poor evaluation. Building on her earlier work, Horwitz explains that language anxiety grows out of the way learners think and feel about themselves while navigating the unique challenges of learning a new language in the classroom.

Anxiety as a Psychological Construct

Psychologists typically define anxiety in their introduction to psychology as a sense of apprehension and dread, defined by an indistinct concern linked to a specific object or phenomenon (Hilgard et al., 1979, as cited in Hakim, 2019). Anxiety is a normal psychological state characterized by feelings of worry and behaviour such as nervousness, dread, and lack of confidence (Fareed et al., 2021). Broadly speaking, anxiety is a complex psychological construct with two well-established dimensions: "state anxiety," representing a temporary emotional response to stressful situations, and "trait anxiety," a more enduring predisposition to perceive stimuli as threatening and

react with anxiety. Even in its most simple representation, anxiety could be linked to feelings of frustration, insecurity, uneasiness, self-doubt, or apprehension, and it is related to self-esteem issues and natural ego-preserving fears (García, 2023).

From psychological aspects, anxiety is divided into three types as follows: (1) trait anxiety, (2) state anxiety, and (3) situation-specific anxiety (Bintang Zul Hulaifah & Sibuea, 2023). The first kind of anxiety is called trait anxiety, and it is a consistent personality trait. It is the kind of anxiety that someone has when they are in a stressful circumstance that they believe to be dangerous or threatening. On the other hand, state anxiety refers to anxiety that could arise because of a specific stimulating input. Someone may have a quick onset of anxiety, nervousness, and concern due to a trigger event. Situation-specific anxiety, or the third type, is triggered by a particular circumstance (Hartono & Maharani, 2020). While state and situation-specific anxieties refer to the probability of feeling anxious in a particular situation or context, trait anxiety refers to the experience of anxiety itself. This type affects individual emotional, cognitive, and behavioural states (Young, 1999).

Moreover, high anxiety is associated with self-esteem concerns and inherent ego-preserving anxieties and can be related to depressive disorders (De la Peña-Arteaga et al., 2024; Weger & Sandi, 2018). This is called facilitative anxiety, a common human emotion that can be beneficial in certain situations by alerting us to potential dangers and helping us focus (Cattell, 2013).

Moreover, several scholars have sought to determine correlations; for instance, Young (1990) outlined the following association: The students with low self-esteem typically exhibit elevated levels of language anxiety, fear of communicating, and social

anxiety (Young, 1990, as cited in Rubio, 2021). Strategies for managing anxiety include self-control, seeking support from loved ones, physical exercise, and adequate preparation before facing challenging situations (Saradhadevi & Hemavathy, 2022). It is common knowledge that anxiety is a feeling that is usually connected to tension, stress, and concern (Al Awlaqi & Ghazali, 2023). Some people believe that the feeling of anxiety related to language acquisition plays a crucial role in the process of acquiring a new language, thereby exerting a notable influence on learners' proficiency in both knowledge acquisition and practical application (Quvanch & Si Na, 2022).

Goes et al.'s (2018) research defines anxiety as a transient emotional condition brought on by a potentially dangerous scenario with a low or unknown likelihood that it will materialize. Researchers have presented several definitions of anxiety, but frequent traits include fear, apprehension, and unease (Alnahidh & Altalhab, 2020). These traits are associated with low self-esteem and an unfavorable self-evaluation. As a result, they steer clear of learning exercises like giving a speech in front of their peers since they experience anxiety when learning. In the context of language education, the definitions encourage us to consider anxiety as a form of fear that may cause students to feel apprehensive about studying a language outside of the classroom.

Several studies have confirmed that language anxiety has a negative effect on the performance of foreign languages among learners (Al Awlaqi & Ghazali, 2023; Hakim, 2019; Horwitz et al., 1986; Quvanch & Si Na, 2022). According to Kaplan and Sadock (1996), anxiety is characterized by a diffuse, unpleasant, vague sense of apprehension, often accompanied by somatic symptoms, such as headache, perspiration, palpitations, tightness in the chest, and mild stomach discomfort. The symptoms can negatively affect students' learning and performance.

Foreign Language Anxiety

FLA has been extensively investigated for the last twenty years (Horwitz, 2010). It should not be viewed as a purely theoretical concept. FLA is the general term for the fear that students experience when they are expected to perform tasks in a foreign or second language (Al Awlaqi & Ghazali, 2023). Its potential effects are common among students learning a second language and vary depending on the stage of language acquisition they are in. It can range from scenarios throughout the sessions to the actual second language classroom; some students even exhibit varying degrees of anxiety based on the teacher or the task at hand (García Marín, 2023). Language anxiety research has become a topic of growing interest among educators and practitioners as it has been a considerable barrier to foreign language learning (Quvanch & Si Na, 2022).

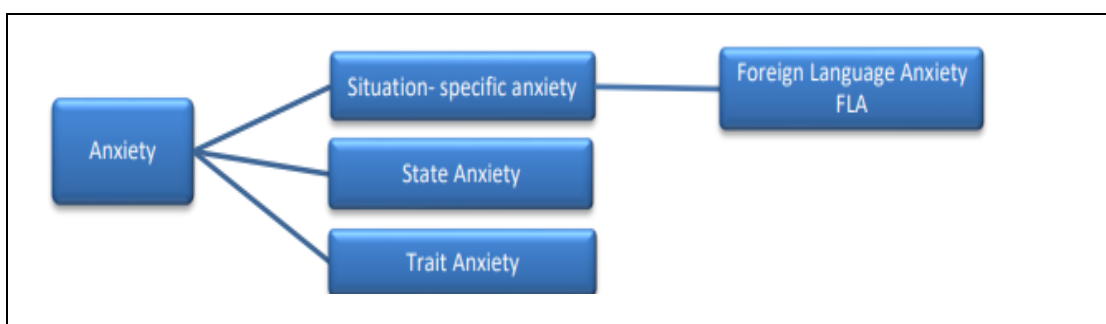
Language anxiety research is greatly influenced by two critical papers (Scovel, 1978; Horwitz et al., 1986). Language anxiety, according to Horwitz et al. (1986), is an intrinsic mode of anxiety that is triggered by the combination of language anxiety and other anxieties that result in an unusual type of internal hindrance in language learning. For example, this feeling of awkwardness that a "shy" student experiences when delivering a brief speech in front of the entire class can be considered language anxiety. The results of oral exams may differ significantly based on the candidates' level of anxiety, since anxiety affects how speakers of English as a Second Language (ESL) interact and perform orally. Scovel (1978) discovered varied outcomes in early anxiety research on language learners' achievement in a second language due to different anxiety measures and conceptualizations. Scovel (1978) suggests distinguishing between facilitating and debilitating anxiety to resolve inconsistent results. Facilitating anxiety can positively impact learners' performance by motivating them, while

debilitating anxiety can negatively affect performance and motivation (Horwitz et al., 1986). On the other hand, Dewaele et al. (2023) employed advanced statistical modelling techniques to establish how foreign language classroom anxiety had the most significant negative effect on English test performance compared to other emotional components.

FLA is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), FLA significantly differs from state and trait anxiety because it appears primarily in Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) classrooms (see Figure 1). Horwitz et al. (1986, p. 128) conceptualize FLA as a unique complex that arises from the specificity of the language learning process and consists of self-perceptions, attitudes, feelings, and behaviours related to language learning in the classroom. They contend that FLA is situation-specific anxiety responsible for unpleasant emotions towards the language, which differs from other academic anxieties because it necessitates more self-concept and self-expression (Horwitz et al., 1986)

Figure 1

Classification of FLA



(Adapted from Horwitz et al., 1986)

MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) created a test utilizing nine anxiety ratings to validate the classifications made by Horwitz et al. (1986). The results showed that

although general anxiety is not directly correlated with language anxiety, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) defined FLA as “the feeling of tension and apprehension associated with L2 contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning” (p. 284). FLA has been categorized as a situation-specific anxiety, and it is not simply a general classroom anxiety. Horwitz’s work suggests that language anxiety can be understood as a natural response exhibited by most language learners, which has a detrimental effect on language acquisition (Horwitz, 2001, as cited in Jamshed et al., 2024). According to Horwitz and Young (1991), FLA may affect 50% of language learners in language classrooms (Young, 1999). Horwitz and Young (1991) discuss two methods for locating FLA. According to the first perspective, anxiety related to language acquisition may be transferred from other domains into the L2 domain (e.g., exam anxiety). The second perspective is that learning a language causes a particular kind of anxiety (Young, 1999). Table 1 shows the summary of FLA definitions.

Table 1

Summary of FLA Definitions

Definition	Authors
FLA is a complicated construct because it deals with learners’ psychology in terms of their emotions, self-esteem, and self-confidence.	Clement (1980)
FLA is a distinct complex of self-perceptions, attitudes, feelings, and behaviours associated with classroom language learning to emerge from the originality of the language learning process.	Horwitz et al. (1986)
FLA is a complicated psychological issue unique to language learning.	Young (1992)
FLA is the sensation of tension and apprehension associated with foreign language situations, such as speaking, listening, and	MacIntyre & Gardner (1994)

Definition	Authors
learning, or the worry and unpleasant emotional reaction experienced when learning or using a second or foreign language.	
FLA has been described as a situation-specific form of anxiety and reflects feelings of anxiety arising from learning and demonstrating competence in a foreign language learning context.	Hu et al. (2021)
FLA is a state of anxiety that occurs when a person begins to learn a foreign language.	Hulaifah & Sibuea (2023)
Anxiety in learning a foreign language refers to a person's great concern about their new language. Anxiety is a momentary concern brought on by a particular situation, whereas typical anxiety is a person's or student's lifetime propensity to feel anxious.	Afdalia et al. (2023)

According to Hakim (2019), all forms of language anxiety can impede learning, but second/foreign language anxiety refers to the specific type of worry that is linked to learning a second or foreign language. There are two theories explaining how language anxiety starts. The first, linguistic anxiety, is defined as a generalized form of anxiety and a basic human response that may be brought on by a variety of combinations of contextual circumstances (McIntyre, 1995; McIntyre & Gardner, 1989, as cited in Hakim, 2019).

Research on FLA has mostly concentrated on how anxiety affects students' oral performance in foreign language courses because speaking is thought to be the most anxiety-inducing language skill. For example, Horwitz et al. (1986) found in their study that speaking and listening, the two fundamental and interactive language acquisition skills, are primarily linked to anxiety. This may be because these skills cannot be separated from one another in any language-based communication interaction. Young

(1992) identified FLA as a complicated psychological issue unique to language learning. Anxiety cannot be assessed easily in a foreign language classroom, but it undoubtedly influences the process of learning a language at various stages. Consequently, anxiety is what stops some people from talking in front of a crowd, performing a task, or taking some other action that puts them in the limelight. However, early FLA research yielded confusing and conflicting findings as well as inconsistent information, making it difficult for researchers to draw a definitive picture of how FLA affected learners (Bintang Zul Hulaifah & Sibuea, 2023).

Recently, Melchor-Couto (2017) found that students in states of high anxiety and/or who suffer from low self-confidence tend to state negative results. Individual differences are seen to be related to language anxiety. Language anxiety is considered a type of debilitating anxiety that negatively influences students' performance, attitudes, emotional state, and enjoyment of the language learning experience (García Marín, 2023). There is no agreement among researchers on whether anxiety either facilitates or debilitates the learning process (i.e., Horwitz et al., 1986; Young, 1992). Those students who are extremely anxious are more reluctant to get involved in the classroom activities that they fear the most, so teachers and examiners need to be aware of the factors that influence the level of anxiety.

Furthermore, researchers in FLA should also be informed that many factors, such as language proficiency, environmental and situational factors, gender, test techniques, exam format, and instructions, are significantly correlated with the level of test anxiety among language learners (García Marín, 2023). In summary, while some studies have noted that FLA promotes language learning, the bulk of language

researchers have observed that FLA is a detrimental factor in the context of language learning (Bintang Zul Hulaifah & Sibuea, 2023).

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

The FLCAS is a pivotal instrument developed in the mid-1980s by Horwitz et al. (1986) to assess FLA in second and foreign language learners. The scale has been extensively used in research and is now considered the primary tool for assessing language anxiety (Horwitz, 2010). FLCAS has been used and modified by numerous researchers (e.g., Aida, 1994; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991) to assess students' anxiety in foreign language classes to determine how anxiety affects their language proficiency.

It consists of items related to communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, which are related to learners' anxiety during foreign language lessons. Using the FLCAS, Horwitz et al. (1986) were the first researchers to identify FLA as a distinct phenomenon in education. The FLCAS included 33 items as part of a self-reported questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). They conducted a study to determine the degree and causes of speaking anxiety. About 78 American students studying Spanish as a foreign language took part in the activity. They discovered that FLA had a negative impact on individuals and that speaking and listening seemed to be the primary causes of anxiety. Horwitz et al. (1986) stated that the scale's items were developed from student reports, clinical experience, and a review of related instruments. The FLCAS was found to be reliable and valid (Horwitz et al., 1986). Its internal consistency was (.93), and test-retest reliability was ($r=.83$). The construct validity of the FLCAS was also conducted. The correlation of the FLCAS with the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory was ($r=.29$); with

the Personal Report of Communication ($r=.28$); with the Fear of Negative Evaluation ($r=.36$); and with the Test Anxiety Scale ($r=.53$) (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Studies have been conducted to test the validity and reliability of instruments like the FLCAS, with results indicating high internal consistency and reliability, making it effective for assessing anxiety among EFL students (Du, 2019; Paneerselvam & Yamat, 2021). A meta-analysis of the FLCAS by Piniel (2024) found that the FLCAS is a consistent measure of language anxiety; however, its relatively extensive length coupled with a limited scope (lacking adaptability to other learning environments and focusing solely on the classroom) calls for more efficient measures of the construct both for data collection and diagnostic purposes. Thus, the FLCAS plays a crucial role in identifying and understanding the causes and implications of anxiety in foreign language learning contexts. Pilot testing of the scale with seventy-five University of Texas at Austin beginning Spanish students proved its validity and reliability. Horwitz et al. (1986). reported that that the FLCAS demonstrated internal reliability, with an alpha coefficient of .93 and significant corrected item–total scale correlations. Over eight weeks, test-retest reliability produced a ($r = .83, p < .001$).

Specific Anxieties Related to Foreign Language Anxiety

Horwitz et al. (1986) introduced the concept of FLA, arguing that it primarily results from three specific anxieties: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. However, it is important to clarify that these three anxieties are not components of FLA itself, but rather related anxieties that contribute to the overall experience of FLA. Communication apprehension refers to the anxiety learners feel when speaking in a foreign language. Test anxiety is linked to worries about

performance in assessments, and fear of negative evaluation involves the concern of being judged or evaluated negatively by others. These specific anxieties are conceptualized as factors that influence FLA but do not constitute its components. For a clearer understanding, it is crucial to distinguish these related anxieties from the broader concept of FLA, as emphasized by Horwitz et al. (1986).

Horwitz et al. (1986) did not suggest that communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation together formed an equation that results in FLA. Instead, they argued that FLA is a distinct and specific type of anxiety that is separate from these three constructs. The authors emphasized that FLA is unique and should be understood as a separate phenomenon, rather than simply a combination of other types of anxiety. The following section reviews three types of anxieties that are closely related to foreign language anxiety, namely communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. While they are not direct components of FLA, they significantly contribute to its overall experience. Understanding these related anxieties provides valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of FLA.

Communication Apprehension. The term "communication apprehension" or "CA" refers, primarily, to a person's worry or level of uneasiness because of the immediate or expected communication with other people, as stated by McCroskey (1977) and Daud et al. (2022) CA is the fear that an individual experiences in oral communication (Horwitz et al., 1986). According to Horwitz et al. (1986), because it centres on how people interact, communication apprehension can play a key role in how learners pick up a new language. The first communication anxiety occurs in a situation, like when a learner feels worried, stressed, or shy to speak with others or communicate in a foreign language (Marzec-Stawiarska, 2015, as cited in Alsowat, 2016; Toth, 2010).

The issues regarding communication pertain to the apprehensions individuals encounter during verbal exchanges. Within the realm of English education, anxious learners may exhibit reluctance to engage in public speaking, often opting to defer inquiries until the conclusion of a discourse, abstaining from raising their hands with the anticipation that another individual will pose the question (Naibaho, 2022). It can be said that this kind of anxiety occurs in students who are hesitant to communicate or speak in an oral classroom. It is related to speaking activities and the embarrassment that learners face when they act in a foreign language classroom (Bintang Zul Hulaifah & Sibuea, 2023). CA is a particular type of anxiety related to interpersonal interactions, and is the primary focus of the current investigation.

CA refers to cases where learners are afraid to engage in real communication with peers or teachers because of poor communication skills, although they possess mature ideas and thoughts (Tzoannopoulou, 2016). CA can present itself in two distinct forms. Firstly, it may emerge as oral communication anxiety, encompassing phenomena such as stage fright or difficulties in articulating thoughts within group contexts. Secondly, it may present as receiver anxiety, which pertains to challenges in comprehending or acquiring a spoken language. Within an educational setting, these apprehensions are frequently exacerbated by the continuous evaluation of linguistic performance and the learners' restricted agency over the language dynamics (Atifnigar, 2024; Horwitz et al., 1986). In an FLA classroom, language learners' oral tasks include not only learning a foreign language but also performing the language. CA in foreign language contexts significantly differs from other settings, primarily due to the unique challenges faced by learners. This anxiety is particularly pronounced during speaking activities, which can hinder language acquisition and performance.

CA is the sensation of awkwardness, worry, and discomfort that a learner has when speaking in English classes. This sort of anxiety occurs when pupils experience trouble speaking, asking, or answering questions in class. CA may be linked to learning a first or second language (Gawi, 2020). According to Sari (2017), students with CA typically feel embarrassed to speak English in front of their peers or teachers. Some students experience anxiety when speaking English because they believe they are being scrutinized for mistakes, leading them to feel inferior to their peers. Horwitz et al (1986) claimed that CA encompasses difficulty speaking in groups, stage fright, and receiver anxiety. Receiver anxiety arises when listening and/or reading. When people talk to a group, or from a stage, or even listen to someone speaking from a stage, they must have the feeling of control. It is when someone feels out of control, for example, due to language barriers, that they become anxious. These learners are also less likely to attend class or participate in/engage in classroom activities or discussions (Šafranĵ & Zivlak, 2019).

Test Anxiety. Test anxiety is defined as the inclination to observe with anxiety the effects of substandard achievement in an evaluation context (Toth, 2010). It can happen before, during, or after an exam. It is the fear of failing in situations that are meant to be evaluated, like written or oral exams and presentations (Hulaifah & Sibuea, 2023). However, it is important to note that the oral test provokes the most anxiety in the classroom setting. According to Horwitz (2010), students often put too much pressure on themselves, feeling that anything less than a perfect score is a personal failure. Moreover, test anxiety is commonly described as a form of performance anxiety that stems from the fear of failure in academic settings. Students experiencing anxiety tend to impose unattainable expectations on themselves and perceive anything below a

flawless test outcome as a defeat (Keeler et al., 2021). Consequently, they might develop excessive worry and harbour doubts about their ability to articulate words accurately or deliver a proficient presentation (Naibaho, 2022). Unfortunately, because most foreign language schools involve frequent and daily skill evaluations, test-anxious students may experience a great deal of stress and trouble in the classroom. Research has demonstrated that there exists a correlation between performance anxiety during examinations and the self-esteem levels of individuals. When learners achieve suboptimal results in foreign language courses, it can detrimentally affect their self-esteem (Atifnigar, 2024).

Additionally, test anxiety can be experienced in examinations, whether it is more formal or less formal. Moreover, test anxiety is a psychological and behavioural phenomenon centred on the fear of exam failure or receiving negative evaluations. In such circumstances, individuals often exhibit poor performance during assessments (Gawi, 2020). Researchers have claimed that test anxiety is driven by fear of failure in the foreign language learning process (Horwitz et al., 1986), with worry and emotionality as two core components (Hu et al., 2021). Test anxiety is performance anxiety triggered by the fear of failure in tests and involves worry over frequent tests and examinations in language classrooms (Tzoannopoulou, 2016). Mohtasham and Farnia (2017) indicate that students often experience speaking anxiety when facing the English oral test that will be implemented. The findings of this study, Mohtasham and Farnia's (2017), coincide with a study that stated that they experienced anxiety in facing oral tests.

Test anxiety might occur for language learners who are particularly nervous in class. Language learners who lack confidence in their proficiency might be

apprehensive about taking a test (Daud et al., 2022). Furthermore, Horwitz et al. (1986) point out that people who usually feel uneasy when speaking in groups can find foreign language classes especially intimidating, since they have little control over conversation and know their performance is being observed.

Fear of Negative Evaluation. Watson and Friend (1969) defined fear of negative assessment as the anxiety regarding others' assessments, the tendency to evade evaluative contexts, and the anticipation of negative judgments from others. It is worth mentioning that fear of negative evaluation is like test anxiety due to both anxieties encompassing a fear of external assessment (Hulaifah & Sibuea, 2023). Fear of negative evaluation is characterized by an individual's apprehension regarding how others may assess them, their tendency to steer clear of situations involving judgment, and their anticipation of receiving unfavorable judgments from others. Within the context of an English classroom, students afflicted with this fear often demonstrate passive behaviour, refraining from active participation in class activities that could otherwise enhance their linguistic proficiency to evade distressing circumstances (Naibaho, 2022).

Horwitz et al. (1986) asserted that test anxiety could manifest in test-taking scenarios; however, fear of a negative evaluation could manifest in any social or academic evaluation scenario, for instance, during frequent group conversations or when conversing in a foreign language. Tzoannopoulou (2016) argued that although fear of negative evaluation is like test anxiety, it is not limited to test-taking environments, but rather, it is present in a wider variety of situations that require evaluation, such as being interviewed for a position or speaking out in a foreign language class. Šafranĵ and Zivlak (2019) claimed that learners with a high degree of

fear of negative evaluation would worry about leaving a negative impression on others and avoid any risk-taking occasion associated with negative evaluations.

General Foreign Language Anxiety in EFL Learners

Studies by Daud et al. (2022), Safarni and Zivlak (2019), and Hu et al. (2021) demonstrate the consequences of anxiety on foreign language learners' performance and participation with a presentation of general causes. Dauad et al. (2022) used the FLCAS with 340 Malaysian university students and found that students had moderate anxiety levels related to English speaking classes, caused mainly by communication apprehension, fear of receiving negative feedback, and fear of tests. These concerns negatively impacted the students' performance. Earlier, Daud et al. (2021) examined the affective consequences of anxiety on 71 undergraduate students, revealing that foreign language learning anxiety decreased students' chances of success. Students expressed anxiety in interacting with peers and native speakers and felt shy in the classroom setting. Similarly, Shah (2022) quantified the anxiety level of Year 5 students through FLCAS, identifying fear of speaking, not being understood, judgment by others, making mistakes, and forgetting what has been learned as prominent sources of anxiety. The study recommended that teachers create low-anxiety classrooms and collaborate with parents to enhance language practice opportunities.

Both Naibaho (2022) and James et al. (2020) discussed the origins and degree of foreign language anxiety in English learners, citing well-known anxiety constructs such as communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Naibaho (2022), from a study conducted with Indonesian students studying at the university level, recorded medium degrees of anxiety, particularly in speaking and

listening skills. The research emphasizes the necessity of using various teaching strategies to ease anxiety, as anxiety is associated with learning difficulties and failure. Naibaho emphasizes the importance of having various instructional techniques to ease anxiety, enabling learners to improve their English language proficiency. James et al. (2020), who focused on Malaysian Basic English learners, reported mild levels of anxiety, where fear of negative judgment and apprehension about communication were the strongest predictors of anxiety. This study advocates for increased sensitivity among teachers of FLA and encourages the use of coping strategies that address these specific issues. Toubot et al. (2018) were interested in examining the level of speaking anxiety in fourth-year EFL students.

Moreover, an examination is conducted on the three essential determinants, which are communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and low self-confidence, responsible for speaking anxiety amplification in the population of EFL learners. The sample consisted of 300 fourth-year English major students from three Libyan universities. The results of the current study indicate that the students experienced a moderate to high level of speaking anxiety in EFL. In addition, the results highlight that the factor of low self-confidence gained the highest mean score among the rest, followed by fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension. The existing literature has always stressed the existence of language anxiety among learners.

For instance, Daud et al. (2021) deduced that students are normally nervous in delivering English speeches, while Alsaqloqi and Al-Tale (2022) deduced that students predominantly have medium levels of anxiety. Similarly, Shah (2022) pointed out that among the major concerns of students is the fear of being judged by others. Together,

these findings demonstrate that language anxiety is a widespread issue that arises in many forms, ranging from general nervousness to fear of negative judgment.

Previous research has consistently highlighted the presence of language anxiety among learners. For instance, Daud et al. (2021) found that students often feel anxious when speaking English, while Alsaqloqi and Al-Tale (2022) reported that learners generally suffer from moderate levels of anxiety. Similarly, Shah (2022) emphasized that one of the major concerns among learners is the fear of being judged by others. These findings collectively suggest that language anxiety is a common issue that manifests in different forms, ranging from general nervousness to the fear of negative evaluation.

Sources of Foreign Language Anxiety

Both Alsaqloqi and Al-Tale (2022) and Shah (2022) investigated foreign language anxiety and its contributing factors among EFL learners, highlighting common sources of anxiety and their impact on language skills. Alsalooli and Al-Tale (2022) focused on 69 first-year EFL students, using the Modified FLCAS and statistical software for data analysis. They found that most students experienced moderate FLA, primarily triggered by communication anxiety, fear of negative feedback, and exam-related stress. Gender effects on anxiety severity were also examined, though the study suggested that future research should explore how anxiety levels fluctuate over time and under varying conditions. Similarly, Alazeer and Ahmed (2023) studied 150 second and third-year students at Cihan University-Duhok using questionnaires and interviews. Their findings revealed a high level of anxiety, with key contributing factors including

limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, inadequate preparation, grammar challenges, and unfamiliarity with classroom activities. The anxiety was linked to fear of errors, concern about negative assessment, peer ridicule, and low self-confidence.

Gender and Demographic Influences. Numerous research studies have delved into how gender and demographic factors impact foreign language anxiety. For example, a study by Hulaifah and Sibuea (2023) revealed varying degrees of anxiety among male and female EFL learners, typically falling within the low to moderate range. Likewise, Naibaho (2022) and Daud et al. (2022) emphasized the role of demographic variables such as students' backgrounds and proficiency levels in influencing anxiety levels. Building on this, Alsaqloqi and Al-Tale (2022) noted that first-year EFL students exhibited moderate levels of anxiety.

Classroom Implications & Coping Strategies. Hopkyns and Gkonou (2023) explore the emotional experiences of stakeholders in English-medium education in multilingual universities in the UAE. It privileges the nuanced emotions related to English-medium instruction (EMI), especially anxiety. For students, EMI brings both possibilities and tensions and gives rise to anxiety, guilt, and feelings of (un)belonging. Teachers also have emotional concerns, for example, feeling the pressure of brokering shifting identities, energy-based pedagogies, and intercultural demands. The study indicates how intersecting variables of English proficiency, linguistic background, and language ideologies affect emotional experience and anxiety, being a prominent emotion for teachers and students alike. The study necessitates greater sensitivity to these affective dimensions and the sociolinguistic reality of stakeholders, against the one-size-fits-all approach to EMI. For this, the students' overall level of anxiety was categorized as "slightly anxious".

There are various studies confirming that communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation are pervasive causes of FLA in university students (Daud et al., 2021; Alsalooli & Al-Tale, 2022; Shah, 2022). These causes are particularly heightened in speaking activities since students fear judgment and mistakes. While Shah (2022) identifies classroom dynamics and peer pressure, Daud et al. (2021) name inner factors such as self-image. This suggests that FLA may be determined by both internal psychological aspects of the individual and external classroom culture, an emphasis on which this study aims to explore more. The most prevalent coping strategies employed by Basic English students included seeking assistance from teachers and fellow students, consulting references like Google and dictionaries, self-help, self-motivation, generation of positive thoughts, diversion of attention, revision, active listening and comprehension, reflection on oneself, striving for performance, relaxation training, acceptance, exercise, contemplation, entertainment, and employment of humour to mask embarrassment.

It is recommended that language instructors make the social and emotional well-being of students their concern by eliminating or minimizing the barriers and hindrances encountered in learning English as a second language, thereby ensuring a conducive and safe learning environment.

Past Studies of Anxiety of Learning Foreign Languages in Saudi Arabia

Several studies have explored foreign language anxiety (FLA) among Saudi EFL learners, particularly using the FLCAS by Horwitz et al. (1986). These studies consistently show that Saudi university students experience moderate levels of anxiety,

often caused by communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and limited language proficiency.

General Findings on FLA Levels and Causes

Alsalooli and Al-Tale (2022) investigated the extent and origins of FLA among 69 first-year EFL students at Bisha University in Saudi Arabia. The examination also delved into the influence of gender on FLA levels. Additionally, the research assessed the repercussions of FLA on the language proficiency of the participants. A modified edition of the FLCAS was employed by the researchers. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS and Microsoft Excel. The findings demonstrated that most students exhibited a moderate degree of FLA stemming from concerns regarding communication, negative feedback, and language assessments. Furthermore, the outcomes indicated that gender was not a determining factor in FLA levels. Moreover, it was revealed that heightened levels of FLA had a noteworthy impact on academic performance among the students. Considering these discoveries, the study put forth recommendations for educators to address and alleviate the factors contributing to FLA. For instance, foster a supportive classroom environment, emphasize communication skills, normalize the frequency of errors, perform additional formative assessments, enhance teachers' awareness, and offer constructive feedback.

Bensalem's (2018, 2021) and Almesaar's (2022) research combined highlight the pervasiveness and intricacy of FLCA in the Saudi EFL context and explore its predictors, gender differences, affective concomitants, and pedagogical implications. Bensalem (2018) administered FLA on multilingualism and self-rated proficiency to 96 Saudi university students. Intermediate levels of anxiety were reported by the findings,

with females reporting higher FLA than males. The study emphasized language background and gender's role in the extent of anxiety in a less-examined Saudi EFL setting. Bensalem (2021) expanded this line of research by exploring the FLE-FLCA connection in a larger sample of 487 Saudi EFL learners. Findings showed a negative relationship between FLE and FLCA, which means that higher enjoyment is associated with lower anxiety. Classroom factors such as activities, performance of teachers, individual scholarly experiences, and testing significantly contributed to influencing both enjoyment and anxiety for both male and female students.

Meanwhile, Almesaar (2022) focused on FLCA's impact on academic English achievement among 257 business and accounting students. Although students exhibited varying levels of anxiety, the findings showed that trait anxiety, communicative apprehension, and situational anxiety did not significantly predict academic performance in English. This suggests that other variables, perhaps instructional methods, individual coping mechanisms, or institutional support, may play more decisive roles in academic success. Almesaar emphasized the need for teacher awareness of learners' personality traits and anxiety triggers to better support language learning.

Academic Impact and Pedagogical Implications

Several studies have shown that FLA affects academic achievement. Faqihi (2024) and Tanielian (2017) studied Saudi EFL students at the college level and registered moderate foreign language speaking anxiety on the FLCAS. Faqihi (2024) focuses on 39 male students at Al-Quaiyah College of Technology and records the most prominent causes of anxiety as lack of preparation, limited knowledge of vocabulary,

mandatory response, and teacher-related factors. The study recommends that topics of discussion are to be provided to students in advance and positive, voluntary engagement instead of coercion to enable less threatening classroom interactions. Similarly, Tanielian (2017) examines a larger sample of 287 King Faisal University freshmen and finds moderate levels of anxiety to negatively correlate with academic proficiency in English. The study finds demographic variables but no gender or major disparity. Along with quantitative results, qualitative comments from administrators and teachers affirm the need for institutional action. These are such as not canceling students for one term of enrollment, implementing academic probation, and offering more Arabic-speaking counseling sessions and English specialists to work with struggling students. It also recommended a safe and engaging classroom environment to diminish anxiety and improve learning.

Both Gawri (2020) and Jamshed et al. (2024) examined the impact and sources of FLA among Saudi male university students, highlighting its moderate intensity and academic implications. Gawri's study at Albaha University revealed that students experienced moderate levels of classroom-related anxiety, with communicative apprehension (mean = 3.6) being slightly higher than test anxiety (3.4) and fear of negative evaluation (3.3). The overall findings revealed moderate FLA that could potentially disrupt academic performance in applied linguistics courses. Similarly, Jamshed et al. (2024) established test anxiety and communication anxiety as the significant sources of English language anxiety among students of the College of Business Administration, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. Their findings supported moderate anxiety levels, with no detectable influence of demographic variables (academic level or background) on anxiety levels. The study was eager to

underscore the importance of understanding the causes of anxiety to inform intervention strategies for the enhancement of language ability. Together, these studies emphasize that moderate levels of anxiety, especially communication and test anxiety, are common among Saudi male EFL students and have a negative impact on their language performance. It is necessary to cater to these factors through targeted pedagogical strategies and nurturing classroom environments in order to promote student achievement and confidence in English language learning.

Besides, the results of this paper provided teachers and policy-makers with some recommendations such as addressing the necessity of balancing attention on speaking abilities alongside the ability to write in the curriculum to mitigate fear and anxiety among students, Enhancing teacher understanding of FLA and offering solutions to assist students in conquering anxiety-related challenges in the education setting and pedagogical implications that will enable them to overcome the male students' language anxiety in the classroom in the Saudi setting, which will also help in achieving better learning outcomes.

Skill-Specific Anxiety: Reading and Speaking

Both Alsaleh (2018) and Alshehri (2024) explored the nature and impact of FLA among Saudi EFL learners at preparatory year levels. While Alsaleh explored the relationship between FLA and reading anxiety, she concluded that students reported moderate levels of FLA and reading anxiety, with key causes of reading anxiety including difficulty in acquiring new words, pronunciation, lengthy reading texts, and fear of making mistakes. Alshehri (2024) expanded the scope to examine general learning anxiety and its causes, including fear of negative evaluation and feedback as

important causes. The study used self-report questionnaires and interviews with teachers to assess the mutual belief by both teachers and students on the degree of anxiety and its implications for teaching. The study also suggested coping strategies for anxiety reduction and improved teaching efficiency. Overall, the studies conclude that Saudi preparatory students' language anxiety is multifaceted, affecting both receptive (reading) and affective (emotional/psychological) areas, with test-related issues and linguistic problems as insurmountable stressors. They emphasize the need for pedagogical approaches to reduce fear and enhance learner confidence in language classes.

In summary, the previous studies above have indicated a notable level of FLA among Saudi undergraduate students. The results derived from said investigations reveal a noteworthy influence of FLA specifically on male Saudi students. Several studies conducted in Saudi Arabia (Alsaloobi & Al-Tale, 2022; Gawi, 2020; Jamshed et al., 2024) all reveal moderate levels of FLA among university students. Communication apprehension and test anxiety are the dominant factors, and that of negative evaluation is less present. Interestingly, despite their agreement on FLA occurrence, the said studies vary with respect to the impact of demographic factors such as gender and study on anxiety levels. For instance, Bensalem (2018) noted gender variance, with females experiencing higher anxiety, while Tanielian (2017) did not notice the same effect. This inconsistency suggests that demographics' effect may be situation-dependent or mediated by another variable, such as institutional setting or instructional approach. Nonetheless, it delves into the repercussions of anxiety associated with testing, communicative apprehension, the classroom, and fear of negative evaluation of Saudi

students enrolled in English courses within the English Language department at Saudi University's College of Arts and Letters.

The Effects of FLA on Language Performance

FLA significantly impacts language performance among learners. Based on the recent research by Cantina (2017), the presence of language anxiety can lead to a deterioration in language learners' performance. It can also inhibit the language learning process. FLA has also been recognized as a barrier that negatively influences students' level of proficiency and achievement (Rudiyanto, 2017). It keeps the students from performing in language skills, such as writing, and keeps them from reaching their goals. Because mastering writing abilities requires a lot of work and consistent practice, students are likely to encounter obstacles along the way, which can contribute to writing anxiety (Quvanch & Si Na, 2022).

Studies have shown that FLA serves as a confounding affective variable influencing L2 performance differently among individuals. FLA has been found to have a negative effect on language performance, with anxiety being a crucial predictor of lower English test scores (Ha et al., 2022). Dewaele et al. (2023) conducted a study using structural equation modelling and latent dominance analysis on 502 Moroccan EFL learners to evaluate the importance of emotions in predicting FL performance. The analysis showed that FLCA had the strongest negative impact on English test scores, while FLB (foreign language boredom) and FLE had weaker negative and positive effects, respectively. Therefore, educators and learners should not overlook the influence of anxiety on language learning. Özer and Akyol (2021) examined the connections between self-efficacy, self-regulation, FLA, class attendance, and

academic achievement in the English language. 344 EFL learners in a one-year preparatory program in Turkey participated in the study. Criterion sampling was used for respondent selection. Findings showed that class attendance significantly influenced academic achievement. FL self-efficacy was the most significant predictor of EFL learners' academic achievement. FLA negatively impacted students' academic performance, as anxiety levels rose. The research highlights class attendance as a strong predictor of academic achievement in foreign language learning. Alsalooli and Al-Tale (2022) indicated that high levels of FLA among Saudi learners had a significant impact on their performance. The results show that a unit increase in the FLA level decreases 0.152 in learning performance.

In summary, FLA negatively affects learners' language performance across various skills, especially writing. Research shows that higher anxiety levels are linked to lower academic achievement and test scores. Studies from different contexts, including Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Turkey, confirm that FLA hinders language learning, while factors like self-efficacy and class attendance can improve performance. Overall, managing anxiety is essential for better language outcomes.

Writing Anxiety

Writing Anxiety Definitions

Anxiety is a common phenomenon in foreign language classes, affecting various skills such as speaking, reading, listening, and writing. The conflicting feelings (i.e., Anxiety) around English have been identified as a 'double-edged sword' (Hopkyns, 2014, as cited in Hopkyns & Gkonou, 2023), characterized by elevated expectations

coupled with a more challenging reality. Additionally, students often experience negative emotions like fear, shame, and nervousness, alongside positive feelings of relaxation and interest during language learning (Manchado-Nieto & Fielden-Burns, 2024). Writing is a highly intricate endeavour that heavily depends on working memory, a form of memory that supports three fundamental components of the writing process (Kimberg et al., 1997). The initial element is maintenance, involving the retention of information obtained from the immediate surroundings for a sufficient duration to meet the demands of a specific situation or task. Following this is retrieval, which encompasses the recollection of data from long-term memory and its retention for eventual utilization. The third and most crucial aspect of working memory is information manipulation, which highlights the writer's capacity not only to retain current and past information in awareness but also to engage in processes for altering it (Waked et al., 2024).

Writing anxiety can be defined as a kind of behaviour generated in the process of writing, including physical anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and anxiety caused by avoidance behaviour (Cheng, 2004). Meanwhile, Huwari and Abd Aziz (2011) found that writing anxiety is a complex term and a critical problem that eventually affects the learners' learning process. It was recently confirmed by Waked et al. (2024) that anxiety in ESL writing is a significant obstacle to achieving excellent learning. Writing anxiety is the term that refers to a writer's tendency to experience apprehension when assigned a writing task (Daly, 1985). Writing anxiety, according to Daly and Miller (1975), relates to a person's predisposition to avoid situations that are regarded as having writing potential, along with a type of perceived judgment. According to Tayşi and Taşkın (2018), anxiety increases the likelihood of pupils making mistakes when writing in a

foreign language. It is because students are constantly concerned with the accuracy and authenticity of their written work.

Writing anxiety is different from personal trait-related anxiety, and it is described as “a relatively stable personality characteristic” (Horwitz, 2001, p.113). In other words, it is situation-specific anxiety that only happens in a specific situation, such as right before a writing task (Zhang, 2019). As a specific form of EFL anxiety, writing anxiety mainly refers to the anxiety and behaviour of EFL learners in the writing process, which can significantly impede writing development and result in feelings of dissatisfaction or hopelessness should they fail to fulfil anticipated standards (Küçük, 2023). It has been introduced by Daly and Miller’s (1975) influential work on L1 writing anxiety (Wahyuni et al., 2019). The term writing anxiety was also used by Al-Sawalha and Chow (2012, p. 6) to describe a “psychological predisposition faced by an individual in a writing task due to tendencies of overwhelming fear arising from a combination of feelings, beliefs, and behaviours affecting the individual’s ability to write”. Since then, various studies on writing anxiety have sailed into uncharted waters to explore its effects on writing performance in different contexts (Khelalfa, 2018; Onyishi & Sefotho, 2020).

Anxiety in writing encompasses various attitudes, beliefs, and actions that hinder individuals from initiating, persisting with, or finishing a writing task, even when they possess the intellectual capacity to do so (Iksan et al., 2023). Writing anxiety also inhibits students’ academic work, self-confidence, and motivation (Onyishi & Sefotho, 2020). Jennifer and Ponniah (2017) found that learners with negative experiences of writing tended to be highly apprehensive. In addition, this kind of student tends to write from memory as they find it difficult to compose written products on their own.

Rohmah and Muslim (2021) showed that the least anxious learners showed better writing performance than those who showed higher levels of anxiety.

According to Kusumaningputri et al. (2018), there are three main causes of writing anxiety: students have not written in English before, their vocabulary isn't well-versed, they make more grammatical mistakes, and they're unclear about proper sentence construction and spelling. This implies that teachers should place a more balanced emphasis on evaluating students' writing development rather than concentrating solely on the quantity of grammatical and structural errors students make. This approach of evaluating both the product and the process may reduce students' anxiety.

Foreign Language Writing Anxiety (FLWA)

Language learners who engage in tasks requiring productive skills like writing may feel a great deal of anxiety (Wern & Rahmat, 2021). It can be a daunting experience for language learners because it is a "...complex activity that requires a certain level of linguistic knowledge, writing conventions, vocabulary, and grammar" (Erkan & Saban, 2011, p. 165). Numerous authors in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) perceive the act of writing to be a challenging endeavour due to its intricate nature, compounded by the writers' limited lexicon and grammatical proficiency in the English language (Paramart et al., 2023; Sabti et al., 2019). According to Badrasawi et al. (2016), FLWA is generally understood as having "negative, anxious feelings (about oneself as a writer, one's writing situation, or one's writing task) that disrupt some part of the writing process" (p. 134). Consequently, FLWA refers to feelings of worry, fear, or apprehension specifically related to the act of writing in a foreign language. Research

has shown that FLWA can significantly impact a learner's motivation and determination to improve their writing skills (Gannoun & Deris, 2023).

Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI)

Cheng's (2004) research has revealed a noteworthy correlation between language anxiety and low self-confidence in one's language skills. Expectations and social-emotional reactions to a language skill exercise can differ depending on whether a skill is performed well or poorly. The study identified three typical conditions that L2 writers could encounter: (1) low writing self-esteem, (2) unfavorable attitudes towards writing (3) anxiety over being judged. These three factors have been included in the structure of the SLWAI, which is divided into three subscales: somatic anxiety-physical arousal, cognitive anxiety-perception arousal, and avoidance behaviour-withdrawal response. These three subscales correspond to Cheng's (2004) theory of anxiety. The theory describes that learners' self-belief in their English writing capabilities serves to be the sole predictor of the level of anxiety arousal (Wern & Rahmat, 2021). Cheng (2004b, cited in Wahyuni et al., 2019) has contended that anxiety is a multidimensional phenomenon; therefore, a three-dimensional measure such as SLWAI is more qualified than other measures to analyse anxiety. SLWAI is defined as a general avoidance of writing and of a situation perceived by the individual to require some amount of writing, together with a certain type of evaluation concerning the writing (Hartono & Maharani, 2020).

Types of Writing Anxiety in Second Language Learning (SLWAI)

Somatic Anxiety. The term "somatic anxiety" describes how someone perceives the physiological ramifications of their anxiety. Somatic anxiety corresponds to the subjective experience of the physical symptoms associated with anxiety, including heightened autonomic arousal, restlessness, digestive problems, increased heartbeat, and evaporated sweat (Waked et al., 2024). Somatic anxiety is often described through metaphors such as having "butterflies in the stomach." It is typically associated with negative physical sensations and emotional discomfort. According to Marzec-Stawiarska (2012), such symptoms can interfere with learners' ability to concentrate and perform effectively, and they affect language learners by causing them to suffer from upset stomachs, extreme sweating, headaches, heart palpitations, and rapid breathing. When a student is abruptly asked to write something that will be judged on a particular scale or in a particular method without any prior preparation, they may quickly become anxious and disturbed (Hartono & Maharani, 2020). Kusumaningputri et al. (2018) documented that individuals experiencing somatic anxiety demonstrate heightened autonomic arousal along with negative emotional states like nervousness and tension. These learners exhibit symptoms such as sweating, trembling, elevated heart rate, headache, and rapid respiration. Alfiansyah et al. (2017) posit that students experience heightened levels of anxiety, leading to cognitive blankness during the onset of writing. This form of anxiety instigates feelings of unease and intense apprehension in learners as they struggle to generate ideas under temporal constraints. Such occurrences are prevalent in situations where students are mandated to complete writing assignments within bounded timeframes (Quvanch & Si Na, 2022).

Cognitive Anxiety. Morris et al. (1981, p. 541) define cognitive anxiety as “negative expectations and cognitive concerns about oneself, the situation at hand, and potential consequences”. It refers to psychological states such as having negative expectations, feeling concerned about weak performances, and worrying about others’ negative evaluations (Rudiyanto, 2017). The cognitive component of anxiety, or the second dimension, arises when a person is consumed with unfavorable expectations and worries about other people's opinions. Cheng (2004) concurs that cognitive anxiety pertains to the cognitive dimension of learners when they encounter anxiety, encompassing pessimistic anticipations, fixation on performance, and apprehension regarding external evaluations. For instance, a teacher's high expectations in a writing classroom will almost always make students more tense and anxious, which could be harmful to the writing task itself (Hartono & Maharani, 2020). Some of the students expressed anxiety regarding feelings of apprehension and discomfort when their written works are assessed and deliberated upon collectively in educational settings. The students harbour anxiety about potential ridicule from their peers towards their English compositions, in addition to worrying about receiving unfavorable evaluations for their written pieces (Kusumaningputri et al., 2018).

Avoidance Behaviour. After somatic anxiety and cognitive anxiety, Cheng (2004) established three basic forms of English as a second language (ESL) writing anxiety, of which avoidance behaviour is one. Cheng defined avoidance behaviour as the way that anxiety manifests behaviourally when a person deliberately looks for methods to evade writing tasks or assignments. If a student knows they will be given a writing assignment, they can decide not to attend class (Hartono & Maharani, 2020). It refers to an avoidant attitude when someone feels anxious (Rohmah & Muslim, 2021).

Moreover, avoidance behaviour associated with writing anxiety indicates the behavioural characteristics of avoiding writing (Cheng, 2004). For example, when given a choice about the language they write in, students often choose to write in their native tongue. One possible explanation for their anxiety when writing papers in English as a second or foreign language is that they exhibit avoidance behaviour (Salikin, 2019).

Kusumaningputri et al. (2018) indicated that learners exhibiting avoidance behaviour tend to actively seek out avenues and circumstances where they can circumvent the task of writing in English or engaging in composition activities, particularly outside of the classroom. EFL learners frequently experience it, which makes them avoid situations that would need them to write, including composition assignments (Rudiyanto, 2017). This is recognized as a severe form of anxiety related to writing, and it impacts how well students do in writing classes. The reason for this is that nervous students have trouble focusing and understanding what they are supposed to be learning, as they are frequently fidgety and distracted (Quvanch & Si Na, 2022).

Causes of Writing Anxiety

Writing is an emotional and cognitive activity; that is, we think and feel while we are writing. L2 writing is influenced by various factors, including social, cultural, and individual characteristics. These factors may include institutional requirements, parental expectations, motivation, and even gender (Cheng, 2002). Rezaei and Jafari (2014) categorized factors contributing to writing anxiety. The first is a negative evaluation. Negative evaluation is a primary cause of apprehension among EFL learners (Alfiansyah et al., 2017). Learners fear negative evaluations from teachers and

peers, which impacts their anxiety. They also worry about not meeting teacher criteria and being ridiculed by others (Brown, 2004). Secondly, Learners feel anxious when compared to their peers' writing (Zhang & Zhong, 2012). To exemplify, Sabti et al.'s (2019) study reported that negative characteristics, such as fear of making errors and being negatively assessed by lecturers and classmates, may have led the respondents to have a high level of anxiety and led them to avoid writing tasks. The causes of writing anxiety that were also identified by past studies, particularly in EFL contexts, include weak educational background, insufficient writing strategies, lack of linguistic knowledge, teaching writing practices, and fear of negative feedback and criticism by peers and teachers (Fareed et al., 2021).

Thirdly, insufficient writing practice can also lead to writing anxiety. Writing anxiety can result from insufficient practice and focus on structure over content (Rezaei & Jafari, 2014). The fourth category is insufficient writing technique. To put it simply, it means students have poor skills in writing skills. Inadequate writing skills cause anxiety among students (Wahyuni & Umam, 2017). In other words, learners who do not possess good writing techniques and composition skills suffer from poor writing performance (Quvanch & Si Na, 2022).

Fourthly, the problem could lie in the choice of topic. Inadequate topical knowledge leads to writing anxiety among learners. A lack of knowledge on a topic can also lead to writing anxiety. In line with this, Zhang (2011) emphasized that language learners' prerequisite knowledge of a topic plays a major role in the accomplishment of its relevant writing task. Learners face more anxiety when writing on unfamiliar topics compared to familiar ones (Quvanch & Si Na, 2022). Fifthly, linguistic difficulty contributes to writing anxiety due to learners' incompetence in the language. It is

recognized as a common challenge faced by learners when it comes to writing (Wahyuni & Umam, 2017). Insufficient knowledge of linguistic components demotivates EFL learners. The lack of vocabulary, grammar rules, and coherence of ideas makes learners anxious.

Moving on, the sixth factor contributing to writing anxiety is the pressure to be perfect. Furthermore, anxiety in writing could occur when learners fail to write perfectly. Learners may experience anxiety if they feel the need to produce perfect work. Additionally, perfectionists and nervous learners share features, for example, higher performance standards and higher levels of worry over errors (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). While the notion of perfect writing is arguably unrealistic and subjective, many learners still feel pressured to meet demanding academic standards and rigid criteria. These high expectations can lead to heightened anxiety, especially when students perceive their writing as falling short of an idealized norm.

The seventh factor is time pressure, which can also cause writing anxiety. The time limitation of a writing task is a source of anxiety for language learners. Well-organized composition requires time-consuming steps. Learners may lose confidence due to time pressure. It can be noticed that when students are required to write under strict deadlines, they may experience feelings of anxiety because they will be unable to focus on their writing and instead will be thinking more about the time constraints.

Eighth, frequent writing assignments may make learners anxious. Apprehension arises when assignments constitute a major percentage of their final grade. Performance measurement in writing courses leads to anxiety (Quvanch & Si Na, 2022). Lastly, self-

confidence is a significant factor in writing anxiety. As such, low self-confidence impedes students' writing performance, while a lack of confidence hinders sharing feelings and ideas. A positive attitude helps learners engage in writing tasks and develop writing skills with ease (Quvanch & Si Na, 2022).

The Effect of Second Language Writing Anxiety on Students' Writing Performance

Several studies conclude that there is, in fact, a negative correlation between writing anxiety and learners' writing performance. Badrasawi et al. (2016) summarize the impact of anxiety on writing performance: anxious L2 writers avoided writing, took longer to begin, lacked vocabulary, expressions, and mature ideas; received low grades; were anxious about their writing being graded; were afraid of what other people would think of their writings; preferred writing outside of the classroom; were reluctant to share their writing with friends; were unable to organize or express their ideas clearly; had a negative attitude toward their writing ability; and were silent for the majority of the class. Limpo (2018) confirmed that students with a greater concern for writing tend to have poorer writing performance. Also, their perfectionist thinking prevents them from finishing the writing, especially when the deadline is close. Moreover, Min and Rahmat (2014) similarly reported a high level of writing anxiety among the students studying at University Putra Malaysia (UPM), affecting their writing performance. Moreover, Al Maawali (2022) found that the fear of expressing ideas in writing often resulted in repeated deletions, leading students to become victims of writer's block.

On the other hand, students with high levels of writing anxiety reported lower writing achievement and writing motivation as compared with low-apprehensive writers (Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021). Sabti et al. (2019) identified that Iraqi EFL students,

who recorded a high level of writing self-efficacy, showed unsatisfactory writing performance. The results of their research further demonstrated an inverse relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing anxiety, as well as between writing anxiety and achievement motivation in writing. Conversely, a significant positive correlation was observed between writing self-efficacy and writing achievement motivation. All these studies again endorse and conclude that students with high levels of writing anxiety do poorly academically and in writing performance, while students with low levels of writing anxiety claim to score higher on writing examinations (Hasni et al., 2021).

Previous Studies on L2 Writing Anxiety

Types and Levels of Writing Anxiety. While anxiety with writing has attracted much interest, numerous studies have been conducted to investigate types, levels, and causal factors of the problem in ESL environments. For example, Cheng (2004) stated that studies on writing apprehension in the context of EFL commenced in the 1990s. Cheng's (2004) study included 165 English majors from a university in Northern Taiwan and showed that language learners who have high writing anxiety tend to be easily discouraged, may have a negative attitude toward writing tasks, and produce low-quality papers. Students with lower writing anxiety, on the other hand, can produce better-quality, longer papers. Concerning the writing anxiety types by Cheng (2004), findings indicated that the most common type is cognitive anxiety that the participants encountered because they were largely worried about things outside of themselves, i.e., fearing judgment from others or getting a low mark from the lecturer. Both Kusumaningputri et al. (2018) and Afdalia et al. (2023) researched the type and cause of writing anxiety in Indonesian EFL learners, and both inevitably found cognitive

anxiety as the most common type. Kusumaningputri et al. used a combination of SLWAI, CWAI, and interviews of first- and second-year college students that revealed the learners were strongly worried about the cognitive difficulties of writing, such as fear of evaluation and performance anxiety.

Similarly, Afdalia et al. confirmed the presence of cognitive anxiety, followed by somatic anxiety and avoidance behaviour, particularly in writing academic journal papers. Both studies indicate that EFL students' anxiety is really rooted in mental and evaluative pressures, suggesting the need for instructional support that focuses on solving students' cognitive issues in writing. Both Elif and Demet (2019) and Kurniasih et al. (2022) investigated writing anxiety among EFL university students, with a focus on its types and levels. Kurniasih et al. administered a test to 303 Indonesian sophomores and juniors, while Elif and Demet studied 257 Turkish preparatory college students. With Cheng's (2004) SLWAI adopted, both studies found moderate to high levels of writing anxiety in learners.

Kurniasih et al. (2022) also measured exceptionally high levels of cognitive anxiety, where there was no detectable difference between measures. Similarly, Elif and Demet reported that respondents tended to report moderate to extreme anxiety, sustained by qualitative analysis of emotional and situational stressors. Generally, the studies point to the presence of cognitive anxiety as a dominant form across academic stages and national settings, which suggests an overarching difficulty in the teaching of EFL writing.

Causes and Contributing Factors. Rasool et al. (2023), Wahyuni et al. (2019), and Rudiyanto (2017) all emphasize repeatedly that FLWA is a prevalent condition among EFL learners, with the threat of insufficient writing practice as an underlying reason. Rasool et al. found high cognitive anxiety among Education University students in Lahore primarily because of language problems and restricted writing experience, without any considerable gender differences. Wahyuni et al. also reported moderate anxiety among Indonesian students with no correlation with academic level and identified topic selection, language difficulties, and lack of exposure to writing as common causes of anxiety. It also uncovered coping mechanisms, which included preparation and peer support. Rudiyanto's study also corroborated the above, with medium somatic levels of anxiety resulting from the inability to practice effectively. Combined, the studies underscore the need for increased writing engagement and intervention to counter students' anxiety and improve writing confidence.

Ali Al-Qaysi et al. (2022) and Fareed et al. (2021) both investigated the underlying reasons and nature of writing anxiety among ESL/EFL students in different geographical locations (Iraq and Pakistan, respectively), revealing a few shared factors. Ali Al-Qaysi et al. found moderate levels of writing anxiety among Iraqi postgraduate students, both in Iraq and overseas cognitive anxiety being the most prevalent. The most common sources of anxiety were linguistic issues, fear of negative evaluation, and low confidence, with no differences among groups. Similarly, Fareed et al. identified a wide range of institutional, pedagogical, and psychological factors inducing writing anxiety for Pakistani undergraduates. They included time pressure, classroom environment, no choice of topic, poor feedback, teacher attitude, and past academic performance. Both studies point to the complex and multilayered nature of writing anxiety, demanding

more supportive, adaptive, and feedback-rich instructional environments to dispel anxiety and build student confidence.

Wern and Rahmat (2021) used a convenience sample of Chinese Independent Middle School students who were purposely chosen to participate. The study found that fear of negative evaluation, time pressure, and linguistic difficulty proved to be the main contributing causes for student writers' writing anxiety. Based on the findings of the descriptive analysis of the causal factors of writing anxiety, they proposed 4 classified strategies that the writing educator could apply in helping student writers cope with their writing anxiety and lighten its effects on writing performance. The four classified strategies are elaborated according to the following: process writing approach, affective strategies, positive error correction, and vocabulary knowledge enhancement.

Hartono and Maharani (2020), Paramarti et al. (2023), and Ubaid et al. (2023) all refer to the prevalence and intricacy of writing anxiety among Southeast and South Asian EFL/ESL students. All three studies identify cognitive anxiety as the dominant type, typically caused by linguistic challenges, such as grammar and vocabulary deficiencies (Hartono & Maharani), or broader academic stressors such as workload overload and time constraints (Paramarti et al., 2023; Ubaid et al., 2023). Where Hartono and Maharani describe grammar issues as the most significant anxiety stimulus among Indonesian learners, Paramarti et al. found that over-allocation of tasks (31% of anxiety causes) led students to seek peer help and teacher interaction to cope. Compare with Ubaid et al.'s Pakistani sample, who exhibited both somatic and cognitive anxiety, while other sources of stress included teacher criticism, test anxiety, and ineffectiveness of writing strategies.

Overall, these studies emphasize the need for targeted instructional support, such as clearer feedback, manageable workloads, and focused language skill development, to help students mitigate writing anxiety and perform more confidently in academic settings.

Impact on Writing Performance. Both Sabti et al. (2019) and Syarifudin (2020) research writing anxiety among EFL learners, with an emphasis on its negative impact on writing ability. Sabti et al. identified a stable negative correlation between writing anxiety and ability, where greater anxiety equals lower writing achievement, and motivation and self-efficacy have a positive impact on performance. Similarly, Syarifudin affirmed a high writing anxiety ($M = 65.86$), wherein cognitive anxiety was the most common type. The study also identified that some of the contributing factors, such as fear of negative judgments and poor practice in writing, had an important role in raising students' anxiety levels. Collectively, these studies highlight the cumulative and pervasive dimension of cognitive anxiety among EFL learners and underscore the importance of boosting students' motivation and confidence to improve writing performance. In order to have an overall understanding of EFL learners' academic writing anxiety, Rohmah and Muslim (2021) translated the twenty-two SLWAI scale into twelve items.

The research was carried out using qualitative case study research. The research findings confirmed that students who had higher anxiety levels performed suboptimal and that anxiety usually immobilized them, making it difficult for them to write. The students also claimed that they always felt cognitive anxiety, which includes extrinsic elements like fear of getting a poor mark from the lecturer or fellow students.

According to Quvanch and Si Na (2022), writing anxiety in Afghan EFL students can have a variety of forms and causes. Respondents were selected from among 133 undergraduate students overall. Data were gathered for the study, which used a quantitative research approach, using a questionnaire modified from the SLWAI and CWAI. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in SPSS to analyse the data. Writing anxiety was found to be moderately prevalent, with cognitive anxiety being the most prevalent type, according to the study's findings.

Genç and Yaylı (2019) explored the anxiety levels, types, and causes of Turkey EFL students' writing anxiety. The participants were chosen from 133 undergraduate students. SLWAI and CWAI questionnaires were used to gather data for this study in quantitative research. Descriptive and inferential SPSS statistics were applied to examine the data. The outcome of the conclusions in the study revealed a moderate level of writing anxiety, where the most common type was cognitive anxiety. As the review above should be able to show, and as noted above, almost no research has so far been done on the levels of writing anxiety among 1st and 2nd year undergraduate students. Apart from this, there also seems to be no such research yet on writing anxiety as a function among undergraduate students in terms of avoidance behaviour, somatic anxiety, and cognitive anxiety. This does not seem to be so both nationally and internationally. Lastly, as established at the onset of this research, the researcher aimed to identify potential factors related to writing anxiety that can impede the development of an efficient research culture and excellence in the university. As a conforming, obedient adherent to its strategic vision, Saudi University aims to be an example of research productivity for both students and faculty members. The current thesis is prepared with the vision in mind of facilitating the achievement of the vision.

Demographic Variables. Qadir et al. (2021) targeted writing anxiety in postgraduate students at a Cypriot university. A total of 37 EFL postgraduate students were tested to determine their levels of writing apprehension. Just like in the present study, Qadir et al. also examined whether there was a statistically significant correlation between writing apprehension among the students and the variables of age, sex, and socioeconomic status. The results presented a range of writing apprehension levels among the respondents, from moderate to high, but there was no statistically significant relation with the said variables. Recommendations were offered, specifically proposing the possibility of inserting or considering identifying the type of apprehension that the respondents experience, which can reveal potential statistical differences. In another local study, writing apprehension was examined as writing anxiety in a sample of 95 undergraduate students at a Manila university.

Coping Strategies and Pedagogical Recommendations. A study was done by Al-Shboul and Huwari (2015) to determine the factors of writing anxiety among Jordanian graduates. The semi-structured interviews indicated that ineffective writing teaching, fear of negative assessment, and worry about writing for academic purposes were three of the main causes of writing anxiety among the participants. Specifically, graduates perceived themselves as lacking due to poor writing practice during their education, which resulted in doubt regarding their writing competence. Furthermore, the fear of receiving negative evaluations from teachers and the necessity to meet academic writing standards were core stressors. The qualitative methodology used in this study facilitated a clearer understanding of context-dependent reasons why the students experienced writing anxiety and offered how it would be dealt with in the schools.

Previous Studies on Writing Anxiety in Saudi Arabia. Several studies conducted in Saudi Arabia converge on the issue of moderate to high levels of EFL writing anxiety among university students, particularly female learners. Alzahrani and Alshaikhi (2023), Aloairdhi (2019), and Albaqami (2023) all found cognitive anxiety to be the most prevalent type, followed by factors like time pressure, linguistic difficulties, insufficient writing practice, and fear of evaluation.

Alamri et al. (2021) extended these findings by highlighting the impact of structural elements (like paragraph organization and sentence accuracy), as well as the classroom environment, which contributed to students' apprehension, particularly in response to feedback and correction. Similarly, Albaqami (2023) emphasized the contrast between anxiety levels inside versus outside the classroom, suggesting that the formal classroom setting can intensify anxiety due to performance pressure, unfamiliar topics, and lack of support. Meanwhile, Waked et al. (2024) provided a critical methodological insight, revealing that standard tools like the SLWAI may not fully capture the unique sociocultural and educational context of Saudi learners. This raises the importance of contextualizing writing anxiety assessments and interventions. Collectively, these studies underline that writing anxiety among Saudi EFL learners is influenced by both internal (self-confidence, language ability) and external (feedback, classroom pressure) factors, and they call for more supportive, culturally responsive teaching environments to mitigate these effects.

Both Al-khresheh and Ben Ali (2023) and Altukruni (2019) highlight that Saudi undergraduate EFL students commonly experience writing anxiety, though they approach the issue with different methodologies. Al-khresheh and Ben Ali used a quantitative approach with a 26-item Likert-scale questionnaire and found that anxiety

stemmed from factors such as negative writing attitudes, fear of evaluation, and lack of confidence. Altukruni (2019), employing a mixed-methods design, confirmed similarly high levels of anxiety, especially cognitive anxiety, among Saudi female students. Her study further revealed that writing anxiety negatively correlated with motivation to read but not with language proficiency. The findings from both studies underscore the need for targeted interventions, such as integrating reading and writing instruction and addressing cognitive aspects of anxiety to support EFL learners more effectively.

Research by Alharbi (2019) investigated the difficulties, such as anxiety, that Saudi undergraduate EFL learners experience when writing academic papers. The study used a combination of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to gather data from 70 undergraduates in Saudi Arabia who were majoring in English as a foreign language. Even though there wasn't a dedicated anxiety measure about writing used in the research, the questionnaire provided queries regarding composition anxiety. Participants reported high levels of anxiety when it came to written assignments, especially when it came to issues with terminology, organization of thoughts, and syntax.

In conclusion, many research findings about the degree, forms, and contributing factors of writing anxiety in EFL contexts have been demonstrated by these studies. Writing anxiety is, in fact, one of the most important problems in research in SLA and hasn't received nearly the attention it deserves in Saudi Arabia. What comes out of the investigations indicates there is a growing movement in Saudi Arabia to measure writing anxiety with approved tools like the SLWAI. These findings lay the groundwork for additional studies on anxiety about writing in Saudi EFL classrooms and emphasize the necessity of a focus on cultural and pedagogical elements that might have a role in the development of that issue among Saudi students.

Coping Strategies to Alleviate Second Language Writing Anxiety.

Regarding strategies for writing anxiety, the breadth of literature on this subject is still limited to tactics students use for it. It has yet to be seen whether they are effective in helping students deal with writing anxiety or not (Masriani et al., 2018; Raoofi et al., 2017; Wahyuni et al., 2019). Also, Wischgoll (2017) stated that writing strategies might assist learners in controlling and modifying their efforts to master the writing assignment. To corroborate this, Masriani et al. (2018) stated that a lack of strategy in writing causes pupils to see writing as difficult and attempt to avoid it. The importance of writing strategies in improving second language writing has been established, and there are differences between stronger and less proficient learners in the number and variety of approaches used, as well as how the strategies are applied effectively to the writing task. In sum, the phrase "writing strategies" refers to the tactics and procedures employed by students to write more effectively or create better compositions. Also, the student's writing strategies include cognitive, metacognitive, and social/affective strategies (Canada & Miralles, 2022).

Writing strategies can be defined as a series of methods that students purposefully adopt to complete the writing task better, including pre-writing, while-writing, and post-writing strategies (Chen, 2011). Students should arrange their writing to produce quality writing. The right approaches and strategies must be employed when organizing writing tasks to help students avoid technical errors such as disconnected paragraphs and grammatical mistakes (Raoofi et al., 2017). Additionally, teachers should avoid overcorrecting errors and instead focus on correcting those that occur frequently and hinder comprehension (Cheng, 2004). This helps students recognize their writing success areas, be flexible, and shift the focus from accuracy to fluency

(Masriani et al., 2018). Students are now able to choose and write on subjects that they find relevant and interesting. Teachers played a crucial role in offering personal help to students experiencing language anxiety. They provided encouragement, support, and constructive comments to help students overcome anxiety and gain confidence in their language skills. Teachers emphasized the importance of recognizing and accepting faults among students (Alshehri, 2024). Moreover, allowing writers to complete several revisions before determining a final grade is one of the most successful approaches. Students can work in groups to generate ideas and edit papers with their peers (Cheng, 2004).

Alrabai (2015) investigated anxiety-reducing techniques employed in English as an EFL course in Saudi Arabia. This investigation offers helpful perspectives on managing anxiety within the Saudi EFL setting. Using the FLCAS invented by Horwitz et al. (1986) to assess anxiety levels, the investigator conducted an exploratory study involving 596 individuals. Learners' anxiety about learning a foreign language was greatly reduced when instructors used measures to reduce apprehension. For instance, creating a supportive classroom environment, providing clear instructions, and using relaxation techniques can help students feel more at ease. Additionally, incorporating collaborative activities, starting with easier tasks, and offering constructive feedback can significantly lower anxiety and encourage more active participation. These strategies help students feel more confident and less apprehensive in their learning process.

Using alternative methods, Raoofi et al. (2017) identified five writing strategies: meta-cognitive, cognitive, effort regulation, social, and affective. The meta-cognitive strategy involves students' self-awareness, understanding, and motivation. Cognitive

strategies help students process and transform information. Social strategies focus on interactions with others. Effort regulation strategies evaluate students' regulation of effort in writing. Affective strategies help to regulate emotions, motivation, and attitudes in writing. Mariani et al. (2018) found that students positively employ strategies when writing, with metacognitive techniques being the most frequently used. Social strategy was the least utilized tactic. It was discovered from the conversation that the elements impacting students' writing anxiety levels included their fear of being evaluated, which may have resulted from the fact that the writing assessment was given in the form of a test.

There exist numerous methodologies for the categorization of writing strategies:

- (1) A classification based on the writing process. Petric and Czarl (2003) delineated writing strategies into three distinct categories: pre-writing, while-writing, and post-writing revision.
- (2) A classification of the subjective cognitive modes of writers. Yang (2002) segmented the writing strategies into five categories: preparation, drafting, revision, reader awareness, and the avoidance of the mother tongue.
- (3) A classification that emphasizes the intrinsic nature of writing and the conceptual framework of writing strategies.

These approaches demonstrate that writing strategies are both stage-oriented and cognitively demanding, offering a framework for analysing writers' processes and cognitive barriers. Oxford (1992) also offered some specific effective strategies that can be applied to an L2, including memory, cognition, and compensation strategies. Indirect learning strategies assist and control language acquisition without using language directly; they are metacognitive, emotional, and social.

Oxford (2001) identified three types of language learning strategies that can help reduce L2 writing anxiety: meta-cognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and affective

strategies. Meta-cognitive strategies, for example, involve recognizing one's interests, needs, and preferred learning styles. This awareness allows learners to gain insight into their learning preferences, along with their strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to choose strategies that align with their learning style (Oxford, 2001). In the beginning, a student might learn from meta-cognitive strategies by reflecting on his or her interests, requirements, and preferred learning style. All these strategies could be used flexibly in coping with the writing anxiety of an L2. Liu (2006) classified writing strategies into two principal categories: learning strategies and output strategies. 4) A classification that is predicated on the significance of monitoring within the writing process. Ren (2006) categorized the writing strategies into four distinct stages: the preparatory stage preceding writing, drafting, revising, and the monitoring stage.

According to Afdali et al. (2023), the methods for overcoming writing anxiety included (i) self-suggestion to remain composed and think optimistically, (ii) seeking out credible sources for references, and (iii) incorporating basic English writing practices into everyday activities. This study suggests that students' use of the cognitive strategy of talking with the instructor or other experts for advice on how to write a journal article might be a creative way for them to get over their nervousness, particularly when writing journal articles in English. A study by Wahyuni et al. (2019) found that students employ all five categories of coping strategies proposed by Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004), namely preparation, positive thinking, relaxation, peer-seeking, and avoidance.

In this case, preparation and positive thinking are strategies used the most by the students. Likewise, according to Horwitz et al. (1986), teachers can use specific measures, including behavioural contracting, relaxation exercises, counselling on

efficient language acquisition procedures, and journaling to help students feel less anxious when learning an L2. Moreover, teachers can assist students in mitigating anxiety by employing pedagogical techniques and writing strategy interventions, while simultaneously fostering learners' self-efficacy through the implementation of more individualized writing tasks within the educational environment. This involves customizing instruction to align with the specific requirements of each student, adopting a supportive demeanour, and providing affirmative assessments to bolster their confidence in writing, thereby contributing to the reduction of their writing-related anxiety (Huang et al., 2024).

Salim et al. (2017) concluded that the predominant coping mechanism employed by English language learners was engaging in group activities. This approach was perceived to enhance learners' comfort levels, as they held the belief that other members of the group might possess greater proficiency, thus aiding in task completion. Ultimately, the literature reviewed contributed to a deeper comprehension of the origins of language anxiety and delineated variations in students' encounters with such anxiety. Cahyono et al. (2023) investigated students' writing anxiety levels, identified causes of anxiety, and proposed solutions. Data analysis revealed that 115 out of 149 students had high writing anxiety, while 35 had medium to low levels. Anxiety was mainly caused by time constraints, linguistic factors, and fear of negative evaluation. Students mentioned factors hindering their writing skills, such as limited practice, insufficient technique, and lack of feedback. The qualitative data revealed that numerous strategies implemented by highly anxious students to reduce their writing anxiety in online writing instruction include doing more writing activities, doing self-anxiety treatment, implementing writing techniques, building resources, and increasing their self-

confidence. Thus, teachers could help students by providing adequate and effective feedback for them to improve their writing.

Canada and Miralles (2022) sought to investigate the extent to which English educators' writing pedagogy and learners' writing strategies serve as significant predictors of students' anxiety concerning ESL writing. The cohort for the current investigation, which utilized a quantitative descriptive-predictive methodological framework, comprised 271 first-year and second-year students enrolled in the University of Mindanao Digos College, Philippines. The data collected were subjected to rigorous analysis and interpretation via statistical measures, including mean and standard deviation, Pearson correlation, regression analysis, and multiple linear regression techniques. The findings indicated that the explicit writing instruction provided by teachers, along with the strategic approaches employed by students in their writing processes, contributed to a reduction in writing-related anxiety among learners. These results substantiated the three domains pertinent to English writing instruction and strategies: acquiring skills in composing factual texts, mastering the creation of both formal and informal texts, and resource utilization, which were all found to significantly predict levels of English writing anxiety. The outcomes derived from this investigation imply that the application of effective instructional methods and strategic approaches by students may mitigate anxiety and enhance performance across various writing genres.

Theoretical Framework

This thesis is grounded in Horwitz, et al.'s (1986) FLA theory, which conceptualizes FLA as a distinct form of anxiety specific to language learning,

composed of communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. This theoretical framework helps explain the psychological and affective barriers faced by EFL learners, particularly in writing tasks, and provides a basis for understanding how anxiety influences performance and motivation. In addition, the study draws on Flower and Hayes' (1981) cognitive process theory of writing, which highlights the recursive nature of writing and the role of planning, translating, and reviewing. Together, these frameworks inform the study's focus on the causes of writing anxiety and the coping strategies used by Saudi EFL students.

In addition, the study draws on Cheng's (2004) theory of SLWAI, which further refines anxiety into three subcomponents: cognitive anxiety (negative expectations and self-beliefs), somatic anxiety (physiological arousal), and avoidance behaviour (withdrawal or procrastination). These subscales are operationalized in the SLWAI, which is used in the present study. Cheng's theory posits that learners' self-belief in their writing capabilities is a primary predictor of anxiety arousal, meaning students with lower self-efficacy tend to experience higher levels of writing anxiety (Wern & Rahmat, 2021).

These theoretical perspectives directly shaped the study's five research questions: (1) To what extent do EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University experience foreign language anxiety? (2) To what extent do they experience anxiety in English writing classrooms? (3) What factors are associated with the writing anxiety of EFL undergraduate students? (4) What strategies are employed by students to reduce their English writing anxiety? and (5) What strategies are employed by teachers to reduce their students' English writing anxiety? By aligning these research questions with the constructs of FLA and SLWAI, the study ensures theoretical coherence.

Moreover, the choice of a mixed-methods design utilizing the FLACS and SLWAI questionnaires and semi-structured interviews was guided by the need to capture both the measurable aspects of anxiety and the more nuanced personal experiences of learners. Finally, the analysis of qualitative data was informed by the cognitive process theory of writing, allowing for a deeper understanding of how writing behaviours interact with anxiety symptoms.

These theoretical perspectives inform the development of the study's research questions and guide the interpretation of data related to learners' writing anxiety and the strategies they use to cope with it. Together, Horwitz et al.'s FLA theory and Cheng's SLWAI model provide a dual lens through which to examine the psychological and behavioural dimensions of writing anxiety among Saudi EFL students and inform both the design of the study and the interpretation of its findings. Furthermore, grounding the study in the constructs of FLA and SLWAI allows for a more holistic understanding of writing anxiety. This dual-theoretical lens acknowledges that writing anxiety is not only an emotional barrier but also a cognitive process shaped by learners' beliefs, prior experiences, and strategic behaviour. Such integration supports a comprehensive investigation that can inform both pedagogical interventions and future research in EFL writing instruction.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 presented the literature review and theoretical framework of the present study. Additionally, it reviewed the related literature on FLA and FLWA among English language learners. It reviewed the nature and sources of FLA and writing anxiety, and the effect of second language writing anxiety on students' writing performance. This chapter also discussed several strategies to alleviate L2 writing anxiety. This review helped to identify gaps in existing research and to justify the focus of the current study. Specifically, there is a lack of research focusing on writing anxiety among Saudi EFL learners at the university level, particularly studies that incorporate both student and teacher perspectives. Much of the existing literature has been conducted in non-Arab or general EFL contexts, leaving the Saudi context underexplored. Additionally, there is limited qualitative investigation into the emotional, pedagogical, and linguistic factors contributing to writing anxiety, as well as how learners cope with it in academic settings. This study aims to address these gaps by exploring Saudi EFL students' perceptions of writing anxiety, identifying contributing factors, and examining effective coping strategies within the Saudi university context. By doing so, it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of writing anxiety within second language acquisition and offers practical insights for educators working with EFL learners in similar socio-cultural environments. Building on these foundations, Chapter 3 details the research methodology employed in this study. It includes a description of the research design, the setting and participants, the development and pilot testing of research instruments, and the procedures for data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will explain how this mixed-methods sequential explanatory mixed methods design investigated the potential factors of writing anxiety among Saudi undergraduates majoring in English at Saudi University. This includes the research paradigm, research methodology, research design, research questions, participants, data collection instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis, data quality, which refers to reliability and validity, and research ethics.

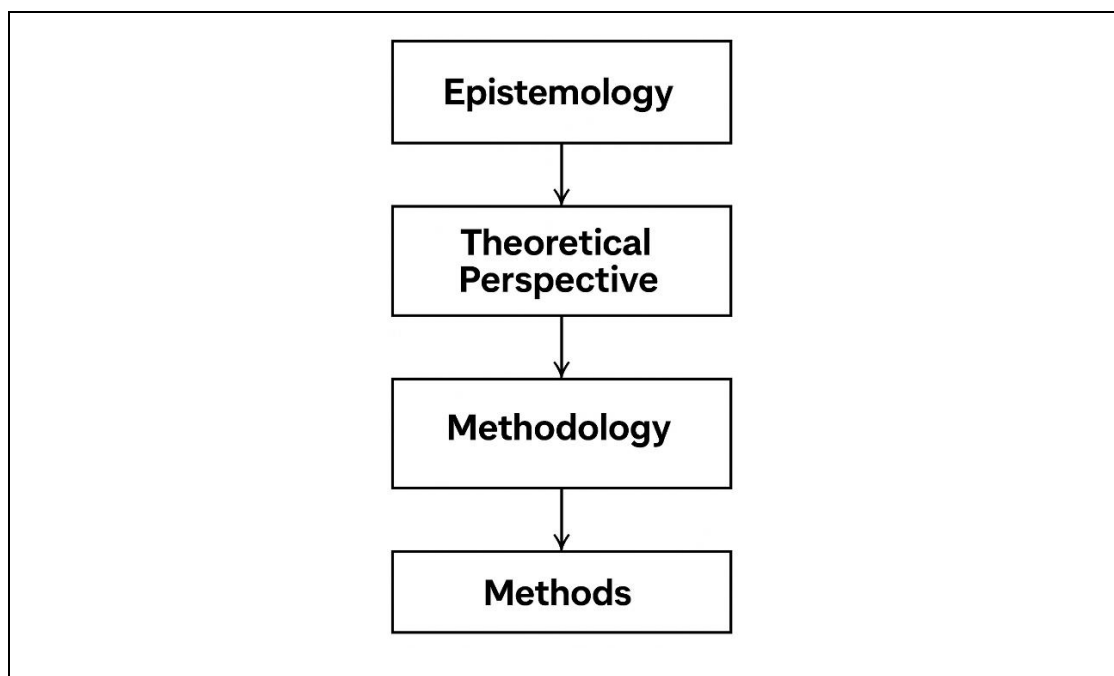
Research Paradigm

Initially, a paradigm comprises various components that can be categorized into philosophy of ontology and epistemology, as well as research methods (Scotland, 2012). The origin of this term can be traced back to the Greek language, where it signifies a "pattern" (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017) and was further pioneered by Thomas Kuhn (1962), an American scientist, who used it to refer to a particular way of thinking. Second, in the field of educational research, the concept of a researcher's 'worldview' is referred to as a paradigm (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The process of conducting research can be explained through four interrelated elements arranged hierarchically: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods (Figure2). Epistemology, as discussed by Crotty (1998), refers to the study of the assumptions individuals make about how knowledge is acquired and the relationship between the knower and the known. In other words, philosophy explains the theoretical position, the research

methods guide the choice of research methodology, and the methodology determines the specific research methods to be applied (Crotty, 1998). Also, the last component, refers to the strategies or processes that include specific actions to gather and analyse data following research questions or hypotheses (Al-Ababneh, 2020). Further, some of the most important research tools are sampling, measurement, and scaling, questionnaires, observations, interviews, focus groups, case studies, life histories, content analysis, conversation analysis, etc. (Crotty, 1998).

Figure 2

The Basic Elements of the Research Process



(developed by the author)

The comprehension of the research paradigms is of utmost importance to the research methodology adopted by social science researchers, as it facilitates a deeper comprehension of the phenomenon under investigation and aids in selecting the most appropriate research tool (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A research paradigm encompasses

the delineation of the research approach, problem formulation, data collection, processing, and subsequent analysis (Žukauskas et al., 2018). A research paradigm is a "systematic investigation" (Burns, 1997, p.2). It is further defined by the "patterns of beliefs and practices that guide inquiry within the field by providing lenses, frames, and procedures through which investigation is done" (Weaver & Olson, 2006, p. 460). A research paradigm serves as a foundational framework that understands, explains, predicts, or controls an educational or psychological phenomenon or empowers individuals in such contexts" (Mertens, 2005, p.2).

The concept of a research paradigm lies in its provision of a framework for the research approach, with methods being an integral part of this approach (Saunders et al., 2012). The research paradigm is intricately linked to researchers' perspectives and the potential influence on their studies. When embarking on research endeavours across any discipline, it is imperative to consider diverse research paradigms. These paradigms encompass assumptions, concepts of truth, and the understanding of reality. Specifically, the relevant paradigms are epistemology, ontology, and methodology (Smith et al., 2009). Ontological pertains to the existence of the natural and objective world, while epistemological is linked to the potential of understanding this world and the forms that such understanding might take, and methodological is associated with the technical tools utilized in obtaining such understanding (Burrell & Morgan, 2019; Corbetta, 2003; Hothersall, 2019).

According to Saunders et al. (2009), four distinct types of research philosophies may be classified depending on how researchers see the process of conducting research: positivism, interpretivism, realism, and pragmatism. The positivist paradigm, also known as positivism, is grounded in realism and holds that the object of investigation

exists in the real world. Positivists, for instance, would argue that each language learner possesses items like motivations, self-regulation, and interlanguage (Phakiti, 2014). From a positivist perspective, these elements are seen as fixed and generalisable features; this perspective claims that by objectively examining these variables, researchers may predict and elucidate language acquisition outcomes across diverse learners and circumstances (Dornyei, 2014).

Besides, Positivism posits that reality exists independently of our subjective experiences and may be grasped by hard cognitive processes, as well as systematic recording and analysis of our empirical encounters (Bryman, 2016; Moses & Knutsen, 2007; Patton, 2015). The term "interpretivism" is frequently used to refer to social constructivism (Mertens, 2005). This perspective assumes that the exploration of human beings cannot be approached like that of physical phenomena (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Further, people in the interpretative paradigm (social constructivism) try to figure out how things operate in the real world. Individuals construct subjective interpretations of their experiences, which are specifically oriented towards objects or entities; therefore, research should rely as much as possible on participants' perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Positivism focuses on objective reality, using defined variables and quantitative data to test theories and prove hypotheses. In contrast, interpretivism emphasizes the constructed nature of reality and seeks to understand social constructions through subjective meaning-making processes using qualitative data (Lawler & Waldner, 2022). As a result, the researcher integrates the quantitative and qualitative paradigms rather than viewing them as conflicting ideologies and develops an integrated ontological, epistemological position for pragmatism (Maarouf, 2019). Pragmatism stands out in

research due to its unique ability to offer a wide array of perspectives to researchers, combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Islam, 2022). Table 2 shows the comparison of research philosophies.

Table 2

Comparison of Research Philosophies

Positivism

- **Ontology:** Reality is external, objective, and independent of social actors.
- **Epistemology:** Only observable phenomena can provide credible data and facts; focuses on causality and the development of law-like generalizations.

Interpretivism

- **Ontology:** Reality is socially constructed, subjective, and may vary or change; multiple realities may exist.
- **Epistemology:** Emphasizes subjective meanings and social phenomena; focuses on understanding the details of situations and the meanings individuals assign to them.

Realism

- **Ontology:** Reality exists objectively and independently of human thoughts, beliefs, or knowledge (realist perspective), but is interpreted through social conditioning (critical realist perspective).
- **Epistemology:** Observable phenomena provide credible data and facts; acknowledges that insufficient data can lead to inaccuracies in perception.

Pragmatism

- **Ontology:** Accepts multiple views of reality, selecting those that best enable answering the research question.
- **Epistemology:** Either or both observable phenomena and subjective meanings can provide acceptable knowledge, depending on the research purpose.

Source: (Saunders et al. 2009)

Pragmatism

The late 19th century saw the foundations of a new philosophical paradigm in the United States known as pragmatism. According to Maxcy (2003), the philosophical movement known as pragmatism may be traced back to the late 19th century in the United States. Further, the term "pragmatism" originates from the Greek word "πρ γμα" which represents activity and is the source of the English terms "practice" and "practical." In English, the words "practice" and "practical" imply the same thing. William James is recognized for promoting the term pragmatism with the publication of his book entitled "Pragmatism: *A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*" (Giacobbi et al., 2005). While pragmatism may be considered a recent addition to the social science research paradigm, its roots can be traced back to the philosophical developments of the nineteenth century (Islam, 2022). Contemporary social science research has embraced pragmatism as a means to explore social issues from diverse perspectives, drawing upon a range of social science theories. Within the realm of social research, pragmatism serves to mitigate methodological ambiguities by integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies to tackle intricate research inquiries (Islam, 2022).

According to Morgan (2007), pragmatism demands "intersubjective" inquiry, which acknowledges the existence of a single reality while also allowing for the possibility of numerous subjective interpretations. In a broad context, pragmatism can be defined as a philosophical evolution that highlights the lived experiences of individuals and asserts the absence of a purely abstract conception of existence; instead,

it posits that all challenges encountered in life are grounded in practicality. Consequently, it is imperative to approach dilemmas in daily life through empirical and pragmatic lenses to gain a thorough understanding of the issues at hand (Islam, 2022).

The positivist paradigm, rooted in empirical philosophy, emphasizes the measurement of phenomena in both natural and social sciences. In contrast, constructivism focuses on qualitative methodology, emphasizing subjective interpretation and understanding of reality (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). This thesis adopts a pragmatic paradigm, which underpins the use of a mixed-methods research design. In this study, pragmatism allows for the integration of both objective (quantitative) and subjective (qualitative) forms of inquiry, aligning with the thesis's aim to explore the multifaceted nature of writing anxiety among Saudi EFL learners. By combining these approaches, this study seeks to gain a more comprehensive understanding of both the measurable patterns and the lived experiences that contribute to writing anxiety in the Saudi university context. Pragmatism, as a worldview in social research, has gained attention for combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies, supporting a mixed-method approach in research. Alberstein (2002) highlighted pragmatism as a theory of human behaviour that views humans as problem solvers, questions claim to truth and promotes an optimistic view of individuals as creators of their reality. This aligns with the idea that pragmatism serves as the cornerstone of mixed-method research, allowing researchers to draw on various methods to address research questions effectively.

The Oxford International Dictionary defines pragmatism as pragmatic, dealing with things sensibly and realistically in a way that is based on the practical rather than the theoretical. The reason for the mixed method is based on the underlying assumption

that pragmatism is the perspective that allows for an integration of different theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and attitudes while studying a given problem (Creswell, 2014). According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), pragmatism may be evident in studies that employ a wide variety of research approaches to generate conclusions that are relevant and appropriate to specific groups. Recently, researchers such as Creswell and Creswell (2018) advocated for paradigm combination to take advantage of the strengths of each approach and complement each other in research.

According to the examples provided by Creswell and Plano Clark (2017), pragmatism disregards the epistemological and ontological argument over the perceptions of the real social world in favour of what is most effective in answering research questions without inquiring into reality or the laws of nature. This affords the researcher the autonomy to select from a multitude of potential methodologies to effectively address the research questions. Therefore, pragmatist researchers can provide answers to the research questions by employing values as an aspect of the strategies in a manner that is both distinctive and complementary (Yardley & Bishop, 2017).

Specifically, this study employs a Sequential Explanatory Design, a two-phase mixed-methods approach in which quantitative data is collected and analysed first, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis to explain or elaborate on the quantitative results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This design allows the researcher to first identify general patterns or trends through numerical data and then gain deeper insight into those patterns by exploring participants' perspectives and experiences in more detail. It helps to clarify unexpected results, provide context to statistical findings, and enhance the overall interpretation by connecting the "what" revealed by the

quantitative phase with the "why" explored in the qualitative phase. In the context of this study, it supports a comprehensive understanding of writing anxiety by quantifying its prevalence and then exploring the underlying causes and coping strategies through participants' narratives.

During the first phase, the levels and sources of writing anxiety were measured using standardized questionnaires (FLCAS and SLWAI). During the second phase, semi-structured interviews with targeted students and teachers were conducted to get richer information about the reasons for these trends and to examine the strategies adopted in reducing anxiety. This is a highly appropriate design since it allows the researcher to begin broadly with a basis informed by statistical trends and narrow it and make it more qualitative through personal narratives.

Consequently, a pragmatic methodological approach was chosen for this study by the researcher for a variety of different reasons. First and foremost, employing a singular approach, whether it be quantitative or qualitative, is inadequate for addressing the research inquiries of this study. To fully understand complex problems, relying solely on either qualitative or quantitative research is insufficient due to the limitations of each approach. Qualitative research is ideal when little is known about a topic, the research context is poorly understood, or the phenomenon is not quantifiable, allowing for flexible exploration guided by data rather than fixed hypotheses. On the other hand, quantitative research focuses on objective hard data and statistical validity, often involving predetermined options and large sample sizes to achieve statistically valid findings (Hesse-Biber, 2018). For example, employing quantitative methodology, particularly utilizing questionnaires like FLCAS and SLWAI to examine writing

anxiety among Saudi students, would provide valuable statistical outcomes but might not comprehensively address all research inquiries.

Second, this approach allows researchers to transcend the traditional dichotomy between positivism and constructivism, providing more comprehensive findings and a flexible framework for inquiry. Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) stated that combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches helps us better to make the findings of the research stronger. The combination of both a quantitative and a qualitative approach allows for gaining understanding about undergraduate students at Saudi University and their experiences with anxiety in English writing classrooms (RQ1), the factors behind their writing anxiety (RQ2), and the strategies they use to reduce it (RQ3), as well as what strategies are employed by undergraduate students to reduce their English writing anxiety (RQ4). This approach also allows for a deeper exploration of students' perspectives through quantitative data from questionnaires, along with strategies used by EFL teachers to lessen students' writing anxiety (RQ5).

This methodology facilitated the production of comprehensive findings regarding the anxiety experienced by Saudi undergraduate students majoring in EFL. One of its key advantages is the ability to explain, interpret, or contextualize quantitative findings, offering a detailed examination of unexpected results. By integrating both approaches, this study captures the complexity of students' experiences and provides a thorough understanding of the factors influencing their writing anxiety, making this combined approach particularly well-suited for the study. Additionally, this method has helped generate broad findings about the anxiety experienced by Saudi university students studying English as a foreign language. One of its most significant benefits is that it allows quantitative results to be clarified and interpreted in context, contributing

to a more rigorous study of unexpected findings. By combining the two methods, this study captures the complexities of students' experiences and provides a more complete understanding of the factors influencing their writing anxiety, making this combined approach ideally suited for research.

Research Methodology

Mixed methods research is becoming common in the social sciences as a whole and is a valid, independent study design (Creswell, 2002, 2003; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, 2003). The utilization of mixed methods in research entails the integration of quantitative and qualitative research techniques within an investigative framework (Creswell, 2009). Identified by its simultaneous collection of quantitative and qualitative data during a single data collection phase, the mixed-methods approach is characterized by the utilization of both types of data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this approach, the primary method employed is quantitative, serving as the foundation for the study, while the secondary method, qualitative, plays a supportive role in the research procedures. The underlying principle of this investigative approach posits that the amalgamation of quantitative and qualitative data leads to a more profound comprehension that surpasses the insights gained from using either quantitative or qualitative data exclusively (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2017), mixed-method research is a model of inquiry whose philosophy is based on qualitative and quantitative research models, allowing the results to provide comprehensive knowledge and increase the validity of the meanings that would not be possible by applying a single model.

Therefore, the quantitative and qualitative approaches for investigating will still be valuable and significant; therefore, the mixed methodologies approach to research is an enhancement rather than a replacement (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

This study employed a mixed methods design to investigate the writing anxiety concerns of students within the Saudi context. As described by Creswell and Plano Clark (2017), this approach involves collecting and analysing both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously, integrating the findings, and framing them within theoretical and philosophical perspectives. The specific design for the primary quantitative method was a survey study to generalize results to the population. Interviews were the qualitative method that focused on collecting detailed views from participants to help explain the initial quantitative survey. The quantitative methods employed a survey to investigate the writing anxiety experienced by EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University in Saudi Arabia. The survey was used to measure anxiety in English writing classrooms. The qualitative method employed an interview to investigate the writing anxiety of EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University. Qualitative research is good for describing, identifying, and exploring the phenomena of human behaviour.

To better understand a complicated process like language learning, researchers need to think about why they require two methodologies and how they might complement one another (Dörnyei 2007, cited in Phakiti, 2014). With mixed methods research, researchers aim to collect data at several levels using a variety of methodologies, approaches, and strategies, all within the context of a single investigation. This type of study would yield a more complete picture than one based only on data collected using a single method (Hakami, 2019).

The reason for the mixed method is based on the underlying assumption that collecting diverse types of data provides a more complete understanding of a research problem, as it allows for a more complete analysis than using either approach alone. On the other hand, there are specific research problems for which quantitative approaches are required, while others can be more effectively answered by employing qualitative research methods. Mixed methods, on the other hand, are guided by a pragmatic philosophy that makes it possible for researchers to use the best features of both approaches to achieve their research objectives and challenges (Hakami, 2019). Therefore, a mixed-methods approach was adopted for this study to assist in overcoming some constraints present in both the quantitative and qualitative methods, if they were to be employed separately, to address research concerns that neither of these methods could resolve properly, and to draw more reliable conclusions (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). For this study, by integrating both quantitative data, which offer broad numeric trends, and qualitative data, which provide detailed views, the researcher can gain a deeper insight into the research problem and its findings. In addition, insights gained from the interview of a small subsample of EFL undergraduate students regarding their anxiety were used to further examine their level of anxiety. Thus, the two components of the study are complementary in that the qualitative component attempts to expand upon and cross-check the validity of the quantitative results.

Moreover, the investigation of a phenomenon with a blend of more than one type of research approach is also an example of the methodology known as triangulation. Triangulation also occurs in pure quantitative or pure qualitative designs and does not exclusively imply a blend of both, which is able to increase a study's internal and

external validity greatly by overcoming methodological problems and allowing them to be controlled more forcefully (Dörnyei, 2007). Triangulation can be conducted either simultaneously, employing the two methodologies, or step by step, designing each methodology based on the results already obtained (Morse, 1991). Triangulation also occurs in the aim to enhance and augment research findings using various methodologies of data collection and analysis, with a view to investigating a single phenomenon. Particularly, this method is used to provide the researcher with an understanding of the anxiety that is experienced by EFL Saudi undergraduate students. It is easy to use and control responses from participants for further data analysis. The interview was also used to provide a clearer view of responses to questionnaires. It is made feasible by the collection, analysis, and employment of information from an array of sources, ultimately with the goal of building the reliability and internal validity of the study (Merriam, 1998).

Sequential Explanatory Design

To decide on the appropriate mixed method design to employ, Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) highlighted that it is important for the researcher to possess a full comprehension of the purpose for integrating the data. Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) identified six mixed methods designs. First, the sequential explanatory design involves conducting quantitative research first, which then informs the qualitative phase, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the research topic (Barnes, 2019; Creswell, 2014). Second, the sequential exploration design involves two stages where qualitative data is first collected and analysed, followed by the collection and examination of quantitative data. Third, in a two-phase sequential transformative design, the choice between starting with a qualitative or quantitative model initially depends on

the research focus and objectives. Fourth, concurrent triangulation design involves collecting quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously and examining them through interactions. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the research topic by integrating different data types in real time. Fifth, concurrent embedded design, akin to concurrent triangulation, involves nesting data collection within the investigation, where primary research leads the inquiry and secondary methods support it. Finally, contemporaneous transformative design involves collecting data in real time to facilitate immediate insights and actions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

This study employed sequential explanatory design due to its inherent structure involving the systematic gathering and examination of quantitative data, followed by the subsequent collection and analysis of qualitative data. The rationale for adopting this approach is the fact that quantitative data and findings did not offer an extensive description of the study topic; more analysis is required, particularly through the gathering of qualitative data, to enhance, expand, or elucidate the overall understanding (Subedi, 2016).

Utilizing this approach confers several advantages, including the ability to elucidate, interpret, or provide context for quantitative findings, as well as to scrutinize unexpected outcomes from a quantitative investigation in a more comprehensive manner. Ivankova and Creswell (2009) argue that interview findings can serve to highlight the results obtained via questionnaires and effectively bring a research study to life. Also, the justification for employing this methodology is in the notion that the incorporation of both quantitative and qualitative data, together with their respective analyses, serves to enhance and explain the statistical findings by exploring the perspectives of the participants more comprehensively. Furthermore, the present study

exhibits these characteristics, hence justifying its appropriateness for the research at hand.

The sequential explanatory design of this study was conducted in two stages, comprising a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase. In the initial phase, data collection was carried out using a questionnaire. The primary objective of the questionnaire was to gather information that could provide insights into the research questions from the participants, as well as assist the researcher in delineating the general characteristics of the undergraduate student population at Saudi University. Subsequently, for the second phase, individual interviews were conducted with the students at Saudi University. The primary aim of these interviews was to involve the selected participants in a series of inquiries about the questionnaire, to reach a better understanding of the writing anxiety experienced by EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University.

Participants

A population is a whole group of specialized people or objects with a set of characteristics and is usually found within a geographical location (Creswell, 2014). The participants of the study comprised undergraduate male students majoring in English during their first and second years at the College of Arts within Saudi University, Saudi Arabia. The selection of this student population was based on university records, which indicated that the total number of English-major undergraduate students at the College of Arts during the 2022–2023 academic year was

approximately 380. Accordingly, the quantitative phase of the study included all 380 students.

For the qualitative phase, a purposeful sampling strategy was used to select 10 students and 5 lecturers. The selection of student interview participants was specifically based on their responses to the FLCAS and the SLWAI. Students who exhibited moderate to high levels of anxiety in the quantitative phase were invited to participate in the interviews. This approach ensured that the qualitative data would provide in-depth insight into the experiences of those most affected by writing-related anxiety, aligning with the explanatory sequential mixed methods design of the study. Purposeful sampling, as defined by Patton (2002), involves the deliberate selection of participants with relevant knowledge or characteristics, enabling the collection of rich and meaningful data. As noted by DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), this method is particularly appropriate in qualitative research, where the goal is to explore experiences in depth rather than to generalize findings.

Quantitative and qualitative phase recruitment was facilitated by coordination with the instructors of relevant courses, who disseminated the study in class and distributed invitations on official university email lists. Interested students were provided with detailed information on the aims of the study, required participation, and confidentiality assurances. Volunteer students completed the questionnaires online, and those participants who consented to be contacted for a follow-up interview were purposively sampled according to their questionnaire responses and availability to be interviewed. All participants provided informed consent before the data were collected.

For purposes of this study, purposive sampling was employed in the selection of the sample. According to Patton (2015), this sampling technique included intentional selection to achieve representativeness of the locations and individuals, enabling efficient data collection from participants and the capture of important new information (Lakens, 2022). Consequently, the purposive sample of semi-structured interviews in the present study comprises EFL undergraduate students in levels 1 and 2 at Saudi University. The students were anxious about their writing, and they did not know how to construct their writing effectively, lacking confidence. In addition, the students were quite willing to share their emotional vexation associated with writing in EFL.

Based on the research conducted in various universities, including Saudi Arabia, it is evident that writing anxiety is a prevalent issue among English language students, particularly in postgraduate and EFL programs (Alzahrani & Alshaikhi, 2023; Waked et al., 2024). The studies highlight that students often experience moderate to high levels of anxiety, with cognitive anxiety and linguistic difficulties being prominent factors contributing to this apprehension (Alzahrani & Alshaikhi, 2023; Waked et al., 2024).

Five teachers, all Saudi Arabian nationals, were selected as participants in this study . It was based on their extensive teaching experience at the first level within the English Department, specifically in Writing 1 and Writing 2 classes. All of them are active members of the English department, where the curriculum primarily focuses on language modules encompassing writing, reading, and speaking during the initial two years of study. Thus, the primary rationale for selecting these five teachers is that, due to their teaching experience and expertise in English writing, they are expected to provide valuable insights into the challenges and strategies related to writing anxiety in EFL. Teachers with practical experience in teaching English writing are often chosen

for their ability to offer informed perspectives on the issues students face and the instructional strategies they employ to address these challenges. It is important to note that both Rami (Teacher 1) and Faisal (Teacher 4) are pseudonyms.

These teachers excel in their teaching, covering a wide range of topics from fundamental concepts to advanced writing strategies. Ahmed (Teacher 5), on the other hand, guides students who have completed their first year of study at the same level in writing skills. Moreover, Omar (Teacher 2), serving as an English lecturer, educates first-year students in the Bachelor Writing program, while Sami (Teacher 3) undertakes the role of teaching first-year students in the Writing 2 department. Every individual was duly informed via email and provided with the opportunity to partake in the interview. The email addresses necessary for communication were obtained from the department's mailing list after the call for volunteers.

Among the five instructors, all are aged between 32 and 40 years old. All instructors are native Arabic speakers and are proficient in English as their second language, reflecting their roles as EFL educators. Their bilingual abilities enable them to effectively teach English while understanding the linguistic and cultural background of their students. All instructors are from Saudi Arabia, which provides a shared cultural context that informs their teaching practices within the university setting. Table 3 presents the demographic information of research participants.

Table 3

The Teacher Interviewees' Profile

Teachers	Interview Time	Age	Rank/Position	Years of Experience	Language	Country
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Teacher 1 (Rami)	30–40 min	40	Professor	9	Arabic, English	Saudi Arabia
Teacher 2 (Omar)	30–40 min	37	Assistant Professor	7	Arabic, English	Saudi Arabia
Teacher 3 (Sami)	30–40 min	35	Assistant Professor	6	Arabic, English	Saudi Arabia
Teacher 4 (Faisal)	25–30 min	33	Assistant Professor	6	Arabic, English	Saudi Arabia
Teacher 5 (Hatem)	25–30 min	32	Assistant Professor	4	Arabic, English	Saudi Arabia

Research Site

The study was conducted in Saudi Arabia at the Saudi University (pseudonym), which is a public university located in the northern region of the country, in April 2023. The university was selected due to its structured English undergraduate programs and easy accessibility to the population of interest in this study. The university adopts a gender-segregated education system in accordance with national cultural and religious traditions, where male and female students study in separate campuses under the management of same-sex faculty. This feature is particularly relevant as it influenced the sampling and data collection processes.

The participants were recruited from the College of Arts and Letters, which houses the English Department. The department offers courses in language, literature, and pedagogy, making it an appropriate setting for investigating English writing anxiety among EFL students. Instruction within the department follows standardized curricula and officially designated textbooks, ensuring consistency across sections. This uniformity supports the reliability of findings related to classroom-based anxiety factors.

Additionally, the university's Preparatory Year College includes an English Language Centre (ELC), which provides a foundation year focused on English language development. Although not the focus of this study, the ELC illustrates the institutional emphasis on English proficiency and reflects the broader language learning environment experienced by participants before entering the English department. For the qualitative phase of the study, ten student participants were selected, all of whom were enrolled in the English department at the College of Arts and Letters during the time of data collection. The participants were male undergraduate students, ranging from first to second year. They varied in writing proficiency levels and academic performance, offering a diverse range of perspectives on writing anxiety. Most had completed at least one academic writing course, and all were non-native English speakers learning English as a foreign language.

Linking Site and Sample to Research Objectives

The choice of a Saudi university as the study location was based on the focus of the research, as it hosts a large number of first- and second-year undergraduate English language students. These students are known to face difficulties in writing in English and in comprehending the language in general. This group constitutes the primary target group for objectives 1-4, which aim to measure levels of anxiety, identify influencing factors, and potential coping strategies. Additionally, the involvement of EFL lecturers from the English Department, who teach Writing 1 and Writing 2, reinforces objective 5. Their experience allows them to delve deeper into the pedagogical practices and methods they employ to reduce writing anxiety in the classroom. Therefore, the location and sample were deliberately chosen to ensure they align with the study objectives, allowing for the collection of both student- and teacher-focused data, essential for

gaining a comprehensive understanding of writing anxiety in the context of English language learning in Saudi Arabia.

Timeline of Research Phases

The study followed a Sequential Explanatory Design, beginning with quantitative data collection and analysis, followed by a qualitative phase aimed at explaining and elaborating on the quantitative results. The research was carried out over six months from January to June 2023 and consisted of the following phases:

January 2023: Preparation phase – finalization of research instruments (questionnaires and interview guides), submission of ethical approval application, and coordination with university departments for access and participant recruitment.

February to March 2023: Quantitative data collection phase – administration of FLCAS and SLWAI to approximately 380 first- and second-year English major students at Saudi University.

Late March 2023: Initial quantitative data analysis – descriptive and inferential statistics were used to identify anxiety levels and key factors contributing to writing anxiety.

April to May 2023: Qualitative data collection phase – purposive sampling of 10 students and five lecturers for semi-structured interviews, designed to provide insight into coping strategies and teaching practices.

May to early June 2023: Qualitative data analysis – thematic analysis of interview transcripts to explore themes related to students' and teachers' experiences with English writing anxiety.

Mid to late June 2023: Integration and interpretation of findings – combining quantitative and qualitative results to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem, consistent with the pragmatic and mixed-method approach.

This staged approach allowed the researcher to first identify general patterns through numerical data, then use qualitative insights to explain and deepen the interpretation of those patterns, ensuring alignment with the study's pragmatic paradigm and research objectives.

Data Collection Instruments

Data collection for this research relies on several primary data sources. To gain an in-depth and comprehensive grasp of the subject matter under investigation, the researcher employed data collected via questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to better answer the research questions. By using a variety of methods, it may be possible to offer a clearer picture of what triggers writing anxiety and how it may be overcome, together with the level of depth and detail required to direct students and instructors who are attempting to address this problem in the context of a writing classroom. Further, it makes it possible to identify inconsistencies and differences between the data obtained from various sources (Barnum, 2010). The study's research questions are listed in Table 4 along with information about which data collection instrument addresses each research question.

Table 4*Research Questions and Instruments*

No	Research Questions	Instruments
RQ1	To what extent do EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University experience foreign language anxiety?	FLCAS Questionnaire.
RQ2	To what extent do EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University experience anxiety in English writing classrooms?	SLWAI Questionnaire
RQ3	What factors are associated with the writing anxiety of EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University?	Semi-structured interview.
RQ4	What strategies are employed by undergraduate students to reduce their English writing anxiety?	Semi-structured interview.
RQ5	What strategies are employed by EFL teachers to reduce their students' writing anxiety?	Semi-structured interview

The primary objective of the first research question (RQ1) is to investigate the extent to which undergraduate students experience general language anxiety, particularly in the context of attending writing classes. It is essential to consider and understand the extent to which these variables affect students' writing abilities in the classes in which they are enrolled. The primary research in this area involved completing a questionnaire to assess how undergraduate students perceive anxiety in writing classes. As mentioned earlier, further investigation is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. The purpose of the second research question (RQ2) is to examine the extent of writing-specific anxiety among undergraduate students, and to determine the factors that contribute to students' writing anxiety. This additional line of inquiry helps to provide clearer understanding of anxiety as it relates specifically to writing anxiety. The purpose of this research is to determine the factors that contribute

to the anxiety felt in writing classes. This is a more in-depth inquiry than the previous two, and as a result, the qualitative research approach is well-suited to answering this question (RQ3). The fourth question considers coping strategies used to address writing anxiety based on interviews with the students. The fifth question also explores the perceptions of EFL teachers regarding coping strategies to alleviate their students' writing anxiety in the classroom.

The first and main source of data was a questionnaire. There are several advantages to using a questionnaire in research. Researchers in the field of higher education frequently employ questionnaires, especially when conducting surveys (Cohen & Morrison, 2000). McDonough (2014) argues that, despite the time and effort required to design and implement a questionnaire, the benefits outweigh the drawbacks. Further, when collecting information, questionnaires are especially helpful, as Wilson and McLean (1994) point out, because they yield numerical data that can be analysed even in the absence of the researcher and are typically quite easy to interpret. Online questions were selected while creating the survey for a variety of reasons. Online surveys, for instance, may be completed quickly and at little expense (Lumsden, 2007). According to Lumsden, researchers who conduct surveys online spend significantly less time gathering responses. They provide a cost-effective, speedy, and convenient method for data collection, as highlighted in various studies (Oben, 2021). Questionnaires can be tailored to evaluate specific competencies that students should acquire during their academic journey, offering flexibility and adaptability to the needs of higher education programs (Bergsmann et al., 2018).

The FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986)

Horwitz et al. (1986) are those who are responsible for developing this 33-item measure. The FLCAS has 33 items with which respondents express the extent of their agreement or of their disagreement with statements about how they experience language anxiety learning a foreign language in the classroom. These items are designed to capture the main dimensions of language anxiety, including communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986). The scale runs from five, which indicates that a respondent strongly agrees, to one, which indicates that they strongly disagree. The FLCAS is a 33-item self-report questionnaire that utilizes a Likert scale to precisely evaluate the classroom anxiety of foreign language learners. This measurement is based on the examination of three conceptually similar situation-specific anxieties: communication apprehension, fear of unfavorable evaluation, and test anxiety. The spread of the items can be seen in Table 5:

Table 5

The classification of FLCAS

Type of Anxiety	Items		Total
	(+)	(-)	
Communication Apprehension	1, 4, 9, 15, 24, 27, 29, 30	14, 18, 32	11
Test Anxiety	3, 6, 10, 12, 16, 17, 20, 21, 25, 26	5, 8, 11, 22, 28	15
Fear of Negative Evaluation	7, 13, 19, 23, 31, 33	2	7
Total	24	9	33

Source: Horwitz et al. (1986).

Several studies, such as Aida (1994) and Rodríguez and Abreu (2003), have proposed that the FLCAS appears to reflect anxiety mainly related to speaking situations exclusively. In addition, Sparks and Ganschow (1991, 1996, 2007) have raised concerns about the validity of the FLCAS, suggesting that it may be more suitable for assessing linguistic abilities rather than anxiety levels. The FLCAS has been extensively utilized in language anxiety research since its introduction by Horwitz et al. (1986) in the mid-1980s. Efforts have been made to address the issue of inconsistent study findings, enhancing its reliability and validity. Previous research studies by Aida (1994) and Elkhafaifi (2005) have demonstrated that the FLCAS is a reliable instrument frequently used in measuring foreign language classroom anxiety.

Concerning the questionnaire, some claimed that the questionnaire might have some issues due to its challenges, such as language proficiency or difficult vocabulary. Respondents with literacy challenges or limited proficiency in a second language might find the questionnaire completion process to be challenging or overwhelming (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009). Foddy (1993) calls the unexpected, frightening impact of negative and difficult written questions on respondents "question threat," highlighting the need for clarity in question language. The author says that people are more likely to say "don't know" or "socially desirable" answers when confronted with questions or directions that employ complex language and make them feel dumb or uninformed. Further, the social desirability bias (Hubbell, Johnson, & Fendrich, 2002) states that respondents may not give truthful responses for a variety of reasons, including forgetting the question's facts, a desire to please the researcher, or displaying a favourable impression of themselves.

The SLWAI (Cheng, 2004)

Cheng (2004) developed the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) to assess writing anxiety among English language learners, recognizing their unique forms of anxiety. The SLWAI draws on the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) and is specifically tailored to assess the levels of writing anxiety among ESL learners (Cheng, 2004). It primarily utilizes quantitative data to measure writing anxiety, without incorporating qualitative methods to explore patterns or sources of anxiety (Cheng, 2004). The SLWAI aims to measure the levels of anxiety associated with writing in a second language, focusing on avoidance behaviour, cognitive anxiety, and somatic anxiety. Further, SLWAI is a valuable tool designed to assess anxiety levels related to writing in a second language.

Cheng's (2004) study on the SLWAI demonstrated high internal reliability with a Cronbach's α of 0.91 for both the overall scale and its subscales. Using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the internal reliability of the original SLWAI instrument by groups was also determined twice. It was 0.88 the second time, 0.87 the first time for somatic anxiety; 0.88 the second time, 0.85 the first time for avoidance behaviour; 0.82 for cognitive anxiety the first time, and 0.83 the second. Each section of the questionnaire has a high level of internal consistency as a result. The results of the test-retest procedure also indicated that each part's reliability was satisfactory. The scores were 0.82 for somatic anxiety, 0.83 for behavioural anxiety related to avoidance, and 0.81 for cognitive anxiety (Nagode & Pižorn, 2024). Moreover, the SLWAI showed excellent convergent and discriminant validity, suggesting that it measures the intended constructs effectively and distinguishes them from unrelated factors.

Furthermore, Hussein (2013) found decent criterion-related validity, indicating that the SLWAI scores were associated with relevant external criteria in a meaningful way. These findings collectively highlight the robust psychometric properties of the SLWAI, making it a reliable and valid tool for assessing second language writing anxiety. Its ability to measure various types of anxiety, such as avoidance behaviour, cognitive anxiety, and somatic anxiety, ensures its effectiveness in both research and practical applications within educational settings. Furthermore, the data gathered from surveys is less prone to impacting the results and biasing the responses, thereby enhancing the reliability of the collected data. Internet-based surveys have indeed been recognized as more practical, convenient, and desirable compared to traditional methods due to their efficiency, convenience, and ability to reach a larger pool of participants within a shorter period (Menon & Muraleedharan, 2020). These surveys are particularly appealing as they require less time to complete, making them more convenient for participants, especially in the context of increasing costs and public reluctance toward face-to-face data collection (West et al., 2023).

Moreover, respondents may be more willing to share sensitive information in Internet-based surveys as they offer a higher level of privacy and confidentiality when correctly implemented (West et al., 2023). Additionally, incorporating new communication forms in web surveys, such as having interviewers read questions via pre-recorded videos, can enhance the naturalness of communication between researchers and respondents, potentially leading to higher survey satisfaction and data quality (Höhne et al., 2024).

Semi-Structured Interviews: Students' Interview

Interviews are indeed a valuable method for collecting data, providing in-depth insights that written instruments may not capture. The aim of employing the interview is to urge the participants to reveal their thoughts and opinions about writing anxiety and how they perceive this writing barrier when writing. While interviews can be time-consuming for researchers, they offer a unique opportunity for participants to share their thoughts and experiences with investigation (Indah, 2020). Further, as posited by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), interviews are commonly perceived as a valuable and convenient tool for gathering information, owing to the adaptability they afford the interviewer in terms of refining their style, pace, and sequence of inquiries. Additionally, interviews are frequently viewed as an efficient and straightforward approach to information collection, with the potential to facilitate in-depth responses from participants. According to Efron and Ravid (2019), the selection of interviews as a data collection method offers participants the opportunity to articulate their experiences from their unique perspectives, as well as to express their thoughts and viewpoints on the topics under investigation. Consequently, researchers opt to conduct interviews due to the crucial function they serve in research.

Interviews can be classified into three main types based on structure and depth: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. This classification is determined by the degree to which the researcher maintains control over how the interview is conducted (Alali, 2020).

Structured interviews involve standardized components such as uniform questions and rating scales, which enhance validity and reliability. They are widely

recognized for their increased validity, reduced bias, and legal defensibility, making them a superior selection tool. However, due to their rigid format, they are less commonly used in narrative inquiry, where a more flexible approach is preferred (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004).

Unstructured interviews are the most flexible type, involving open-ended questions tailored to the participant's responses. These interviews are particularly suitable for exploration studies focusing on meanings and experiences (Holloway & Galvin, 2016). While they provide in-depth insights into participants' perspectives, they may not always yield comprehensive responses due to the lack of a consistent line of questioning, potentially leading to missed insights (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004).

Semi-structured interviews offer a balance between structure and flexibility. While they follow a set format, they allow for follow-up questions and clarifications based on participants' responses, making them ideal for qualitative research (Duff, 2018). These interviews are particularly valued for their ability to uncover new information and dimensions in research. However, they may be influenced by participants' desire to please the interviewer, potentially affecting the results (Karatsareas, 2022). Semi-structured interviews are commonly used in narrative inquiry due to their ability to provide rich, detailed data while maintaining some level of structure (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004).

As highlighted in Belina (2023), semi-structured interviews involve a set of open-ended questions while also permitting the interviewer to ask follow-up questions for clarification or to delve deeper into specific topics. According to Galletta (2013), a semi-structured interview provides the researcher with the opportunity to ask a

participant for further explanation or clarification while the person in question is sharing an incident. Semi-structured interviews provide researchers with the flexibility to delve into emergent topics during the interview process, allowing for a more comprehensive exploration of the subject matter (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). This approach enables the collection of rich and detailed data, particularly useful in any anxiety that may arise from a more structured method for data gathering (Gomm, 2008). In this study, a total of 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face with key individuals who played an essential role in the subject matter.

The decision to carry out these interviews in person was deemed advantageous, as this mode of communication facilitates interpersonal connection, enabling a deeper understanding of the interviewees (Fontana & Prokos, 2016). While face-to-face interviews may incur higher costs and require additional time for travel arrangements, they offer numerous advantages compared to alternative methods such as mail, telephone, or online interviews (Alali, 2020). For instance, a face-to-face interview allows for inquiring about ambiguities and extracting additional details from the survey participants. Moreover, it provides certainty regarding the identity of the individual being interviewed (Greene et al., 1989).

The interview questions, which were altered and adapted from Alamri's (2020) interview guide, encompassed a variety of themes, ranging from general anxiety inquiries to those specifically focused on writing-related anxieties. These questions can be found in Appendix 6. To cultivate a conducive environment for the students, initial inquiries were made regarding their motivations for studying English, their sentiments towards the learning process, and their overall satisfaction with their learning journey (Alamri, 2020). The participants were subsequently presented with inquiries crafted to

illuminate the matters under scrutiny. Initially, they were queried regarding their anxiety levels, specific stimuli, and the potential influence of the instructors. Subsequently, the students were asked about the strategies they employed in managing their anxiety and the actions they perceived could be taken by their teachers and peers to support them.

The key informative conversations were useful in collecting firsthand information and knowledge from a wide range of participants about the research problems and questions. The interviews were carried out at the Saudi University on the premises of the Department of English between the 10th of April and the 23rd of May 2023. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in English. Depending on the circumstances and the interviewees' situations, the length of the interviews was flexible, ranging from 20 to 40 minutes. The interviews took place in locations convenient for the students, such as quiet spaces within the university. Each interview was tailored to ensure comfort and ease for the students during the process.

Semi-structured interviews: Teachers' interview

Teachers were interviewed through semi-structured methods. Additionally, teachers were first asked about their educational background, then presented with inquiries drawn from Alamri (2020) and adapted from a broad sense of anxiety to writing-related anxiety. These questions aimed to explore teachers' own experience of anxiety, their perceptions of students' anxiety, and the impact of teachers' anxiety on their students (Alamri, 2020). Moreover, ultimately, I inquired about the strategies employed to mitigate the level of anxiety experienced by their students. The comprehensive set of inquiries can be in Appendix 7, derived from the interview

questions utilized in Alamri's research on anxiety. The discussions lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes and were recorded using a SONY recording device. Given that the teachers were native Arabic speakers, with English as a second language. A total of five individuals took part in the study, all of whom held multiple qualifications and extensive knowledge and experience related to writing anxiety in foreign language context.

To maintain the privacy of the participants and their institutions, pseudonyms are applied throughout the text. All the participants from the faculty were male individuals. One among them held the rank of full professor, while four occupied roles as assistant professors. Two individuals possessed a total of 6 years of experience, one had 7 years of experience, one had 9 years, and one had 4 years of experience.

Research Ethics

Ethical considerations are essential when using human subjects or collecting data, as highlighted by Guillemin and Gillam (2004). Denscombe (2017) emphasizes the necessity for researchers to consult their university's ethical committee before conducting surveys or interviews, stressing the importance of obtaining approval from the institution's ethical committee before commencing any research activities. Therefore, initially, my study endeavour received approval from the University of Essex's Research Ethics Committee, guaranteeing its adherence to ethical research procedures.

The research Ethics Committee processed the paperwork I submitted for approval and consent, which included registering my human subjects' data and ensuring the validity of the instruments. Secondly, the researcher then formally applied to Saudi University's English Department for approval to perform the study with their students

and instructors. The application detailed the study's subject matter, its goals, the anticipated number of participants, and the planned methods. After the ethical review board gave permission, the researcher then created an email invitation letter and sent it out to potential participants.

Lastly, every individual who took part in the study was required to fill out and submit an electronic consent form, in which they acknowledged that they were aware of the objectives of the study, that their participation was entirely voluntary, that they had the option to stop participating in the research at any point during the process, and that the researcher promised that their personal information would be kept strictly confidential. Further, every participant was an adult, and their anonymous responses were treated as strictly private. Pseudonyms (such as "Student 1," "Teacher 2," etc.) were used in the thesis to preserve the privacy of the participants. The surveys, audio recordings, and transcripts were initially stored on a Sony recording device. After the data were collected, they were securely transferred to a protected computer for analysis. Access to these files was strictly limited to the researcher, ensuring the confidentiality and integrity of the data throughout the analysis process. For the ethical approval and consent form, please see Appendix 2.

Data Collection Procedure

Pilot Study

A pilot study is highly likely to increase the possibility of effective research, while it also helps the researcher in testing the suitability of the research tools and determining their viability (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). In the current study, a

pilot test was conducted using the questionnaire, which included 33 multi-point items from the FLCAS and 22 multi-point items from the SLWAI (See Appendix 1). An online survey, which involved 21 undergraduate students majoring in English at Saudi University, Saudi Arabia, was conducted. All respondents were informed to provide truthful responses and that all information provided in the survey was kept strictly anonymous and confidential. Anderson et al. (1983) recommended a sample size of between 20 and 50 for a pilot study to identify any shortcomings in the developed instrument. The reliability of the questionnaire was examined based on Cronbach's alpha coefficients using IBM SPSS (version 26). George and Mallery (2019) recommended the following interpretations for the values of Cronbach's alpha, which were considered in this study: (1) values above 0.9 suggest excellent; (2) values above 0.8 suggest good; (3) values above 0.7 suggest acceptable; (4) values above 0.6 suggest questionable; (5) values above 0.5 suggest poor; (6) values lower than 0.5 suggest unacceptable. The generally accepted minimum threshold value for Cronbach's alpha is 0.7. Referring to Table 6, the recorded values of Cronbach's alpha obtained from the pilot study ($n = 21$) ranged from 0.800 for FLCAS to 0.809 for SLWAI, which demonstrated acceptable internal consistency. Although the sample size was relatively small, these results indicate that the questionnaire items were sufficiently reliable for this study.

Table 6

Results of Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ($n=21$)

Constructs	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Overall, of FLCAS	33	.800
Overall, of SLWAI	21	.809

Note. Data are based on the researcher's analysis.

To organize my final interview plans and assess the validity of the research questions, 6 pilot respondents like the target study were invited (four students and two faculty members). Moreover, all the students were pursuing a major in English at the undergraduate level. The instructors held a Master of Arts degree in English. The research was conducted within the context of a writing class (Composition 1), with four students taking part. The participants in the initial pilot study were distinct from those involved in the subsequent main study. The pilot results showed that the original interview questions were largely appropriate, though some minor changes were made based on pilot results and analysis, for example, one of the referees suggested changing the word (general to specific writing anxiety. The selection of four students for the interview stemmed from their classification as significantly anxious individuals according to the findings. The subjects were given a short explanation of the objectives of the study and the requirements for taking part.

Main Study

Before data collection, approval to conduct the study was obtained from the Saudi University in Saudi Arabia, in the College of Arts and Letters. The faculty administration has encouraged students to participate in an online survey. In particular, the advantages of employing an online survey include speed, accuracy, secure websites, traceable survey invites and replies. These characteristics protect anonymity and allow data to be readily exported or transferred into Excel spreadsheets or statistical analysis software packages such as SPSS, which may be downloaded automatically. Reminders

were emailed, and all questionnaire sets were gathered in two weeks. The researcher used Question Pro to create a web-based questionnaire.

Online survey services have developed into a practical and accepted means of conducting surveys among students because of the rising computerization and accessibility of Internet connections. The FLACS and SLWAI questionnaires were given out in the second semester, during which the participants already had relevant English writing experiences. The questionnaires were sent to the email, and students filled them out independently according to their own experience in English writing. The undergraduate students majoring in English at the College of Arts and Letters in levels 1 and 2 at Saudi University were sent an email inviting them to participate in an anonymous online survey in collaboration with the College of Arts and Letters' Deanship and Staff Affairs and Management of Electronic Services. Each email address was permitted to access the survey once to avoid the chance of survey responses being repeated. The participants were given eight weeks to complete the survey. The survey was disabled after the 8-week deadline had passed. The raw data were collected using Question Pro and exported to SPSS for analysis.

For the qualitative part, five teachers and 10 students from the College of Arts and Letters at a Saudi University were purposively selected. Regarding the students' participants, the director of the English department selected participants based on academic performance, intentionally including both high-achieving and low-achieving students to reflect a spectrum of learning experiences. The researcher conducted interviews initially with the students and later with the teachers in the faculty. The reason for choosing individualized interviews instead of focus group interviews was that participants felt more comfortable sharing their thoughts directly with the

researcher. For each interview session, participants were asked to provide written consent to participate and to be audio-recorded in the study, following the ethical approval provided for the study.

Data Analysis

To prepare the data for analysis, all qualitative responses were first transcribed into Microsoft Word documents. The coding process was then conducted manually within the Word platform using a structured, multi-step approach. Initially, a preliminary set of codes was developed based on the research objectives and a review of relevant literature (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2006). This was followed by open coding, where emergent themes were identified directly from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Codes were iteratively refined during the process to ensure they accurately reflected the content and meaning of participants' responses (Saldaña, 2021). In the first cycle, interview transcripts were examined line by line, and descriptive labels (codes) were assigned to meaningful units of text that reflected participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to writing anxiety. For instance, the statement, "I feel anxious when I think about my final grade," was coded as "grade-related anxiety." In the second cycle, these initial codes were reviewed, refined, and grouped into broader categories and themes, such as "fear of negative evaluation" and "academic performance concerns."

In the second coding cycle, the initial codes were refined and organized into broader categories and overarching themes. For example, codes including "fear of criticism," "peer judgment," and "teacher feedback anxiety" were integrated into the theme "fear

of negative evaluation.” Thematic categories were then established to organize the codes into broader concepts relevant to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). To enhance the reliability of the coding process, a second reviewer independently coded a subset of the data. Any discrepancies were discussed and resolved collaboratively to ensure consistency in interpretation.

The researcher divided all the interview transcripts into ideational units for analysis after going over the material several times to get a better sense of the participants' perspectives. For the quantitative study, data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, standard deviations, and percentages to summarize the sample characteristics and responses. Research questions 1 and 2 were addressed using analysis of descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, and percentages. These statistical measures were utilized to investigate various aspects related to undergraduate students at Saudi University's perspectives on experiencing anxiety in English writing classrooms.

Thematic analysis is a widely used method for analysing qualitative data that involves systematically identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Unlike simply summarizing the data, thematic analysis enables a rich, detailed, and nuanced understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives, going beyond surface-level description to explore underlying meanings and implications (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2022). This method involves familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and refining themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. According to Braun and Clarke (2022), thematic analysis is not a rigid set of procedures but a flexible, reflexive approach that can be adapted to suit different

research questions and epistemological positions. It is well-suited for this study's aim to explore the complex phenomenon of writing anxiety among EFL students by capturing the depth and diversity of their lived experiences.

In addition, thematic analysis has been widely applied across disciplines as a robust qualitative analytic tool (De Sordi, 2024; Xu & Zammit, 2020), facilitating the transcription, coding, categorization, and interpretation of qualitative data to reveal significant themes relevant to the research questions. This approach supports a comprehensive understanding of the data while allowing for critical interpretation of contextual and nuanced aspects of participants' perspectives.

In addition, thematic analysis was employed to answer research questions 3, 4, and 5, which address factors associated with writing anxiety among EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University (RQ3; see Appendix 8) and strategies used by EFL students to reduce their writing anxiety (RQ4). Strategies employed by EFL teachers to reduce students' writing anxiety (RQ5) were also examined in relation to the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires.

The interview data were analysed using an inductive approach, specifically thematic analysis. The collected data, including recordings, were securely stored on a laptop and in a database to ensure confidentiality and data protection. First, I familiarized myself with the data by listening to the audio recordings of the interviews and reviewing handwritten notes. This process was iterative, involving multiple readings of the transcripts and repeated listening to the recordings to ensure a deep understanding of the data. Once familiar with the content, I identified initial codes by highlighting significant phrases or responses. These codes were then organized into

broader themes that were linked directly to the participants' responses. The themes were derived from the open-ended and probing questions asked during the interviews. Investigator triangulation was employed to enhance the validity and reliability of the analysis. This process involved consulting with other experts in my department at the Saudi University and comparing insights from various data sources. After the initial theme identification, the researcher carefully interpreted these themes about the research questions. Emerging impressions and significant points were also recorded to further inform the study. Finally, the themes were confirmed after ensuring they were strongly supported by the interview data. Throughout the analysis process, ethical considerations were maintained, with written consent obtained from participants for both participation and audio recording.

Data Quality

Validity and reliability are crucial aspects of data quality, reflecting the accuracy and consistency of findings. Validity, often equated with truth, pertains to how well a study measures what it claims to assess (Perakyla, 2011; Silverman, 2013). On the other hand, reliability refers to the consistency of results over time and the ability to accurately represent the entire study population (Joppe, 2003). Thus, to ascertain the validity and reliability of the chosen instruments, they were initially presented to my supervisor at the University of Essex, who concluded that the questionnaires were suitable for collecting data pertinent to the objectives of this study. The FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986) and the SLWAI (Cheng, 2004) are the two instruments that were modified from previous research endeavours that provided support for their validity and reliability.

Moreover, FLCAS and SLWAI were carefully translated into Arabic, with accuracy validation conducted by a proficient translator affiliated with the same academic institution at Saudi University. Furthermore, Patton (1990) emphasized the importance of the integrity of the researcher in ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry. For instance, throughout the interview, the researcher refrained from using leading questions like, "Do you not believe that writing in English is challenging?" and instead offered unbiased questions such as, "What are your feelings when writing in English?" to lessen bias. Additionally, after confirming the robustness of the tools and the overall project framework, the questionnaires were formulated.

Regarding the reliability of the questionnaire, the researcher confirmed its accuracy by distributing it to twenty-two English language students in the piloting study conducted previously at Saudi University. The findings indicated high reliability because of the consistent ratings that were constant throughout. In this study, Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency reliability of the multi-item scales employed in the questionnaire. This statistical measure evaluates how closely related a set of items is as a group, making it suitable for assessing the reliability of psychometric instruments. Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each scale after data collection to ensure that the items within each construct demonstrated adequate internal consistency before proceeding with further analysis. As a result, both the FLACS (0.800) and SLWAI (0.809) quantitative instruments have high levels of reliability as assessed by Cronbach's alpha.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

In this mixed-methods study, quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of foreign language anxiety and writing anxiety among EFL undergraduate students at a Saudi university. Quantitative data, collected through structured questionnaires, addressed Objectives 1 to 3 by measuring the levels of general foreign language anxiety and writing-specific anxiety, and identifying statistically significant factors associated with that anxiety. Qualitative data, gathered through open-ended responses, complemented these findings by offering deeper insights into the personal experiences of students and teachers, particularly about Objectives 4 and 5. Integration of the quantitative and qualitative data occurred during the interpretation stage, where the quantitative results established general patterns and the qualitative data explained the underlying reasons and contextual factors. For example, while quantitative analysis revealed levels of writing anxiety, qualitative responses helped uncover specific classroom practices and coping strategies that either exacerbated or alleviated this anxiety. This triangulation allowed for a richer, more nuanced interpretation of the data and ensured that the findings addressed the research objectives from both statistical and experiential perspectives.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the data analysis according to the research questions given in the current study. Initially, the rationale for employing a mixed-methods paradigm was discussed, followed by an explanation of the selected paradigm, namely pragmatism. The chapter also presented the data collection instruments utilized for the study, including quantitative measures such as the FLCAS and SLWAI scales, as well

as qualitative tools such as interviews. Additionally, the chapter included information on the study participants and described the data analysis process. The piloting study was presented, along with the chosen quantitative and qualitative approaches. In this chapter, the demonstration of the validity and reliability of the study, as well as the ethical considerations, were also examined. The subsequent chapter will present a comprehensive analysis of the results of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis obtained from both the quantitative instruments (FLCAS and SLWAI) and qualitative instruments (interviews) presented respectively for each research question. The data was analysed using SPSS version 25, including demographic variables using descriptive statistics, reliability, validity, and hypothesis test results. The data from the questionnaire was first downloaded from the Survey QuestionPro website for analysis in the form of an Excel spreadsheet file. The responses from the participants were then numbered and cleaned to improve data quality and transferred into SPSS. The variable names and other properties were defined and entered into the SPSS variable view window, and the responses from the participants were entered into the data view window.

The chapter will describe the level of EFL writing anxiety among Saudi English major undergraduate students at Saudi University, the factors related to their anxiety, and the strategies suggested to be used by EFL undergraduate students and their teachers to reduce their English writing anxiety. For the qualitative findings, parts of the final coding scheme were obtained and presented as needed for each research question. As stated earlier, the study has been guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. To what extent do EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University experience anxiety in the English language classroom?

- RQ2.** To what extent do EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University experience anxiety in English writing classrooms?
- RQ3.** What factors are associated with the writing anxiety of EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University?
- RQ4.** What strategies are employed by undergraduate students to reduce their English writing anxiety?
- RQ5.** What strategies are employed by EFL teachers to reduce their students' writing anxiety?

Response Rate

In this study, data were collected from undergraduate English majors in Saudi Arabia through online questionnaires administered via Survey QuestionPro. Apart from that, SMS has been made available to increase the response rate by reminding the respondents. As a result of these efforts, 129 out of 236 questionnaires distributed to undergraduate English majors in Saudi Arabia were completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 54.66%. Among these, 27 invalid surveys were found because respondents answered one choice for all questions. Consequently, there were 104 valid surveys usable for further data analysis and a valid response rate of 44.06%. Therefore, the rate of 44.06% falls within the standard range in online-based research (Mellahi & Harris, 2015). Thus, the response rate of 44.06% achieved in this study is considered adequate for the analysis, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7*Research Response Rate*

Questionnaire Response	Frequency/Rate
Number of distributed questionnaires	236
Number of returned questionnaires	129
Number of unreturned questionnaires	107
Number of returned and excluded questionnaires	25
Number of returned and usable questionnaires	104
Response rate	54.66%
Usable response rate	44.06%

The FLCAS Students Questionnaire

This scale comprises a total of 33 items, with 8 items about communication anxiety (1, 9, 14, 18, 24, 27, 29, 32), 9 items associated with fear of negative evaluation (3,7,13,15,20,25,31,33), 5 elements related to test anxiety (2, 8, 10, 19, 21), and the remaining 11 items categorized under the umbrella of anxiety in English class (4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 16, 17, 22, 26, 28, 30). Participants were required to rate the items in the FLCAS scale on a continuum ranging from one (representing strong disagreement) to five (representing strong agreement). The FLCAS questionnaire demonstrated a high level of reliability, as evidenced by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.920.

Overall Level of Foreign Language Anxiety

As depicted in Table 8, the mean overall score for English language anxiety among students is presented. Descriptive analysis was conducted to compute the average and standard deviation for each item as well as for each type of anxiety, to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the students' anxiety levels about their English

language skills within the classroom setting. The average falls within the range of 3.0 to 3.4, indicating a high level of anxiety, whereas an average between 2.5 and 2.9 denotes a moderate level of anxiety. Conversely, an average ranging from 2.0 to 2.4 signifies a low level of anxiety according to Cheng (2004).

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Students' Overall English Language Anxiety

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total Anxiety	104	1.00	3.94	2.5107	.64869

The analysis revealed that FLA among EFL undergraduate students had a mean score of 2.50, with scores ranging from 2.5 to 2.9. Additionally, the standard deviation was 0.648, indicating a moderate level of variability in responses. According to common interpretations of Likert scale means, this average score suggests a moderate level of anxiety among the participants. These findings imply that while students are not experiencing extreme anxiety, they do report a noticeable degree of discomfort and apprehension related to English language learning. This moderate anxiety may influence their academic performance, confidence, and engagement, particularly in writing tasks, which are often associated with increased pressure and fear of negative evaluation.

Specific Anxieties Related to FLCA

Table 9 presents the averages and standard deviations of students concerning each form of anxiety. the participants' scores in this study range from 2.4865 to 2.5565. Through the calculation of the means and standard deviations for each category of

anxiety, it was determined that the students' fear regarding negative appraisal, with an average score of 2.5576, surpassed the levels of other anxiety types.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics of Related Anxiety Types

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Communication Apprehension	104	1.00	3.75	2.5204	.63907
Test Anxiety	104	1.00	4.00	2.4865	.68366
Fear of Negative Evaluation	104	.98	4.78	2.5566	.90816

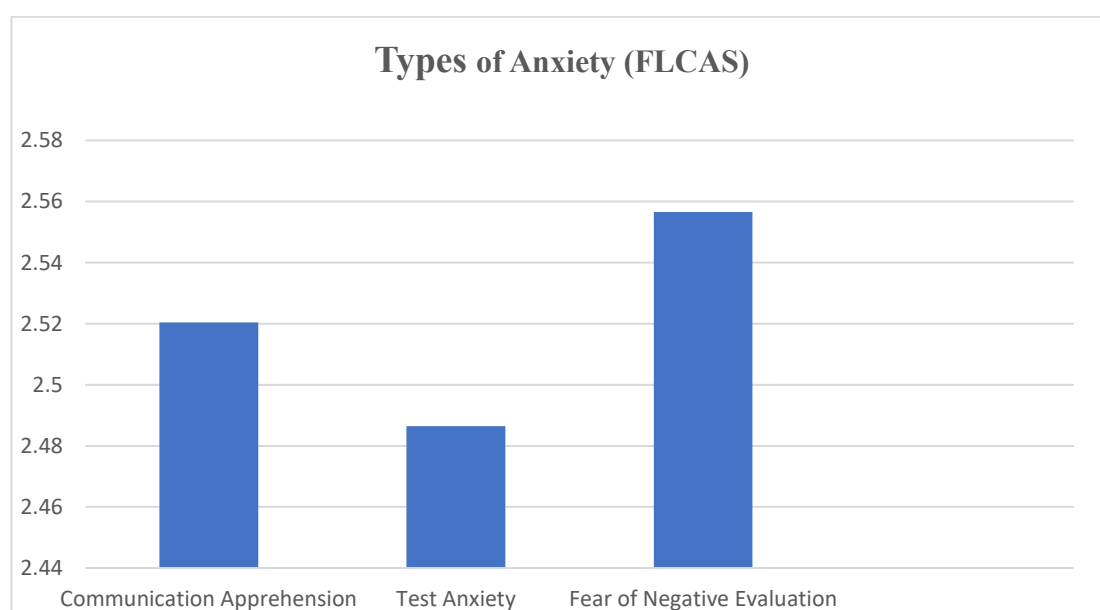
The average value obtained for communication apprehension is 2.5204, with a standard deviation of 0.63907. Upon analysis, it can be inferred that the students possess a moderate degree of communication apprehension. As for test anxiety, the mean value is recorded as 2.4865, accompanied by a standard deviation of 0.68366. This indicates that the students exhibit comparatively lower levels of test anxiety. The mean value of fear of negative evaluation is 2.5566, with a standard deviation of 0.90816. This suggests that the students possess moderate levels of fear of negative evaluation.

Figure 3 shows that fear of negative evaluation is the most common type of anxiety encountered by the participants (mean 2.5566). Following this, communication apprehension ($M=2.5204$) and anxiety induced by the test ($M=2.4865$) were also significant in their respective proportions. As such, it could be claimed that concerns about communication apprehension and anxiety tests mainly contribute to the participants' fear of negative evaluation. The potential for experiencing anxiety of a

specific nature could potentially result in the inference that undergraduate students in English at Saudi University frequently face moderate levels of apprehension regarding the evaluation of their work within English-focused courses. In sum, a close examination of the mean scores related to each anxiety type shows that the participants had moderate levels of anxiety in their English classes.

Figure 3

The Three Types of Anxiety



Description of Individual FLCAS Statements

Going back to the individual FLCAS statements (see Appendix 4), items 29, 2, 13, and 26 received the highest scores from the participants. Item 29 (mean 2.96) of the questionnaire is about communication apprehension: “I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says”; item 2 (mean= 2.64) is about test anxiety: “I don't worry about making mistakes in language class; item 13 (mean= 2.80) reflects fear of negative evaluation: “ It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my

language class” handles learner’s worries when volunteering answers in my language class (see Table 10).

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for the Scores of the Highest Four Items on FLCAS

	Item	Category	Mini	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says.	29	Communication and apprehension	1	5	2.96	1.427
I don't worry about making mistakes in English class.	2	Test anxiety	1	5	2.64	1.261
It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class.	13	Fear of negative evaluation	1	5	2.80	1.288

The situations that make students the most anxious about the foreign language classroom are as follows. First, Table 10 illustrates that the highest level of agreement (mean=2.96) is observed for item 29 “I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says”, with 37 participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that they get nervous when they don't understand every word the language teacher says, while 32 of students disagree/strongly disagree with this item. This item is included in the domain of communication apprehension (based on the domains constructed by Horwitz et al., 1986). These students were exceedingly nervous because they felt they had to understand every word in English. In other words, they were easily embarrassed and

anxious, fearing that the teacher expected them to comprehend every single word spoken.

Then, the statement that makes students anxious is the statement No. 2, “I don't worry about making mistakes in English class”. It is also noted that 30 participants agree or strongly agree (mean=2.64) that they don't worry about making mistakes in language class, while 52 of the students disagree/strongly disagree with the item. It means that 30 students are feeling confident and relaxed when they make mistakes in English class. This item is included in the domain of test anxiety (based on the domains constructed by Horwitz et al., 1986).

Additionally, they highly endorsed statement 13, “It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class”. The results showed that 36 participants agree or strongly agree (mean=2.80) that they feel embarrassed to provide voluntary answers in their language class, while 49 of the students disagree/strongly disagree with the item. This item is included in the domain of fear of negative evaluation (based on the domains constructed by Horwitz et al., 1986). These students were not only apprehensive about understanding every word the English teacher would say but also anticipated that they would feel embarrassed to provide voluntary answers in their language class.

The results in Table 11 showed that 37 participants agree or strongly agree that they feel more tense and nervous in their language class than in their other classes (item 26 under the anxiety of English class category, mean=2.92).

Table 11*Descriptive Statistics for the Frequency of the Highest Three Items on FLCAS*

Item	No.	Category	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	Mean
I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says.	29	Communication and apprehension	28	4	35	18	19	104	2.96
I don't worry about making mistakes in English class.	2	Test anxiety	22	32	20	21	9	104	2.64
It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class.	13	Fear of negative evaluation	19	30	19	25	11	104	2.80

SA= strongly agree, A = agree, N = neutral, D = disagree, and SD = strongly disagree.

Description of Communication Apprehension

This type of communication apprehension was taken from 8 items of the FLCAS. The data analysis indicated that the mean score of communication apprehension was 2.96 with a standard deviation of 1.427. Based on the table of the mean range of communication apprehension level, the analysis revealed that this type of anxiety was at a moderate level. In addition, the average score and the level of anxiety of each item are presented in Table 12 below.

Table 12*Descriptive Statistics of Communication Apprehension*

No.	Items	Mean	Level
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	2.39	Low
9	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in a language class.	2.30	Low
14	I would not be nervous speaking a foreign language with native speakers	2.39	Low
18	I feel confident when I speak in a foreign language class	2.45	Low
24	I feel very self - conscious about speaking a foreign language in front of other students.	2.63	Moderate
27	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	2.75	Moderate
29	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	2.96	Moderate
32	I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of a foreign language.	2.29	Low

From Table 12 above, it can be observed that 5 statements were at a low level, and 3 statements were at a moderate level. The lowest score of anxiety was in statement 32, the item with a mean score of 2.29 indicated that when students spoke without preparation in language class, they started to panic. This result suggested that students felt only a low level of anxiety when speaking without preparation. On the other hand, the highest score of anxiety was observed in statement 29, where the mean score was 2.96.

Description of Test Anxiety

Test Anxiety was taken from 5 items of the FLCAS. The data analysis indicated that the mean score of test anxiety was 2.4865, with the standard deviation being 0.68366. Based on the table of the mean range of test anxiety levels, the analysis revealed that this type of anxiety was at a low level. In addition, the average score and the level of anxiety of each item are presented in Table 13 below.

Table 13

Descriptive Statistics of Test Anxiety

No.	Items	Mean	Level
2	I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.	2.64	Moderate
8	I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.	2.40	Low
10	I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	2.16	Low
19	I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make	2.64	Moderate
21	The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get	2.58	Moderate

As shown in Table 13, two statements were rated at a low level, while three statements were rated at a moderate level. However, the average scores were different for each item. Statement 10, in which students reflect on the consequences of failing their foreign language class, received the lowest mean score (2.16). Statements 2 and 19 had the highest mean score (2.64), indicating that students were afraid that their language teacher was ready to correct every mistake they would make.

Description of Fear of Negative Evaluation

This type of anxiety was measured using 9 items from the FLCAS. The data analysis indicated that the mean score of fear of negative evaluation was 2.5566 with a standard deviation of 0.90816. This type of anxiety was at a moderate level. The average scores for the level of anxiety of each item are presented in Table 14 below.

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics of Fear of Negative Evaluation

No.	Items	Mean	Level
3	I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	2.65	Moderate
7	I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am	2.50	Moderate
13	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	2.80	Moderate
15	I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting	2.09	Low
20	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.	2.66	Moderate
23	I always feel that the other students speak a foreign language better than I do.	2.61	Moderate
25	Language class moves so quickly, I worry about getting left behind.	2.72	Moderate
31	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak a foreign language.	2.62	Moderate
33	I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	2.36	Low

Table 14 indicates that 2 statements were at a low level, and 7 statements were at a moderate level. The lowest score was in statement 15, with a mean score of 2.09, in which students get upset when they do not understand what the teacher is correcting. In addition, the highest score was in statement 13, in which students feel embarrassed when they volunteer answers in their language class.

The SLWAI Students Questionnaire

SLWAI is based on the analysis of potential factors of writing anxiety in a language classroom. As previously mentioned, SLWAI has been used to answer this question and identify the extent to which writing anxiety has been a problem for undergraduate students in English at the Saudi University context. The English writing anxiety questionnaire, which looks at three types of anxiety cognitive, somatic, and avoidance behaviours (Cheng, 2004) proved to be highly reliable, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.894, showing that the questionnaire items consistently measure the same construct (reliability) and that it accurately assesses English writing anxiety (validity) according to Cheng's (2004). Based on this method, participants were then divided into high- and low-anxiety groups using Cheng's (2004) classification method. According to this classification, the mean range between 3.0 and 3.4 indicates high anxiety, the mean range between 2.5 and 2.9 indicates moderate anxiety, the mean range between 2.0 and 2.4 indicates low anxiety, and the mean range below 2.0 indicates no anxiety.

Overall Students' Writing Anxiety Level

Descriptive statistics, specifically means and standard deviations, are displayed in Table 15. Given the total of 22 items in the SLWAI, the potential total mean range

spans from 2 to 5. Consequently, a lower total mean indicates a decreased level of anxiety, while a higher total mean suggests an elevated level of anxiety. Specifically, the respondents whose total scores of the twenty-two items were equal to or below 2.0 indicate no anxiety, while scores between 2.0 and 2.4 indicate low anxiety, and those whose scores were equal to or higher than 3.0 were highly anxious. The range of scores falling between 2.5 and 2.9 indicated a moderate level of anxiety. The standard deviation was 0.66499, suggesting a moderate level of EFL writing anxiety among undergraduate students at Saudi University.

Following the findings presented in Table 15, the average score for writing anxiety among undergraduate students studying English at Saudi University was 2.5317.

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics for Student Overall English Writing Anxiety

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total Anxiety	104	1.00	3.73	2.5317	.66412

Types of Writing Anxiety

The SLWAI questionnaire consisted of 22 items, divided into three categories. Specifically, there were 8 items related to cognitive anxiety (1, 3, 7, 9, 14, 17, 20, 21), 7 items related to somatic anxiety (2, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, 19), and 7 items related to avoidance behaviour (4, 5, 10, 12, 16, 18, 22). The Likert scale was used to measure responses, with participants selecting from five optional answers ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A close examination of the frequencies and mean scores related to each anxiety type shows that the participants exhibited moderate levels of

English writing anxiety in two types and a low level in one type, as indicated by the mean scores (see Table 16).

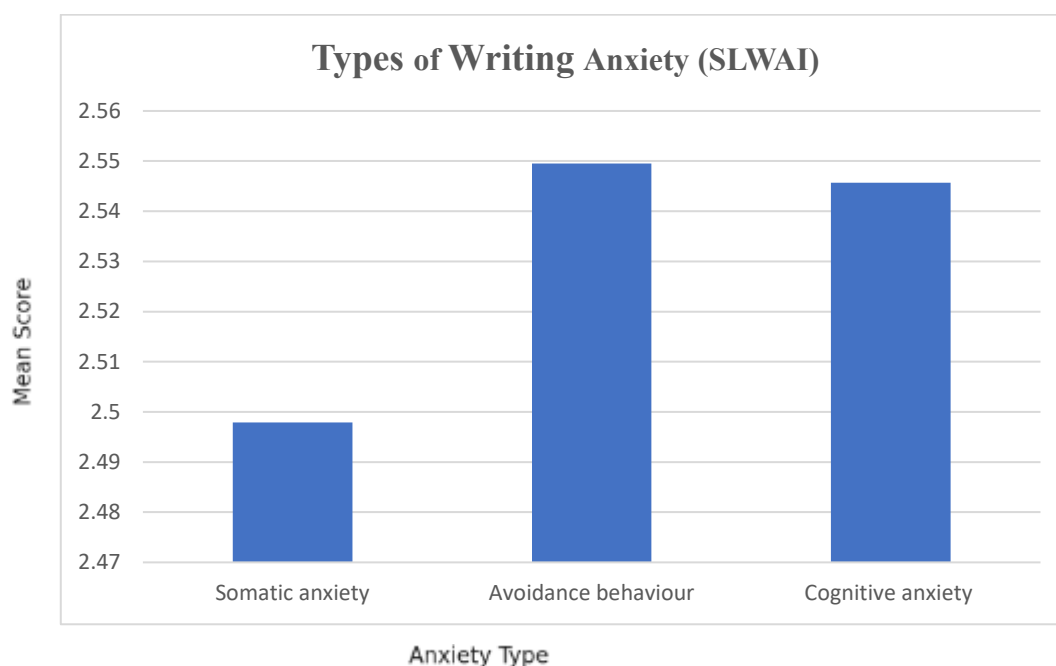
Table 16

Descriptive Statistics of the Type of Writing Anxiety (SLWAI)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Somatic anxiety	104	1.00	4.57	2.4979	0.86962
Avoidance behaviour	104	1.00	3.86	2.5495	0.69553
Cognitive anxiety	104	1.00	3.75	2.5457	0.64988

The average value for somatic anxiety was 2.4979, while the standard deviation was 0.86962. These figures indicate that the students possess a somewhat low degree of somatic anxiety. In terms of avoidance behaviour, the mean is 2.5495, with a standard deviation of 0.69553, thereby suggesting that students exhibit moderate levels of avoidance behaviour. As for cognitive anxiety, it has an average value of 2.5457 and a standard deviation of 0.64988, implying that the students experience moderate levels of anxiety related to cognitive anxiety.

Figure 4 presents that the most prevalent form of anxiety related to writing is avoidance behaviour, which was encountered by the respondents with a mean score of 2.5495. The average value of cognitive anxiety, as well as somatic anxiety, is 2.5457 and 2.4979, respectively. Consequently, it can be argued that avoidance behaviour (mean=2.5495), as shown in Figure 4.2, was the dominant and most common type of writing anxiety among undergraduate students at Saudi University.

Figure 4*The Three Types of Writing Anxiety*

Note. This figure is based on the researcher's data

Description of Individual SLWAI Statements

Table 17 shows a reference to the individual statements about writing anxiety in each specific type of writing. Item 14 ranked as the first most writing anxiety-provoking item in the present study. Item 14, “I am worried that other students will ridicule my English sentences if they read them”, which has a mean score of 2.88, centres around cognitive anxiety. It highlights that when writing English sentences, the students have anxiety that other students will ridicule them. In other words, students actively look for reasons to rationalize their inability to write sentences effectively in English.

Item 19 ranked the second-highest item, which states that " I usually feel my whole body stiff and tense when I write English sentences", with a mean score of 2.88,

and focuses on somatic anxiety. Specifically, in attempting to write a phrase in English, the students feel stiff and tense in their bodies. This can be attributed to the anxiety that arises when writing sentences in English.

Lastly, item 16, “I would do my best to make excuses if asked to write English sentences”, with a mean score of 2.85, focuses on avoidance behaviour. Specifically, this item suggests that students will strive to generate excuses when faced with the task of composing English sentences.

Table 17

The Mean and Std. Deviation of Each Category of Writing Anxiety

Item	No.	Category	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I usually feel my whole-body rigid and tense when I write English compositions.	19	Somatic anxiety	1	5	2.86	1.186
I would do my best to excuse myself if asked to write English compositions	16	Avoidance behaviour	1	5	2.85	1.268
I am afraid that the other students	14	Cognitive anxiety	1	5	2.88	1.423

would deride
my English
composition
if they read it

Table 17 provides an overview of the findings regarding item 14, “I am afraid that the other students would deride my English composition if they read it,” under the cognitive anxiety category, which demonstrates the highest mean score of 2.88. A total of 39 participants agreed or strongly agreed that they feel anxiety when other students ridicule their English sentences if they read them. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that 33 participants agreed or strongly agreed with item 19, “I usually feel my whole body rigid and tense when I write English compositions” (mean = 2.86 under the somatic anxiety category), while 42 students disagreed/strongly disagreed with this item. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that an additional 35 participants agreed or strongly agreed (item 16, mean = 2.85 under the avoidance behaviour category, Table 18) that they do their best to make excuses if asked to write English sentences, while 46 students disagreed/strongly disagreed with this item.

Table 18

Descriptive Statistics for The Frequency of the Highest Four Items On (SLWAI)

Item	No.	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	Mean
I usually feel my whole-body rigid and tense when I write English compositions	19	15	27	29	24	9	104	2.86

Item	No.	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	Mean
I would do my best to excuse myself if asked to write English compositions	16	17	29	23	23	12	104	2.85
I am afraid that the other students would deride my English composition if they read it.	14	22	26	17	20	19	104	2.88

SA =strongly agree, A = agree, N = neutral, D = disagree, and SD = strongly disagree.

Description of Cognitive Anxiety

This type of writing anxiety was taken from 8 items of the SLWAI. The data analysis indicated that the mean score of cognitive anxiety was 2.5457 with a standard deviation of 0.64988, indicating that this type of anxiety was at a moderate level. In addition, the average score and the level of anxiety of each item are presented in Table 19 below.

Table 19

Descriptive Statistics of Cognitive Anxiety

No.	Items	Mean	Level
1	I am not nervous at all when writing sentences in English	2.58	Moderate

No.	Items	Mean	Level
3	I feel worried and anxious if I know my writing will be judged when writing English sentences.	2.38	Low
7	I am not worried that my English sentences are much worse than others.	2.55	Moderate
9	If my English sentences are graded, I will worry about getting a low grade	2.38	Low
14	I am worried that other students will ridicule my English sentences if they read them	2.88	Moderate
17	I am not worried at all about what other people think about my English sentences	2.20	Low
20	I am afraid that my English sentence will be chosen as an example to be discussed in class.	2.66	Moderate
21	I am not afraid at all if my English sentences are judged as not good.	2.73	Moderate

From the data presented in Table 19, it can be observed that three statements demonstrated a low level of anxiety, whereas five statements exhibited a moderate level of anxiety. The statement with the lowest anxiety score was Statement 17, which had a mean score of 2.20. This indicates that when constructing English sentences, students generally did not feel apprehensive about others' opinions. In contrast, Statement 14 had the highest anxiety score, with a mean of 2.88, reflecting that students did feel anxious about the possibility of being mocked by their peers when others read their English sentences. Although both statements relate to students' feelings about others' perceptions, Statement 17 focuses on general apprehension, while Statement 14 specifically highlights fear of peer mockery, explaining the difference in scores.

Description of Somatic Anxiety

This form of writing anxiety was measured using seven items from the SLWAI. The statistical analysis revealed that the average score for somatic anxiety was 2.4979, with a standard deviation of 0.86962. Referring to the table displaying the mean range of anxiety levels, it was evident that this particular form of anxiety fell within the moderate level. The average score and anxiety level of each item are presented in the subsequent Table 20.

Table 20

Descriptive Statistics of Somatic Anxiety

No.	Items	Mean	Level
2	I feel my heart pounding when I write a sentence in English with a time limit	2.37	Low
6	My mind is often blank when I start working on English sentences.	2.48	Low
8	I tremble or sweat when I write English sentences with time pressure.	2.25	Low
11	My mind gets muddled when I write English sentences under the time limit.	2.38	Low
13	I often feel panicky when I write English sentences with a time limit.	2.55	Moderate
15	I became stiff when suddenly asked to write a sentence in English	2.60	Moderate
19	I usually feel my whole-body stiff and tense when I write English sentences.	2.86	Moderate

Table 20 indicates that four statements were at a low level, while three statements were at a moderate level. The lowest score was in statement 8, with a mean score of 2.25, in which, in attempting to write sentences in English under time pressure,

the students tremble or sweat. Conversely, the statement with the highest score was statement 19, which leads to students feeling a general stiffness and tension throughout their entire body while writing an English sentence.

Description of Avoidance Behaviour

This form of writing anxiety was measured using seven items of the SLWAI. The statistical analysis revealed that the average score for avoidance behaviour was 2.5495, with a standard deviation of 0.69553. Referring to Table 21 illustrating the range of mean anxiety levels, it was evident that this particular type of anxiety fell within the moderate range. Additionally, the table below provides the average scores and anxiety levels for each item.

Table 21

Descriptive Statistics of Avoidance Behaviour

No.	Items	Mean	Level
4	I often choose to write down my thoughts in English.	2.27	Low
5	I usually do my best to avoid writing sentences in English.	2.41	Low
10	I do my best to avoid situations where I have to write in English.	2.63	Moderate
12	I would not use English to write sentences unless I had no choice	2.70	Moderate
16	I would do my best to make excuses if asked to write English sentences.	2.85	Moderate
18	I usually look for every opportunity to write English sentences outside of class	2.47	Low
22	If possible, I will use English to write a sentence.	2.51	Moderate

Table 21 indicated that four statements were at a moderate level except for three statements at a low level. However, the average scores were different for each item. Statement 4, in which students are asked to write down their thoughts in English, received the lowest mean score (2.27). Statement 16 had the highest mean score (2.85), indicating that students do their best to make excuses if asked to write English sentences.

Taken together and analysing the mean scores of all three types of writing anxiety and individual items of the questionnaire, the data demonstrate that the participants' writing anxiety is largely attributed to feeling worried that other students will ridicule their English sentences if they read them, feel stiff and tense when they write English sentences, and make excuses if they are asked to write English sentences. This result is in line with the SLWAI anxiety model (Cheng, 2004). Furthermore, the implications of the quantitative findings will be discussed in more depth in the subsequent chapter.

Data Analysis and Results of the Qualitative Phase Two

The primary method of data collection was the semi-structured interview, which was described in more detail in Chapter 3 (Research Methodology). The qualitative component of the research comprised semi-structured in-person interviews with a total of 10 students (representing diverse levels of proficiency and academic attainment) and five teachers responsible for instructing the writing curriculum.

Every clause or sentence that offers several interpretations along with their explanations is called an ideational unit. For instance, the student's seventh statement, "I pretended that I understood due to the teacher's nervousness and tiredness," can be interpreted in two different ways. To address this, an inductive procedure was employed.

A procedure called induction was employed to analyze the qualitative data. This approach focuses on identifying and significant themes that emerge directly from the data in order to examine it. The researcher made an effort to create groups or themes by combining comparable codes in this manner. Following Creswell's (2012) recommendations, the data were coded in two rounds to ensure reliability and accuracy. All transcripts were initially coded by a single researcher. In line with Saldaña (2021), coding was applied as a systematic process to condense and organize the data, identify significant ideas, and facilitate understanding of the phenomenon while supporting the development of theoretical constructs. The analysis employed Saldaña's two-cycle coding method. Throughout the data analysis process, memos were written regularly to document reflections, insights, and emerging patterns. This iterative approach facilitated ongoing engagement with the data, enabling the researcher to refine codes and identify relationships between themes more effectively. Writing memos helped to capture the evolving thought process and ensured that the interpretation remained grounded in participants' actual experiences rather than preconceived ideas. Consequently, this method enhanced the credibility and depth of the analysis, allowing for a richer and more nuanced understanding of the phenomena under study. The final themes thus accurately reflected the complexities of participants on writing anxiety.

A structured coding methodology was developed to ensure reliability and consistency throughout the analysis. A detailed codebook was created and systematically updated as new themes emerged, ensuring clear definitions and consistent application of codes. To maintain transparency and rigour, an audit trail was kept to document codebook adjustments and analytic decisions, in line with Halpin's (2024) recommendations. This process provided a comprehensive record of the coding

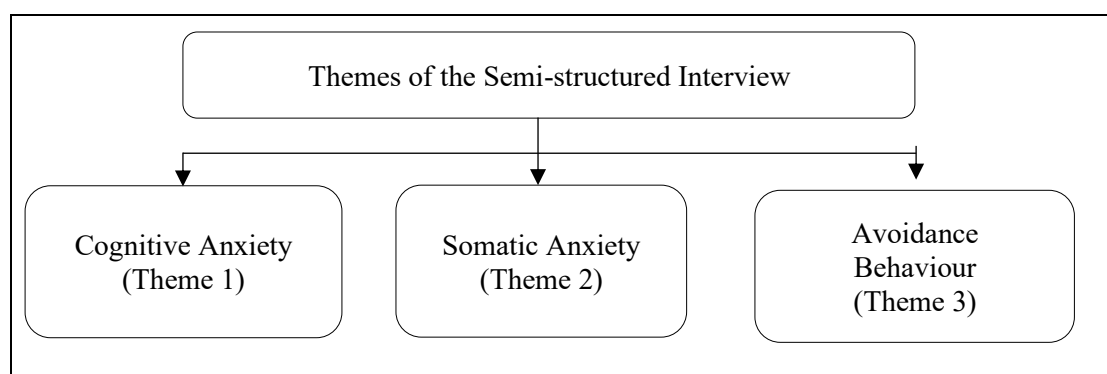
procedures, thereby strengthening the trustworthiness of the analysis and minimizing potential bias, even though the coding was conducted by a single researcher.

The analysis revealed that participants consistently referred to themes of fear and self-doubt, which were grouped under the broader category of “writing anxiety.” For example, concerns about peer judgment and negative teacher feedback were frequently highlighted, aligning with the overarching theme of “fear of negative evaluation.” These findings illustrate how the coding process captured not only individual experiences but also broader patterns across the dataset.

Factors Contributing to English Language Writing Anxiety

The goal of the analysis was to get detailed information from ten of the most anxious student participants who were asked about the factors associated with their EFL writing anxiety. Specifically, students who scored in the upper range, indicating high levels of writing anxiety, were identified as the “most anxious students.” These participants were purposefully selected for follow-up interviews to gain deeper insight into their anxiety experiences. This form of purposive sampling ensured that the qualitative data would be rich and relevant to the central research questions.

The major themes that emerged from these semi-structured interviews are illustrated in Figure 5, which provides an overview of the key categories identified during the coding process.

Figure 5*Themes of the Semi-structured Interview*

The semi-structured interview data were coded for emergent themes and patterns; these themes were then put into categories as reported in the sections below. Significantly, the thematic map (see Table 22) includes interview questions, participant codes, and representations of all nine themes. For confidentiality and consistency, participants in the qualitative interviews were assigned numerical codes (e.g., Student 1, Student 2) based on the order in which their interviews were conducted.

The themes are categorized from SLWAI, and the subthemes that emerged from the semi-structured interview are displayed in Table 22 below. Nine of the participants stated that time limits, fear of negative evaluation, lack of students' understanding of the classroom environment, lack of exam preparation work, teamwork in writing class, previous writing experiences, and lack of motivation in the writing classroom are associated with writing anxiety. Main Themes, Sub-themes, and Sub-subthemes are provided in the following table 22.

Table 22*Main Themes, Sub-Themes, and Sub-Subthemes from Phase Two*

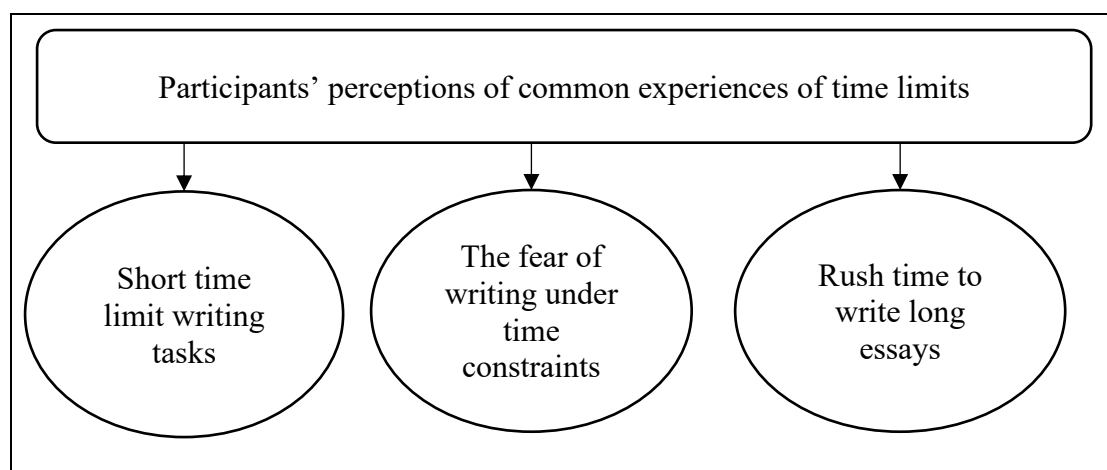
Main Theme	Sub-Themes	Sub-subthemes	Codes	Interview Schedule / Main Question
Factors influencing FLA writing anxiety among Saudi undergraduate students.	Cognitive Anxiety	Time Limit Fear of negative evaluation Lack of students' understanding	- A short time limit writing task - The limited time and interfering ideas - A short time to rush to write long essays - Course criteria, tasks, classmates' judgment, teacher judgment, final grades - Comprehension, speaking, lack of vocabulary	For the interview's questions Please see Appendix 6 & 7
	Somatic Anxiety	Classroom environment Exam	- The class size, design, lack of posts, and creativity. Formality in classroom. - The strict instructions, sudden quizzes, and times and essays.	
	Avoidance behaviour	Lack of preparation. -Work team in classroom. - Previous writing experiences.	-Loads of courses, distractions, challenges in some courses. -Negative Competition and fear, roles of students.	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of motivation in writing classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Style, lack of training, experience, and easy courses. - writing is boring and challenging - writing is boring and challenging 	
	Avoidance behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of preparation. -Work team in classroom. - Previous writing experiences. - Lack of motivation in writing classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Loads of courses, distractions, challenges in some courses. -Negative Competition and fear, roles of students. - Style, lack of training, experience, and easy courses. - writing is boring and challenging 	

Theme 1: (Cognitive Anxiety) Time Limit. Figure 6 presents participants' perceptions of common experiences related to time limits during writing tasks.

Figure 6

Participants' perceptions of common experiences of time limits



Five participants believed that insufficient or limited time is a source of writing anxiety in the classroom. This is primarily because they are suffering from time constraints, which is closely related to the pressure of producing perfect work and the pressure of writing tests. Based on Cheng (2004), this anxiety concerns the psychological effects experienced by a person, reflected in increasing autonomic arousal and unpleasant feelings such as nervousness and tension. This is related to a lack of knowledge of writing expectations. In this context, all participants told the researcher that they experienced negative emotions such as nervousness and fear. The fear of writing under time constraints and the worry associated with it contribute significantly to the overall writing anxiety experienced by students, leading to cognitive anxiety and negative writing attitudes. According to the students' interviews, Student 1 and Student 2, they became very anxious when their writing task had a short due date. In addition, students thought that writing for a short period was difficult and that they

could write about anything. They thought that because of the time limitations and competing ideas, writing would affect their results, as shown in the example:

“I feel pretty much anxious. Sometimes, if there's a short time limit writing task. Like, for example, you have a long essay to write, but the time is very short. Sometimes you get pretty much nervous, and you get anxious to be completely honest with you”. (Student 1).

In other words, this situation made this student write worse than what he wanted. Anxiety certainly hindered his capacity to articulate ideas coherently or enhance his work, resulting in writing that did not accurately represent his true potential. Moreover, a lack of knowledge and excessive focus on grammar may influence students' writing performance.

This situation hindered Student 1's ability to articulate ideas clearly and meet his usual writing standards. Similarly, Student 2 explained:

“Yeah, it's not easy to write within a limited time. I'll write about anything I know, but I know it will not be relevant due to the time set. It will cause anxiety, and my heart rate increases quickly as well”.

Another challenge participants face is their inability to effectively do their final exam. Student 3 described how difficult it was to write on the final exam because there wasn't enough time. The student also said that the amount of time required for the exam was unfair. The fairness of the amount of writing required in exams and the time spent on them is a complex issue. Tests that are too long can leave students feeling pressured and anxious, without enough time for careful thought. Student 3 explained:

“Yes, like in examination time final exam there's so much to write and little time. that's very pressuring time. Yes, the amount the length of the things I must write and the amount of time I must spend are not fair. That brings anxiety in writing during the examination period”.

The time pressure imposed by teachers can indeed trigger anxiety in writing among students, as evidenced by 9 out of 10 participants. For instance, Student 4 and Student 5 experienced anxiety in writing due to the pressure of the limited time given by the teacher. This issue is further exacerbated by factors such as poor time management, which is identified as a key antecedent to academic misconduct (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, absenteeism, and lack of participation) and resistance among students. Therefore, addressing time constraints and promoting effective time management strategies are crucial in enhancing student outcomes and reducing academic misconduct in educational settings.

Nine out of ten participants expressed anxiety caused by teacher-imposed time limits, as described by Student 4 and Student 5:

“Yes, some teachers are strict. When I have been told you have got 10 minutes to write. 10 minutes left? So, yeah, time pressures me. Hurry up, come on, guys. Yeah, that's bad. It triggers anxiety in writing. Especially when there is another exam on the same day”. (Student 4).

“Exactly, that's what I want to say is time pressure like timed essays. Most of the students say that it triggers anxiety and makes students paranoid”. (Student 5).

Furthermore, the fear of not having enough time to write was a significant factor contributing to anxiety among 9 out of 10 students, affecting the efficiency and quality of their writing, as reported by Student 8. Likewise, Student 10 experienced adverse effects such as feeling nervous and having insufficient preparation time, which can result in negative emotions and physical manifestations like trembling. Therefore, teachers should consider these factors when implementing timed writing practices to ensure a positive and conducive learning environment for all students. Student 8 explained:

“Time limit is the biggest problem in the classroom. A lesson is only 1 hour in some courses. I can’t fully focus and write at the same time.”

Student 10 added:

“Always, the problem is the time limit in writing, maybe like I have something, but time increases bad feelings. Hydrate. Yeah, hydrate and shake. Like shaking a little bit, and I don't know, it's like a bad feeling in general”. (Student 10).

The interviewees highlighted the problem they faced, which is that writing exams requires sufficient time to do it effectively, as explained by Student 6, Student 7, and Student 9. The students reported anxiety and stress in writing exams due to reasons such as a lack of writing time and a lack of necessary strategies, such as interfering ideas. In other words, having plenty of time in a writing exam may help reduce anxiety, and it can positively affect exam performance. Therefore, it is also important to address the time factor contributing to test anxiety to support students in fulfilling their academic potential. This concern was echoed by several participants, as demonstrated in the following examples:

“I would feel anxious in writing an exam, it is because of the time limit during the exam. I’m thinking that my writing is going to impact my outcome due to the limited time and interfering ideas”. (Student 6).

“My problem in writing class was, when teachers rushed us to write quickly, or gave us a short time to rush to write long essays, which wasn't helpful, but compared to when they gave us more time. You know, I feel relaxed to be honest, not nervous”. (Student 7).

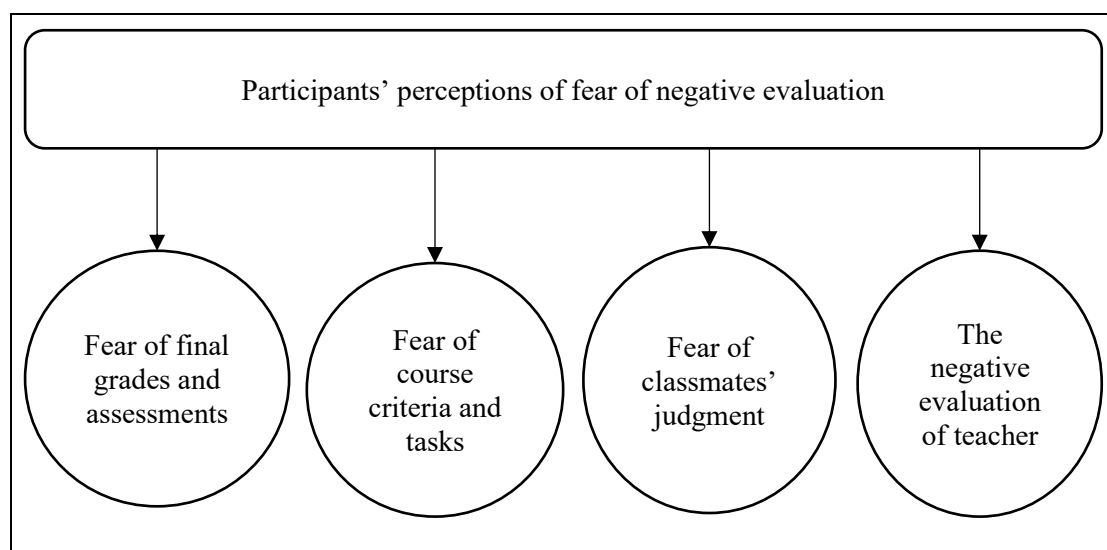
“The time in exam periods is not enough; it’s an obstacle we face always.” (Student 9).

In conclusion, inadequate time for testing and the constraints imposed during the composition of assessments appear to occupy a significant portion of students' cognitive processes and lead to apprehension. Seven out of ten of the participants, expressed anxiety and concern regarding the phenomenon of “speeded tests,” in which the allotted time for assessment is so limited that students are unable to complete their tasks. Nine out of ten participants reported that they felt anxious when completing writing tasks with tight limit time, often feeling nervous and struggling to organize their ideas during exams or times assignments. Nine out of the ten students mentioned that having a bit more time would make them feel calmer and more confident, showing just how much time pressure contributes to their writing anxiety. Therefore, all the students recommended that all English department lecturers and not just English writing professors, should give students enough time during the exam. Hence, allowing more time during exams may help reduce students’ anxiety and potentially improve their confidence in performing writing tasks.

Theme 2: (Cognitive Anxiety) Fear of Negative Evaluation. Figure 7 highlights participants' fears of negative evaluation in writing situations.

Figure 7

Participants' Perceptions of Fear and Negative Evaluation



The second theme, fear of negative evaluation, is a source of writing anxiety in classrooms. In general, for EFL students to pinpoint their areas of weakness and get guidance on enhancing their writing skills, feedback is essential. Even with the best of intentions, teachers or students in large classrooms provide critical feedback to one another in front of the class (Zhou et al., 2022). Furthermore, negative judgment from their classmates and teachers' judgment may also prevent learners from participating or seeking help from instructors or peers, as noted by Sun et al. (2024). Students who perceive their teacher positively tend to exhibit low writing anxiety and show higher achievement.

For example, Students 1, 2, and 4 in the current study indicated that they felt anxious when they were thinking about the final grade and assessment. This feeling is

reflected in the answers of both students 1, 2, and 4. Those challenges increased participants' writing anxiety. As a result, the existence of writing anxiety is caused mainly by negative evaluations by teachers. The following statements by students who scored high on the writing anxiety scale and had lower English proficiency reflected these causes:

“Well, I think writing anxiety might happen when you're writing and thinking about the final grade and assessment, which will get me nervous”. (Student 1).

“Yeah, I think any student would feel anxious about the grade and negative evaluation. Exactly. Yeah. About performance. For me, I'll be worried about the grades too, but I think I'll do my best. No one will blame me because I did my best”. (Student 2).

“Indeed, yes, when low grades and low evaluations came out, it would influence my evaluation. I became anxious thinking how my grade looks; I might fail in future tasks.” (Student 4).

Participants experienced a sense of negative peer evaluation, which can increase writing anxiety and reduce confidence. Factors such as being laughed at by peers during writing tasks contributed to writing anxiety among students. Additionally, cultural and external factors further contribute to this challenge. These are not only related to grades but also other aspects, such as performance in classroom learning. Some students experience high levels of anxiety when they read, write, or present their work in front of their peers. These findings underscore the importance of addressing students' fear of negative evaluation and providing support to enhance their writing skills and reduce

anxiety levels. The comments made by students 5 and 6 help to exemplify the emotional impact of peer judgment and grade-related anxiety on students' writing experiences:

“A teacher told us to write and present it in front of students. When I presented mine, I had some mistakes, and I felt that the students laughed at me and made fun of me. The teacher did not do anything to stop it, unfortunately.” (Student 5).

“When my classmates show me their grades and ask me about mine, I feel blocked, and my classmates will laugh at me due to my performance.” (Student 6).

These comments highlight that not only direct criticism but also indirect exposure to peers' performance, such as grade comparisons, can heighten writing anxiety. Student 6's anxiety stems from the public nature of grade sharing, which creates a fear of ridicule and embarrassment. This form of peer pressure and public judgment fosters a sense of vulnerability, especially when writing abilities are closely scrutinized in social or evaluative settings.

Teachers (as well as learners) provided a reason: peer pressure and being judged. A few students also reported feeling scared and apprehensive as a result of poor teacher feedback or evaluation. They are afraid of being embarrassed in front of their classmates if they are unable to write to the required standard. They fear being judged if they don't do well. Also, Rasool et al. (2023), who received negative evaluations or comments from their instructors, also reported experiencing anxiety and worry. They fear the scorn of their classmates if they turn in a poorly written paper. My students worry that their performance will be unfavourably appraised, highlighted by Student 10, who stated:

“I am anxious when my teacher reads my writing answers and highlights the mistakes in front of my classmates, this is so embarrassing and terrifying.” (Student 10).

This student emphasises that public error correction generates discomfort and embarrassment, perhaps hindering writing progress by fostering an anxiety of making mistakes. Such reactions are essential as they demonstrate how teaching methods might adversely affect a learner's confidence and willingness to participate in writing exercises.

Multiple linguistic factors, such as the breadth of vocabulary, word choice, command of grammatical structures, spelling words, organizational abilities, and familiarity with rhetorical structures, influence the development of EFL learners' writing (Derakhshan & Karimian Shirejini, 2020). Participants faced challenges in selecting appropriate words to express their thoughts, ideas, or feelings accurately. The participants in this study struggled to find the best words to express themselves, and spelling words or their meanings not being delivered led to either overly simple language or the incorrect use of more complex words. Student 8 is anxious and afraid that he will find out that his spelling of words or their meanings cannot be delivered in the writing task. This anxiety can be caused by various factors, such as the teacher's verbal behaviour and classroom management techniques. Furthermore, to write effectively, one must be able to construct a style that is appropriate for the intended audience and purpose, as well as underline important ideas using sophisticated grammatical strategies (Derakhshan & Karimian Shirejini, 2020). A statement by one of the highly anxious students is illustrative of this point:

“Spelling mistakes caused many problems to me; it embarrassed me. I feel anxious when my teacher asks me what I mean by certain words and phrases.” (student 8).

According to Student 9, fear of negative evaluation comes out when the department of English at Saudi University posts names and grades on the public boards on campus, leading to losing face in front of colleagues and teachers, which can contribute to this writing anxiety. This experience stated how, in cultural context of Saudi Arabia where saving face and maintaining social reputation are highly valued. Public exposure of performance can heighten writing anxiety. Therefore, it suggested teachers need to be mindful of their behaviour and create a supportive and respectful learning environment to alleviate students' writing anxiety.

Understandably, the anxiety experienced by students when required to write tasks by hand due to concerns about legibility and embarrassment is a common issue highlighted by student 8. The study indicates that students with limited mobility encounter difficulties with handwriting, which affects their self-esteem. Using laptops for typing may mitigate anxiety associated with inadequate handwriting and enhance performance, highlighted by Student 8, who stated:

“It's anxiety when my teacher requires me to write the tasks by hand, not by laptop, because my knowledge in English is not good and I feel embarrassed and anxious.” (Student 8).

In summary, alongside the quantitative findings, interviews with students reporting elevated anxiety reveal that the majority experience anxiety regarding the evaluation process overall. Again, fear of formal evaluation seems to be a major source of writing anxiety. These findings together emphasise how fear of negative evaluation influences students' writing experiences, especially in high-stakes contexts. After

establishing this pattern of evaluative anxiety, the discussion now shifts to the next theme lack of students' understanding.

These findings can also be understood within the broader context of neoliberalism in higher education, which frames education as a commodity and students as consumers or future workers (Giroux, 2014). Neoliberal ideologies promote competition, individual accountability, efficiency, and performance metrics, principles that have increasingly shaped university policies, assessment practices, and student behaviour (Ball, 2003; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). In such a system, students are under constant pressure to produce measurable results, such as high grades, standardized test scores, and polished written work, which are often viewed as indicators of future employability and personal worth (Brown, 2015). This market-oriented approach to education contributes to the internalization of performance-based pressure, where students come to view academic success not just as desirable but as a moral obligation and personal responsibility (Ball, 2003).

As such, grade-related writing anxiety is not only a personal or classroom issue but also a structural one, rooted in a system that emphasizes measurable achievement and individual competitiveness over collaborative learning and personal growth. The emphasis on quantifiable outcomes discourages risk-taking and collaborative learning, and instead fosters fear of failure, perfectionism, and over-identification with academic output (Giroux, 2014; Brown, 2015). For Saudi EFL learners, these pressures may be amplified by the high stakes associated with English language proficiency in globalized labour markets, where English is often positioned as a gateway to economic mobility (Marginson, 2006; Saltmarsh & Swirski, 2010). Thus, students' writing anxiety may

reflect deeper anxieties about future success and social belonging in a competitive and uncertain world.

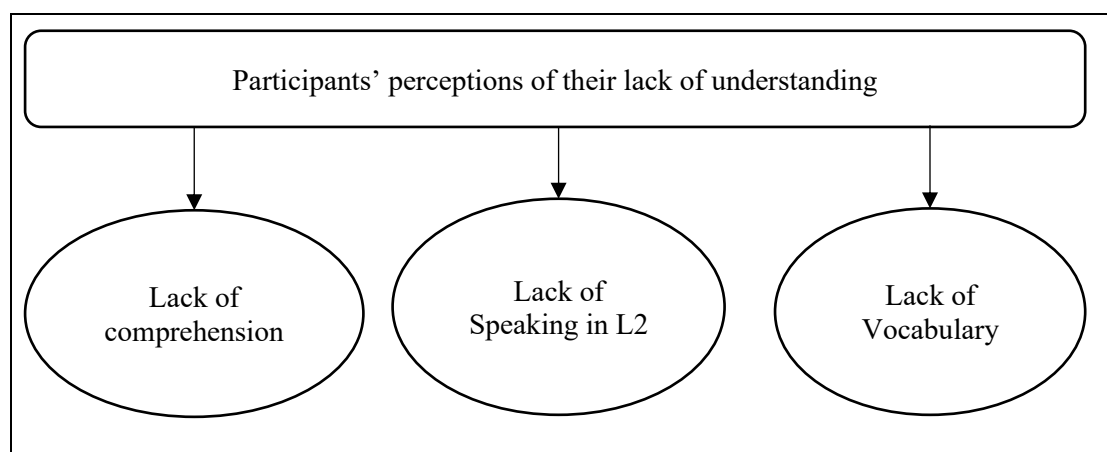
By recognizing the intersections between neoliberalism, language learning, and academic anxiety, this study contributes to a more critical understanding of writing anxiety as a socio-political phenomenon (Giroux, 2014; Brown, 2015). It encourages educators and policymakers to consider not just classroom interventions, but also the broader institutional and ideological forces that shape students' experiences and emotional well-being in higher education (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Theme 3: (Cognitive Anxiety) Lack of Students' Understanding.

Figure 8 demonstrates participants' perceptions of their lack of understanding as a source of writing anxiety.

Figure 8

Participants' Perceptions of Their Lack of Understanding



The third theme of this qualitative study focused on the lack of students' understanding, which is a source of writing anxiety in classrooms. EFL students' perceptions of writing anxiety sources include lack of knowledge about the topic, genre

inexperience, brainstorming challenges, structuring difficulties, integrating sources, linguistic issues, and inadequate feedback.

EFL students often struggle with their limited vocabulary, unclear ideas, and incoherent organization of content, as reported in the literature of this research. Furthermore, these feelings of unease are even more potent if doubts arise about whether they are using the correct vocabulary and grammar. As Student 6 explained, “I feel anxious because I can’t understand the lessons and write fully due to the lack of vocabulary” (Student 6).

The little vocabulary knowledge not only prevents student writers from expressing their thoughts and writing meaningful sentences but also increases their fear and concerns of not understanding the writing prompts, which is considered the most anxiety-provoking aspect. The outcomes of the interview reveal that students encounter challenges in understanding English lessons and writing fully because of issues like insufficient comprehension of the classes and incomplete writing due to the teacher’s nervousness and their anger due to the lack of students’ understanding. The noisy classroom environment with numerous students contributes to feelings of shyness, nervousness, anger, and anxiety, as evidenced by students 7 and 10. For example,

“I can’t understand the lesson or ask my teacher a question when the classroom is noisy and has many students, I feel shy and anxious.” (Student 7).

“I pretend that I understand due to the teacher’s nervousness and slight anger, I can notice it” (Student 10).

Other students (Student 1, Student 5, and Student 8) experienced anxiety due to the teacher's use of advanced English language in writing or speaking, leading to difficulties in comprehension. These findings highlight the significant role of language proficiency and teaching strategies in influencing students' anxiety levels and academic performance. These findings suggest that the students' linguistic anxiety is closely linked to the learning environment and the extent of language support provided. Activities such as opportunities for informal practice in a non-judgmental Atmosphere were reported as particularly beneficial in reducing anxiety and fostering confidence. As Student 1 stated, "I feel anxious when my teacher speaks quickly because I can't get the whole words and phrases" (Student 1). Similarly, Student 5 noted, "My teacher speaks very fast in the classroom, and I couldn't understand the lesson clearly" (Student 5). In addition, Student 8 explained, "My teacher always writes and speaks in advanced English, and it's difficult to comprehend sometimes" (Student 8). Students 1 and 5 attributed their anxiety to the teacher's rapid speech, highlighting how speed hindered comprehension in the writing classroom, whereas Student 8 highlighted related concerns about advanced terminology. Together, unclear teacher communication, whether in pace or word choice, can reveal and accelerate writing anxiety.

These challenges can also be analysed through the lens of neoliberalism in higher education, complementing the previous discussion of how neoliberal ideologies influence academic experiences. In this context, institutional priorities tend to focus on efficiency, performance indicators, and competition rather than providing individualized support for students and promoting holistic learning. Overcrowded classrooms, limited teacher feedback, and a heavy emphasis on grades and measurable outcomes reflect a system based on productivity and accountability. This environment

fosters pressure on students, increasing their writing anxiety by valuing performance over process, thus undermining collaborative or reflective teaching methods. Integrating these insights reveals how the structural forces underlying neoliberal policies not only influence institutional practices but also directly impact students' emotional well-being and learning experiences. Understanding this broader context is essential to interpreting the findings and considering reforms that promote student-centered approaches in Saudi higher education. In such environments, students, particularly those with language challenges, may feel ignored and pressured to complete assignments without the necessary resources, increasing their anxiety and damaging their confidence in writing tasks.

Theme 4: (Somatic Anxiety) Classroom Environment. The classroom environment is a source of writing anxiety, and factors influencing anxiety in this case include class size, design, lack of posts, and creativity. The results indicate that the anxiety experienced by students in large classes with over 50 students can significantly impact their ability to study and write effectively. As Student 5 explained, “I feel anxious to study and write when the class is small and includes more than 50 students. I can’t think sometimes”. Additionally, students felt emotionally burdened by the formal, silent classroom style, characterized by a lack of cooperation and collaborative activities. Student 6 stated, “I feel bored and anxious during the formal silent classroom, such as a lack of cooperation and activities”.

Writing is more than just putting words together to create a paragraph or a statement. To create a composition that is well-organized, thoughts must be arranged and structured in a logical, accurate, and instructive manner (Quvanch & Si Na, 2022). Some participants find that coming up with ideas is a difficult undertaking and a major source of their anxiety (Sun et al., 2024). Furthermore, the absence of motivational elements like boards with ideas or phrases in a formal classroom setting can impact student engagement and perception of the learning environment. This is highlighted by Student 7: “The formal class is creepy and the wall in my classroom is empty; there are no board ideas or motivational phrases.”.

The feeling of anxiety in a classroom due to the lack of personal space was expressed by Student 9. By considering these insights, it becomes evident that creating a supportive and personalized classroom environment is crucial in alleviating students' anxiety and promoting a conducive learning atmosphere. Student 10 indicated that poor indoor environmental quality in classrooms, including inadequate air conditions, can lead to discomfort, reduced attention during class, and even unwillingness to study. As Student 9 stated, “I dislike the classroom when the tables are linked, not separated, so no personal space; I feel anxious” Similarly, Student 10 noted, “Some classrooms have no heating system or air conditioning in winter, which discourages me from attending the class and studying”. The findings expressed by Students 9 and 10 about physical space and environmental discomfort indicate that improving physical classroom design may be as essential as educational measures in reducing anxiety.

While some students mentioned environmental factors such as classroom temperature and seating arrangements as sources of general discomfort that can affect attention and willingness to study, these factors were not directly linked to writing

anxiety. For example, Student 9 noted discomfort due to linked tables reducing personal space, and Student 10 mentioned the lack of heating or air conditioning discouraging class attendance. Although these issues may influence the overall classroom experience, they appear secondary to specific causes of writing anxiety.

Environmental challenges, including overcrowded classrooms, impersonal design, limited motivational resources, and inadequate facilities, can be understood within the framework of neoliberalism in higher education. In systems shaped by neoliberal values, education is often managed with a focus on cost-efficiency, standardization, and output, rather than student well-being or holistic development. This orientation influences institutional priorities and classroom practices, where measurable performance indicators like grades and test scores become the primary concern. As a result, students may experience increased pressure and anxiety, especially in demanding tasks such as academic writing, because the emphasis on productivity can overshadow the need for supportive learning environments that nurture skills and confidence. Recognizing this dynamic is crucial to understanding the structural forces that contribute to writing anxiety among EFL students and highlights the importance of addressing not only individual challenges but also systemic factors within higher education. The pressures to accommodate large student numbers with limited resources can result in learning environments that neglect students' emotional and cognitive needs. Consequently, the physical and social aspects of classrooms become anxiety-inducing rather than supportive, reinforcing students' feelings of alienation and performance pressure.

Theme 5: (Somatic Anxiety) Exam. The exam and fear of an examination are also sources of writing anxiety in classrooms. Participants said that they normally feel

less anxious during classwork than they do during exams. They believe that during examinations, they become nervous about not being able to perform to their full potential and are unable to put ideas on paper. This anxiety can stem from various factors, including strict instructions and unexpected assessments. The feeling of anxiety and being overwhelmed by surprise quizzes in a writing classroom is a common experience among students, as highlighted by Students 1 and 2. The findings from the interview also suggest that the scheduled time for written exams induces stress, leading to feelings of anxiety among Students 6 and 7. As Student 1 stated, "Quizzes and sudden tasks made me extremely anxious" . Similarly, Student 2 said, "I hate sudden quizzes; I feel creepy and anxious". Student 6 explained, "Written exam time puts me in stressful situations, and I become anxious". Finally, Student 7 expressed, "I think when we have plenty of time in the exam, anxiety would fade away".

Furthermore, writing anxiety, which involves feelings of fear or hesitation associated with writing tasks, can be exacerbated by factors such as insufficient time and stringent academic requirements. In contrast, exam anxiety refers to the pressures students experience during tests or assessments, which may include worries about overall performance and evaluation by others. Both types of anxiety can negatively impact students' academic performance and increase stress levels, although they are caused by different triggers.

The experiences shared by Student 5 and Student 8 regarding feeling overwhelmed, anxious, lacking confidence, and experiencing anxiety due to essay topics in exams are reflective of the prevalence of writing anxiety among students. These findings highlight that students' writing anxiety is strongly associated with the learning environment, teacher support, and assessment practices, which collectively

influence their confidence and writing proficiency. The following statements by highly anxious students reflected these causes:

“My teacher gave us a set of essay topics to choose from in the exam, which caused me to be overwhelmed and anxious” (Student 5).

“In exams, there should not be an essay to write; I caused anxiety and lack of confidence” (Student 8).

In summary, the concept of unfamiliarity with a topic appears to constitute a significant contributor to students’ writing anxiety, particularly when there exists a substantial divergence between the individuals’ pre-existing knowledge or background and the novel information. When students are unable to connect the subject matter of their writing to their cognitive frameworks in an exam, it is understandable that they experience feelings of anxiety and trepidation. As demonstrated by Student 1, Student 2, Student 5, Student 6, Student 7, and Student 8, a lack of familiarity with the topic obstructs the seamless generation of ideas during the writing process, owing to the absence of the requisite background knowledge that is essential for the formulation of ideas and thoughts. Some interviewees go further by revealing that they get anxious during any writing quizzes and tests, regardless of their difficulty or simplicity. In addition, they claim that test anxiety is responsible for making them stressed and unable to organize their ideas when writing an English essay.

Theme 6: (Avoidance Behaviour) Lack of preparation. Another challenge participants face is a lack of preparation to effectively complete an exam due to loads of courses, distractions, and challenges in some courses. Whenever learners need to combine diverse perspectives and integrate them into their writing, they may experience

feelings of overload and anxiety (Teng, 2020). The findings from the interview suggest that students are experiencing feelings of being inundated during the examination period because of insufficient preparation and a high volume of modules, as expressed by (Student 2, Student 3, and Student 4). Based on the students' concerns about feeling overwhelmed by the exam period due to limited preparation time, it is crucial to consider effective time management strategies and planning techniques to optimize study efforts. It highlights the significance of strategic time allocation for effective preparation. These findings indicate that inadequate time management contributes to students' feelings of being overwhelmed during exam periods. As Student 2 mentioned, "This term I have 25 hours; I can't prepare all of the courses. I know I'll feel overwhelmed by the exam period". Student 3 added, "I feel anxious and distracted during the exam period due to a lack of preparation and also the number of modules I have had". Similarly, Student 4 stated, "I can't prepare eight modules on weekends. It causes anxiety and ambiguity".

Other students (Student 5, Student 6, and Student 7) often experience stress due to academic demands, such as the need to prepare for multiple tasks like writing and exams. The pressure to perform well in challenging courses, like writing, can lead to feelings of anxiety, especially when extensive readings are required for preparation. Students' self-reported lack of proper preparation before exams contribute to their anxiety levels, indicating a need for improved study habits and time management skills. These findings underscore the importance of addressing academic stressors through effective coping strategies and support systems to enhance students' well-being and academic performance. As Student 5 shared, "I feel stressed sometimes because of the tasks we have, the preparations and attention we have to provide during the

term”. Similarly, Student 6 admitted, “My mistake, I don’t prepare properly before the exam, so that’s why I am always anxious in exams”. Student 7 further explained, “Some courses, like writing, are difficult to prepare; they require a lot of reading, so that’s why I am anxious about writing”.

Three participants illustrate that their preparation weaknesses and mistakes are partially responsible for their writing fears and anxiety. They point to the fact that frustrations happen when they do not prepare properly before the exam.

Theme 7: (Avoidance behaviour). Work teams in the writing class. Team-based learning in writing classes has been widely successful in various disciplines (Alkhannani, 2021), but its adoption in writing class subjects faces challenges such as time-consuming course design, student reluctance, unsuitable working spaces, lack of competition, and limited independent work. Students experience feelings of anxiety when they are instructed by their teachers to assemble in groups, as expressed by students 1 and 2:

“I don’t feel relaxed in working groups because I feel my classmates judge my thoughts and writing” (Student 1). “I become anxious when my teacher requires us to gather in groups, I like independent work”. (Student 2).

Negative competition in group settings can indeed lead to anxiety and negative outcomes, as highlighted by Students 4, 6, 7, and 8, and is a common phenomenon with significant implications for learning outcomes. The findings suggest that negative competition contributes to heightened anxiety and strained group dynamics, whereas cooperative approaches are associated with reduced tension and more positive interactions. As Student 4 stated, “I feel overwhelmed because my classmates will

compete and know my language skills in working groups”. Student 6 added, “I feel anxious in the workgroup because there is only one leader who speaks, and the rest are silent”. Similarly, Student 7 expressed, “I feel anxious in work groups because my teacher will stare at me and judge my competition” . Finally, Student 8 noted, “I feel anxious that working in groups is negative competition”.

Furthermore, the competition in working teams was found to be a major source of writing anxiety. Students in the current study indicated that they felt anxious and overwhelmed when they competed with their classmates in working groups. Also, students often feel stressed and anxious in class, especially when faced with high competition in working groups and the pressure to perform well. This fear of being evaluated by others can hinder their ability to effectively write, communicate, and participate in group discussions, as reflected by Student 4, Student 6, and Student 7 above. As a result, students hesitate to write and avoid the risk of making mistakes.

Theme 8: (Avoidance behaviour). Previous writing experiences. One of the critical points raised was that learners got fewer chances to write, and mostly they used to cram the content if they had to write. The primary concern of students was a lack of writing practice during their high school studies and fewer chances of writing. Transitioning from high school to university can indeed be challenging, especially in terms of academic writing, as highlighted by Students 1, Student 2, and Student 3. Moreover, inadequate training in writing during high school can exacerbate this anxiety, leading to poor writing concepts, linguistic obstacles, and insufficient practice (Student 5). Strategies to cope with writing apprehension involve seeking help from others,

improving writing strategies, and effectively managing feedback, emphasizing the importance of appropriate teaching techniques and peer collaboration to reduce anxiety and enhance writing skills. Wern and Rahmat (2021) also recommended working with students to create a learning nook where they may review frequent writing errors and receive remediation guidance to reduce writing anxiety. Therefore, educational institutions should provide comprehensive writing training and support to equip students with the necessary skills and confidence for university-level writing tasks. As Student 1 explained, "Writing at the university level increases my anxiety because when I was in high school, my teacher didn't train us properly to write daily". Similarly, Student 2 shared, "In high school, we didn't study writing properly because the course was short and general, so that's why we struggle in writing".

The lack of writing practice among high school students is a significant barrier to developing their writing skills, compounded by cramming habits that prioritize rote memorization over practical application. This issue is prevalent in various educational contexts. Wu (2024) further supports this by noting that a focus on language knowledge over practical writing skills exacerbates students' anxiety, limiting their writing proficiency. As Student 3 explained, "I feel anxious towards writing at university because in high school we used to write short sentences". Similarly, Student 5 stated, "I feel anxious because my previous teacher at high school didn't train us well in writing".

Moreover, the challenges faced by students previously in writing at high school, leading to anxiety, are a common issue highlighted by Students 4, 6, and 7. Students often struggle with writing anxiety, emphasizing the need for increased teacher motivation and guidance to help students handle the challenges of writing and cope with this anxiety. Based on the results, the significance of English writing in high school

education is growing, but students' apprehension towards writing impedes their progress, necessitating constructive teaching suggestions to alleviate anxiety and enhance writing proficiency. At the current Saudi university level, English writing instruction is challenged by issues of low writing efficiency, insufficient practice, off-topic writing, and low writing interest, indicating a need for urgent solutions to improve students' writing abilities. As Student 4 noted, "Writing style in high school is easy, whereas at university it is challenging". Student 6 expressed similar concerns: "I wish I could have had a good teacher in high school, so I could handle the challenges of writing currently". Likewise, Student 7 added, "The writing in high school was not helpful, so this is the potential reason for my anxiety".

Theme 9: (Avoidance behaviour). Lack of motivation in the writing classroom. Motivation in the writing classroom can be a crucial factor influencing writing performance. Student 1 expressed low motivation, like feeling bored and challenged in writing, due to the teacher's lack of grade modification. The students emphasized the significance of creating a supportive and engaging classroom environment to foster motivation and enhance student outcomes.

Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping student engagement with feedback, with their behaviours significantly impacting student motivation and learning experiences. Yu and Zhou (2022) emphasized that a variety of feedback techniques, including one-on-one meetings, class discussions, and peer reviews, contribute to the development of supportive learning environments that enhance student progress. Similarly, Song et al. (2023) reported that peer feedback and peer interaction function as effective methods for improving the writing skills of EFL learners in higher education. Therefore, addressing issues of low motivation, such as feeling bored and challenged in writing,

requires a multifaceted approach that considers both internal and external motivational factors, teacher feedback practices, and the overall classroom environment to promote student engagement and success in writing tasks. As Student 1 expressed, “My teacher hasn’t promoted my grade after the feedback I changed; I feel writing is boring and challenging” .

Teachers’ speaking was also problematic and could trigger writing anxiety. This can be due to teachers speaking very fast, using advanced English language in the classroom, or not explaining the importance of certain materials, which can contribute to students’ difficulties in understanding, as reported by Students 5 and 8. For example, Student 5 stated, “My teacher speaks very fast in the classroom, and I couldn’t understand the lesson clearly” .Similarly, Student 8 explained, “My teacher always writes and speaks in advanced English, and it’s difficult to comprehend writing lessons sometimes”.

Findings indicate that encouragement and positive feedback contribute more effectively to students’ writing confidence than criticism. When teachers highlight the strengths and benefits of students’ writing, learners gain a sense of accomplishment, which in turn fosters enthusiasm for writing and reduces feelings of anxiety or dissatisfaction. However, as Student 3 noted, “Most teachers are strict when they communicate in English. The lecture is very formal”.

Overall, all participants agreed that communication apprehension is a common experience among English undergraduate students as well. Particularly, the presence of their classmates, a lack of English and vocabulary knowledge, teachers' nervousness and tiredness, teachers’ speaking, and competition in working groups made them very

anxious and stressed. It has been found that among participants, individuals with higher levels of communication apprehension tend to have lower self-perceived communication competence, which can further contribute to their writing anxiety as well. In brief, participants identified dynamics in the classroom, language barriers, and teacher-related issues as primary drivers of communication anxiety. These qualitative observations will now be merged with the quantitative data for a thorough discussion in the following section.

Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

This part examines the factors influencing FLA writing anxiety among Saudi undergraduate students. Using the triangulation method is one way to verify the interview data. The researcher is tasked with evaluating the "qualities" of the quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the administered questionnaire survey and conducted interviews (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The research was a mixed-method study incorporating triangulation, which involved the correspondence of results acquired through quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Greene et al., 1989). Therefore, triangulation was utilized in this study to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings by integrating insights from both phases.

In the quantitative phase of the research study, based on the data analysis, the mean scores reflected that all the domains/factors of the FLCAS and SLWAI perceived moderate level of anxiety among Saudi undergraduate students. Therefore, the qualitative findings confirm these results, indicating that even moderate anxiety hinders students from engaging in class discussions, completing writing assignments promptly, and achieving in examinations. However, this is still considered to be alarming and

needs to be dealt with. Similarly, the qualitative findings support these results. The findings are concerning because anxiety-induced avoidance decreases practice opportunities, decreases the quality of work, and affects assessment performance, consequently hindering language acquisition and academic success.

The findings revealed that students in this study reported that they felt anxious because they had limited time to write, which affected the efficiency and quality of their writing. The qualitative data support the quantitative data, along with the students being concerned about their test anxiety in the English classroom. Interviews with Student 1, Student 5, and Student 7 revealed that university students experience increased cognitive anxiety towards writing compared to high school.

Students also reported that they got stressed and confused if they got sudden quizzes. Avoidance behaviours, including lack of desire, inadequate preparation, limited vocabulary knowledge, frequent errors, and teachers' doubts about their ability, negatively influenced their writing performance, resulting in feelings of anxiety and nervousness. Also, students (i.e., Student 1 & Student 6) reported that they had a fear of negative evaluation because they overthink their grades and assessments and participate less in class.

In conclusion, most themes derived from the students' narratives align with those identified in prior scholarly investigations, encompassing elements such as grading, examinations, collaborative efforts, classroom dynamics involving peers, and temporal limitations (Chang, 2004; Prasetyaningrum et al., 2021; Jawas, 2019). Many researchers in the previous studies affirmed that time constraints, negative attitudes, lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem, inability to write in English, pressure of

perfect writing, and fear of negative comments are among the common personal factors that make them anxious about writing (Aripin, 2023). An important novel factor emerged from this research: the participants indicated that previous writing experiences could elicit anxiety, as these past encounters were often perceived as negative or problematic.

Coping Strategies

When the interviewees' responses were related to factors contributing to FLWA, they were asked about the ways to cope with the negative experience. This section presents the findings of the qualitative phase of the study regarding coping strategies. It mainly aims to answer the fourth and five research questions:

- i. What strategies are used by undergraduate students to reduce their English writing anxiety?
- ii. What strategies are used by EFL teachers to reduce their students' writing anxiety?

Below is a sample of analysing coping strategies from the point of view of students and teachers. When asked, students were asked which strategies they would use to decrease writing anxiety. They mostly preferred to use the six strategies created by Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004) (See Appendix 9). Additionally, positive thinking, peer seeking, and preparation have been highlighted as effective strategies for coping with anxiety in learning English. Hence, it is suggested that students adopt more action strategies in their English language writing to enhance writing achievements.

Coping Strategies Undertaken by Students. In response to the third research question regarding “What strategies are used by undergraduate students to reduce their English writing anxiety?”, most students suggested a variety of strategies for creating less anxiety in the English writing classroom.

Positive Thinking. The ability for positive thinking is demonstrated through the reduction of cognitive processes that are linked to students' anxiety, such as the act of envisioning success or seeking pleasure in challenging circumstances (Kondo, 2004). The participating students who actively engage in positive thinking emphasized the crucial role it plays in mitigating their anxiety during test-writing, taking, and completing assignments. The application of positive thinking by English undergraduate students has also been found to alleviate anxiety about learning English, emphasizing the role of positive thinking in promoting a positive personality and an active cognitive learning process (See Appendix 9). For example, Student 1 stated, “To reduce my anxiety in exams, I think of my family’s adventures and trips in summer, and positive memories I spent with them, then I feel thrilled”). Similarly, Student 2 added, “I read and think positively to myself that I will pass the exam, then I find it easy” . Student 3 shared, “Thinking positively during the exam helped me to become calm”. Student 4 explained, “When I get anxious during speaking and writing, I think of my teacher’s smile, and I feel calm”. In addition, Student 5 mentioned, “My teacher told me to think always positively in the learning process”. Finally, Student 6 reflected, “When I become anxious in the classroom, I tend to lower my head and think of motivational and positive stories of successful people during challenges”.

Relaxation. Relaxation is used to specifically target and decrease physical symptoms of anxiety. Common examples are phrases such as 'I breathe deeply' and 'I

attempt to relax’. According to MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012), relaxation techniques have a wide range of effects on human health, including physiological changes (such as a decrease in breathing and heart rate, as well as a lowering of blood pressure and tension in the muscles) and psychological ones. These strategies include deep breathing before speaking or writing to alleviate anxiety, exercising before exams or presentations to combat anxiety, drawing on notes during writing exams to reduce tension and anxiety, and meditating to induce relaxation and calmness during moments of anxiety. The use of relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, exercise, drawing, and meditation not only aids in reducing anxiety but also promotes a sense of calmness and preparedness, ultimately enhancing students’ confidence and performance in academic tasks (See Appendix 9). For example, Student 3 reported, “keep having issues due to anxiety while speaking English or writing an essay”. Student 4 added, “I turn up my eyes in speaking or writing, so I become relaxed”. Student 5 stated, “I deep breathe before I speak and write to avoid anxiety”. Similarly, Student 6 explained, “Before exams or presentations, I exercise for half an hour to combat anxiety”. Student 7 mentioned, “During the writing exam, I draw on my notes so I can reduce my tension and anxiety”. Student 8 shared, “When I get anxious in writing, I stick to drawing and highlighting words”. Finally, Student 9 noted, “I breathe deeply and meditate during my anxiety, so I become relaxed and calm”.

Preparation. Preparation refers to attempts at controlling the impending threat by improving learning and study strategies (e.g., studying hard and trying to obtain good summaries of lecture notes; Kondo, 2004). Some students strongly attributed their achievement and high competence to their prior preparation, according to their preparation strategies. Students who attribute their achievement and high competence

to prior preparation strategies demonstrate the importance of prewriting and test preparation in academic success. Utilizing effective prewriting strategies, such as discussing topics with peers or teachers before writing, engaging in extra study, and connecting new information with existing knowledge, can significantly impact writing outcomes. By actively engaging in preparation activities, students not only boost their confidence and progress but also mitigate feelings of anxiety and enhance their overall academic performance. For example, Student 2 stated, “I study well before I go to class to avoid any sudden quizzes or tests that cause me anxiety”. Similarly, Student 4 mentioned, “My brother teaches me every day, so I feel confident about my progress” . Student 5 added, “My teacher requests a revision of our next lesson. I prepare well, so that helps a lot”. Finally, Student 6 noted, “Preparation helps me succeed in all my courses, and I don’t feel anxious in the classroom”.

Students’ perspectives on motivation and compliments. Motivation is a crucial element in the learning of second and foreign languages. Despite its obvious significance, it is commonly recognised that Saudi EFL learners typically exhibit low levels of L2 motivation (AlMaiman, 2005; Alrabai, 2011; AlShammmary, 1984; Alrabai, 2014). This confirms the significant role of teachers in cultivating motivation through positive reinforcement, guidance, encouragement, and learner support. Students indicated that their teachers’ words of encouragement and appreciation were essential to their academic advancement and emotional well-being. Although three students expressed gratitude for encouragement, one student reported experiencing anxiety in response to motivational statements. For instance, Student 5 stated:

“That's a very important thing; there is a lack of motivation among our teachers.

I wish that all teachers remind their students that they should never give up writing. It's okay to struggle, it's okay to fall and then get up, but not to give up”.

In contrast, Student 6 mentioned:

"I feel anxious and disappointed when my teacher praises some good students for their performance in writing in front of us. I think it's unfair for some students; we need encouragement and compliments".

Similarly, Student 5 shared:

“I never forget my teacher when I felt sleepy in the classroom due to some circumstances; he saw me and told me I could go home and get some rest. I did, I went home, then I liked the course and the teacher, and never felt anxious or demotivated”.

Finally, Student 8 explained, “Indeed, when I get positive feedback, and it's a form of motivation, it influences my progress. I become calm and satisfied with my mistake”.

These viewpoints emphasise the necessity for instructors to offer equitable praise to encourage their pupils, rather than fostering a comparative environment or feelings of inadequacy among students. This was also consistent with a study that was carried out in Saudi Arabia by Alrabai (2014), which confirmed that it is essential for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers to demonstrate an adequate and positive learning atmosphere to care about the motivation of their students.

Peer Seeking. In peer seeking, students in this context have a significant desire to seek out their peers who may be struggling to comprehend the material or manage their anxiety (Kondo, 2004). Peer collaboration not only aids in revising tasks, checking answers, and reducing anxiety but also enhances task completion and overall confidence levels. This collaborative approach not only fosters a sense of community and support but also allows for the exchange of ideas, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of tasks and increased self-assurance. For example, Student 1 stated, “I always rely on my peers for the revision of tasks and writing, so I feel confident.” Student 2 added, “I share my answers with my peers, so I can check and correct them if necessary.” Similarly, Student 4 mentioned, “I like to share my essay tasks with my colleague; I feel calmer and more confident.” Student 5 explained, “I feel anxious when I do my tasks individually compared to peer sharing; I feel more confident.” Student 6 shared, “My peer helps me by sharing thoughts in a writing task, and we can also exchange ideas.” Finally, Student 7 expressed, “I feel motivated and active when I am with a peer in the classroom.”

The anxiety associated with writing assignments, particularly under time constraints, significantly impacts students' performance. As reported by interviewees, sharing assignments with colleagues helps students feel calmer, more motivated, and actively checking tasks and reducing anxiety, emphasizing the positive impact of peer interactions on academic performance. While peer support is beneficial, it is essential to recognize that some students may still struggle with anxiety despite collaborative efforts, indicating a need for tailored interventions to address individual needs. For example, Student 3 stated, “Sharing my assignment with my colleague helps me double-check my task and reduce my anxiety about failure.”

Coping Strategies Suggested by Teachers. In response to the fourth research question, “What strategies are used by EFL teachers to reduce their students’ writing anxiety?”, four teachers shared a range of strategies aimed at reducing anxiety in English writing classrooms.

Enough Time in Writing Tasks and Exams. One of the essential strategies that is provided by teachers is enough time for writing tasks and exams. The importance of providing students with enough time during writing tasks and exams to alleviate anxiety is highlighted in the data provided. One of the key strategies identified in the data is the provision of adequate time for writing tasks and exams. Both teacher and student participants emphasized the importance of sufficient time allocation as a means to reduce anxiety and enhance performance. Teacher interviews consistently highlighted that time constraints negatively impact students' ability to express themselves effectively during assessments. For example:

“I feel anxious when I set a timed-essay task, as I see my students give up writing and leave the task empty. I think a timed essay must be for advanced learners, not undergraduates. Also, teacher should help his students in writing by Hook or Crook, I mean by any possible means”. (Teacher Faisal)

“I think students should be given enough time to write during written exams, as long as the students don’t feel stressed by time, they will achieve the tasks properly” (Teacher Sami).

From the students' perspective, many participants reported that limited exam time heightened their anxiety and hindered their performance. They advocated for extended time as a means to better articulate their thoughts and reduce stress. This theme

was also supported by Teacher Omar, who noted: “Most of my students’ struggle is time in exams. If we provide extra time, they would not be anxious during exams, whether written or verbal exams”.

These responses suggest that, from the perspectives of both teachers and students, allowing more time for writing tasks and exams is perceived as a practical strategy to reduce classroom anxiety. While these insights are based on participants’ subjective experiences, they point toward a shared belief in the value of time as a mitigating factor in academic stress.

Motivations and Compliments. Motivations and compliments are essential strategies suggested by teachers and students as well. Motivation and compliments play a crucial role in reducing anxiety and enhancing student performance in writing tasks and speaking, as highlighted by the perspectives of teachers and students. Teachers emphasize the importance of motivating students through positive reinforcement and compliments, avoiding public corrections, encouraging evaluations, and maximizing both their motivation and positive reinforcement. Conversely, students express the impact of the motivation of their teachers on their emotions and performance in writing, with praise sometimes causing anxiety and disappointment, emphasizing the need for encouragement and fair treatment through compliments. This strategy is widely recognized at Saudi University, with participants from different departments acknowledging its effectiveness in supporting students during assessments. By fostering motivation and offering genuine compliments, educators can create a positive learning environment that boosts students’ confidence and performance while reducing anxiety. For example, Teacher Faisal emphasized the importance of continuous encouragement, stating,

“All of you deserve to succeed, and this responsibility is straightforward. Strive to consistently keep them motivated and compliment students always, maximizing both their motivation and positive reinforcement”.

Similarly, Teacher Rami highlighted the need for positive communication, explaining, “Having a strong sense of motivation and compliments is crucial. Avoid correcting students in front of their classmates and keep complimenting them”.

Finally, Teacher Sami added: “Motivation and compliments are extremely important in the classroom, especially after written exams and evaluations” .

Teacher Effective Communication. Teachers' effective communication in the classroom is crucial for successful learning outcomes and is considered a great strategy that is suggested by teachers and students as well. While teacher-student communication is essential, certain methods like constant translation, formality, and speaking loudly are considered ineffective by participants. Direct translations of the teacher's language can lead to anxiety and confusion among students, hindering the learning process. Informal and English-based communication is preferred by students, as it fosters motivation and engagement in the classroom. Foreign teachers who maintain a strict and formal communication style may demotivate students, particularly in subjects like writing. Therefore, promoting English language use and avoiding literal translations can enhance student motivation and overall learning experience. As Teacher Faisal explained, effective communication in English without literal translation helps students feel more comfortable and engaged:

“Communicate with them using the English language. Ensure that the entire classroom setting is conducted in the English language. Avoid translating

directly from your language, as precise translations might generate anxiety and confusion for the recipient. Avoid using literal translation”.

Group Work as a Strategy to Reduce Writing Anxiety. Group work in the classroom, as highlighted by participating teachers, is considered an effective strategy for reducing students’ writing anxiety. Teachers believe that engaging in collaborative tasks encourages students to participate actively, communicate more confidently, and enhance their academic development. According to teacher Sami, incorporating group activities at least twice a week enhances student engagement and motivation. Teacher Hatem also noted that working in groups enhances important skills such as problem-solving, negotiation, and conflict resolution, which contribute to reducing anxiety. Teachers collectively emphasized the importance of collaboration and group work in fostering student engagement and reducing writing anxiety. Teacher Rami also mentioned that collaboration allows students to exchange different perspectives, which contributes to a supportive learning environment.

“I think I've seen that encouraging students to collaborate in class, such as in groups A, B, and C, will motivate them and undoubtedly reduce their anxiety during written assignments.” (Teacher Sami).

“Group work is a helpful strategy in the classroom; it encourages students to participate and communicate in both written and oral activities effectively.” (Teacher Omar).

“Group work assists students in cultivating skills highly sought, including problem-solving, negotiation, and conflict resolution.” (Teacher Hatem).

“Teamwork and collaboration are the best strategies that contribute to developing students in terms of exchanging thoughts and perspectives and help reduce anxiety, as I have noticed with my students.” (Teacher Rami).

Teachers in the study unanimously highlighted group work as an effective strategy to reduce writing anxiety and promote student engagement. Teacher Sami noted that dividing students into groups A, B, and C could motivate learners and “undoubtedly reduce their level of anxiety in written tasks,” suggesting that structured peer collaboration creates a supportive environment. Similarly, Teacher Omar emphasized that group work encourages participation and communication in both written and oral activities, reflecting its dual benefit for language development.

Teacher Hatem extended this perspective by underscoring how group work helps students develop critical interpersonal skills such as problem-solving, negotiation, and conflict resolution. This aligns with research emphasizing collaborative learning to build both linguistic and social competencies (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Finally, Teacher Rami observed that teamwork facilitates the exchange of ideas and perspectives, which not only enhances learning but also alleviates anxiety, an important affective benefit echoed in the literature on learner affect and group dynamics (Oxford, 1992). Collectively, these insights highlight that collaborative approaches are viewed by teachers as both pedagogically valuable and emotionally supportive, offering promising avenues to address writing anxiety among Saudi EFL students. Despite the strong endorsement from teachers, some students expressed mixed feelings toward group work. While several students felt supported and more confident when working with peers, others reported discomfort, preferring to complete tasks individually. These varying responses suggest that although group work can be beneficial in reducing

anxiety, its effectiveness may depend on individual learning styles and levels of social comfort.

The studies established that students have varying preferences and levels of comfort with group work. While some students valued the chance to share ideas with peers, others, especially those who were more introverted or apprehensive, felt uneasy with working in groups. This implies that adaptability in group design, such as specific role allocation and the potential for volunteer involvement, can assist with catering to different student needs.

The data indicated that students who experienced supportive and interactive classroom environments, such as through collaborative group work or individualized attention, reported higher levels of self-confidence and reduced anxiety. These findings suggest a positive correlation between the nature of classroom interactions and students' emotional and academic outcomes.

Compassion and Empathy. Compassion and empathy play a crucial role in teaching and learning, as highlighted by various teachers and students. Teachers who show compassion and empathy towards their students create a supportive environment where students feel understood, valued, and motivated. By considering students' circumstances, mistakes, and concerns with empathy, teachers can help reduce anxiety, develop emotional intelligence, and enhance student engagement in the learning process. Encouraging open communication, active listening, and understanding in the classroom fosters a sense of relaxation and comfort among students, ultimately leading to improved academic performance and overall well-being. The personal experiences shared by teachers and students underscore the transformative power of compassion and

empathy in education, emphasizing the importance of creating a humane and supportive educational environment. The use of this strategy reveals an intense bond between pupils and instructors, as well as the creation of a welcoming and compassionate atmosphere, which reduces the level of anxiety that students experience when working on writing projects and learning in general. Teachers emphasized that showing empathy and sharing personal experiences helps students feel comfortable and supported.

“My students like when I inform them about my experiences during my study and life in general; they get attracted, start asking me, and become involved in lessons effectively.” (Teacher Faisal).

“I consider the students’ circumstances and show compassion and empathy toward their mistakes, which helps them reduce anxiety and develop emotional awareness.” (Teacher Rami).

“Showing empathy and consideration to our students in the classroom, such as listening fully to students’ excuses and overlooking their minor errors, helps them feel relaxed and less anxious in the classroom.” (Teacher Omar).

This approach was further reinforced by Teacher Hatem, who explained that showing understanding and compassion during individual meetings helps students feel more relaxed and less anxious:

“During my office hours, I let students talk about their concerns and lessons they can’t comprehend, and I tell them it’s normal. When I used to be a student, I had the same concerns, and I tell them I am compassionate about whatever circumstances they have. They feel relieved and relaxed” (Teacher Hatem).

Correcting Students' Errors. The teachers should guide the students to minimize their writing errors. Through positive reinforcement, writing anxiety can be lowered, and gradual improvement in learners' writing can be ensured. Correcting students' errors in writing should be approached positively and productively, as highlighted by the teachers' strategies in providing feedback and encouragement, framing mistakes as part of the learning process and offering multiple chances to improve helps students feel supported, encouraged, and confident in their abilities, ultimately reducing anxiety and promoting learning.

Two teachers emphasized the importance of creating a supportive classroom environment to view mistakes as part of the learning process. For example:

“I informed my students that any mistakes in writing that student commits mean that he is learning, and a chance will be given several times to students who try. They feel encouraged and confident in the next tasks.” (Teacher Faisal).

Similarly, Teacher Omar further emphasized the importance of giving students repeated opportunities to learn from mistakes and reduce their exam-related anxiety:

“One of the best strategies that reduces my students' concerns in exams is that I inform them that there are plenty of tasks that would help them learn from mistakes and increase their marks in writing. I can see them not anxious afterwards”. (Teacher Omar)

Positive feedback and reassurance from teachers, as also noted by student 8, play a crucial role in influencing students' progress, fostering a sense of calmness, satisfaction, and motivation to learn from their mistakes. This constructive strategy for

error correction not only enhances students' writing skills but also boosts their overall learning experience and self-esteem. According to Huang et al. (2024), College students can boost their self-efficacy by developing writing methods, breaking down writing tasks into portions, and increasing their writing skills. Teachers can also help students overcome anxiety by using proper instructional methods, writing tactics, and interventions, as well as encouraging attitudes and providing positive feedback, as reflected in the following statements by teachers:

“I avoid mistakes made by students and provide oral encouragement and positive feedback; most of them feel confident and calm frequently.” (Teacher Omar).

“I told my students never to feel anxious about mistakes; I will always be on your side, and I will provide different materials that help you learn and succeed.” (Teacher Hatem).

This strategy emphasised the need for positivity and encouragement for pupils to reduce their anxiety levels when writing in a foreign language. Several solutions proposed by participants were found to help alleviate students's anxiety, for example, Teacher Hatem asserted that reading short stories at the basic level could enhance our pupils' writing skills and facilitate their comprehension of good English. Teacher Faisal emphasised the significance of extracurricular endeavours, such as the English club, which is not evaluated by the college, as it fosters student confidence and dedication. Teacher Omar proposed that the materials should be diverse, including audio-visual elements, as they could facilitate students' comprehension of the course and alleviate cognitive discomfort. These strategies may alleviate anxiety in the classroom and foster a positive atmosphere.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the quantitative and qualitative data results for each study topic. It began with the level of EFL among undergraduate students majoring in English at Saudi University in Saudi Arabia, using FLCAS and SLWAI questionnaires. The interviews with both teachers and students in this study provided support for most of the quantitative results of the FLCAS and SLWAI Questionnaire variables. Analysis of the qualitative data revealed the findings of semi-structured interviews with students and teachers on the topic of students' writing anxiety. Also, it explored the factors that led to anxiety in English writing among these students, as well as suggested strategies that could be employed by EFL undergraduate students and teachers to alleviate writing anxiety. The process was initiated with the analysis of questionnaire results and afterwards supplemented with interview data that confirmed and elaborated on those findings. The subsequent section will analyse and discuss these findings alongside previous research, providing a deeper comprehension of the origins of writing anxiety and possible strategies for mitigating it.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion of the Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the study's findings about the five research questions. The discussion integrates both quantitative and qualitative data, drawing from the FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986), the SLWAI (Cheng, 2004), and semi-structured interviews with students and teachers. The goal is to interpret the data within the context of existing literature and the sociocultural theoretical framework underpinning this study.

The chapter is structured around each of the five research questions to ensure clarity and logical progression. For each question, the key findings are summarized, compared with relevant studies reviewed in Chapter 2, and linked to the theoretical concepts also discussed in Chapter 2. This structure allows for a systematic interpretation of how EFL undergraduate students in a Saudi university experience and cope with writing anxiety, and how teachers support them in this process.

Discussion of the Findings

The section discusses the findings about the research question. A detailed discussion of the overall findings is conducted under the following four main categories, which reflect the ideas indicated in the research questions: levels of anxiety and

specifically writing anxiety, the contributing factors behind high levels of writing anxiety, and the participants' perceptions about the coping strategies used in anxiety reduction.

Discussion on Findings of Research Question 1: Levels of Anxiety

The quantitative methodology was employed to investigate the first Research Question: 'To what extent do EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University experience anxiety in English writing classrooms?' The quantitative data gathered using the FLCAS revealed that students experience moderate levels of foreign language anxiety (mean = 2.51). Among the three subcomponents of FLA, fear of negative evaluation was the most pronounced (mean = 2.56), followed by communication apprehension (mean = 2.52), while test anxiety was comparatively lower but still within the moderate range.

These findings align with Horwitz et al. (1986), who developed a self-report instrument aiming to gauge language learners' anxiety specifically in response to learning a foreign language within an educational setting. This instrument was adjusted and refined to align the posed inquiries and assertions with the environment of a rudimentary English course. The FLCAS tool serves the purpose of determining the extent of anxiety experienced by individuals when engaging in foreign language learning (Horwitz et al., 1986). Taken as a whole, these results highlight the critical need to include methods to alleviate anxiety in EFL lessons and instruction in Saudi Arabia. We may greatly improve the foreign language learning process and results for Saudi EFL students by tackling FLA, especially the anxiety of negative evaluation. The

following section analyses students' personal experiences with FLA as revealed in interviews to elucidate its impact.

Students' FLA Experiences. The findings showed that undergraduate students at Saudi University who are majoring in EFL report a moderate level of FLA (mean = 2.51). The results of the current research are consistent with findings from other EFL examples where the FLCAS has been employed. In Hulaifah and Sibuea's (2023) research, university students studying EFL in Indonesia reported moderate levels of anxiety, whereas Óafranj and Zivlak (2019) found that Serbian EFL learners had moderate levels of anxiety related to foreign languages. The findings of the present study align with several studies conducted in Saudi Arabia by Alsalooli and Al-Tale (2022), Bensalem (2018), Faqihi (2024), and Tanielian (2017), which identified moderate anxiety among undergraduate university students.

Fear of Negative Evaluation. Considering FLACS findings, it seems that students' fear of evaluation regarding their language skills is the main cause of FLA. This indicates that Saudi students tend to worry more about how their classmates view and assess them in class. The result is corroborated by James (2020), whose research on English language anxiety among Malaysian students delves into second language anxiety and the promotion of coping mechanisms. In his investigation, fear of negative evaluation emerged as the most prominent factor, attributed to cultural nuances. Particularly in Asian societies, such as the Arabic tradition, the concept of "face" holds considerable significance, fostering an aversion to criticism as it may tarnish one's reputation and honour. Consequently, when students, notably those from Saudi Arabia, encounter adverse evaluations, it could potentially impact their self-worth. This observation is pertinent to the current study context, given Saudi Arabia's classification

as an Asian nation. For this item, the mean score was 2.80. That means that the Saudi students were afraid of receiving a negative evaluation from their classmates and their teachers. They felt fearful to volunteer to answer questions in class and preferred to remain silent.

These findings are also in line with the findings of Gatcho and Hajan (2019) and Hidayati (2018) that the students fear receiving “negative feedback” from their teachers and classmates, i.e., “feeling afraid” of “making mistakes” and poor outcomes. Cui et al. (2024) showed that students with moderate and high writing anxiety levels tend to avoid writing tasks due to the fear of being evaluated negatively or worrying about the distress caused by their poor writing performance, which results in lower odds of using affective strategies. Alsalooli and Al-Tale (2022) highlighted that most Saudi students exhibited moderate levels of anxiety in acquiring a new language, largely stemming from apprehension over negative evaluations. Alshehri (2024) found that a total of 71 % of the teachers agree that the students face anxiety while taking writing tests/exams. Likewise, Faqihi (2024), employing a mixed-methods approach, revealed that Saudi EFL college learners grappled with moderate anxiety levels during foreign language speaking tasks, often due to inadequate preparation, limited vocabulary, and the fear of negative evaluation. The qualitative findings endorse the results, as illustrated by an instance provided by a participant (Student 8), who expressed experiencing apprehension due to receiving low marks in an assessment and facing criticism from peers. Alaqeel and Altalhab (2024) examined Saudi students’ levels of English-speaking anxiety and found that learners experienced anxiety when required to speak in front of their peers who were evaluating them and who might form a negative view of them due to their poor performance.

Moreover, this study's findings that negative evaluation anxiety is the most common barrier to learning a foreign language provide credibility to other studies that have stressed the significance of social and evaluation variables. The greater degree of apprehension over negative evaluations indicates that students are highly worried about how others view and evaluate their language proficiency and, therefore, might impede their drive to engage in communication and class participation. This discovery fits into Horwitz et al.'s (1986) understanding of foreign language anxiety as a unique combination of self-perceptions, attitudes, and actions associated with learning a language in a classroom setting. The apprehensions over peer judgment and instructor assessment correlate with the discoveries presented by Rohmah and Muslim (2021) and Kusumaning Putri et al. (2018). In the Saudi setting, since apprehension about negative evaluation is frequently increased by cultural considerations, strategies need to emphasize the establishment of a friendly classroom atmosphere that fosters a willingness to take risks in composition. The following section examines another crucial aspect of FLA: communication apprehension, which notably influences students' writing confidence and engagement.

Communication Apprehension. From the FLACS survey, CA received the second-highest rating in this study with a mean score of 2.52. The students reported being unconfident, confused, and nervous when speaking in class. In other words, the results suggest that students could be reluctant to speak English for fear of being poorly evaluated or making mistakes themselves. This aligns with the discoveries made by James (2020), who observed that CA was the second most highly rated aspect in his study. A large proportion of the respondents experienced elevated levels of anxiety in their English language lessons, often feeling uncertain or perplexed during English

conversations. Daud et al. (2020) underscore the significance of CA as the primary manifestation of anxiety. The anxious feeling of interacting with and speaking in a foreign language is referred to as fear of communication, and it has been recognized as a key source of anxiety in numerous studies of research that have been conducted on EFL (e.g., Alsalooli & Al-Tale, 2022; Afdalia et al., 2023).

This CA result is consistent with Alaqeel and Altalhab (2024), who concluded that CA is a significant factor affecting Saudi students' willingness to participate in English-speaking classes. The present study's findings, which identify CA as one of the main causes of anxiety, are also in line with the research carried out by Jamshed et al. (2016), whose findings indicated that respondents experienced moderate anxiety levels and identified many sources of anxiety among Saudi EFL learners. It is a reasonable deduction that the presence of uncertainty in academic settings often results in a myriad of negative emotions experienced by students, including but not limited to feelings of inadequacy, lack of clarity, and fear. These emotions tend to manifest particularly when students find themselves in situations necessitating social interaction with peers and the teacher, leading to a sense of unease and apprehension in such individuals (James, 2020).

Furthermore, the participants exhibit a significant level of self-awareness when engaging in spoken English interactions with their peers, a behaviour attributed to feelings of shyness, fear, and the apprehension of potential criticism regarding their perceived lack of proficiency in the English language. This phenomenon was detailed in Table 10 within the confines of Chapter 4 on page 151, where the data showcased the prevalence of heightened anxiety in response to the notion that students may experience unease in situations where they are unable to comprehend every utterance articulated by their language instructor. Shah (2022) investigated the fear of

incompetence and reported that students experienced language anxiety due to fear of making mistakes when speaking English and concerns about forgetting previously learned material. These factors contributed significantly to their overall anxiety. Speaking without preparation could also lead to communication apprehension. In the present study, as reflected in the questionnaire and interview responses, the students felt panicked, scared, and uncomfortable when they were required to speak spontaneously. This is in line with the findings of Faqihi (2024) on English classroom anxiety, who reported that Saudi EFL college students experienced feelings of apprehensiveness when asked to speak spontaneously during English class, due to a lack of preparation, vocabulary knowledge, forced participation, and teacher-related factors. The findings from the interview did mirror this claim (e.g., Student 3, Student 4, Student 8, see Chapter 4).

It was difficult to draw definitive conclusions regarding conversational anxiety in interactions with native speakers. This uncertainty stems from the observation that a significant number of participants reported experiencing conversational anxiety in such interactions. For instance, the students reported feeling confident and comfortable when communicating in a second language with native speakers (see Chapter 4, Table 12). Furthermore, certain interviewees expressed feelings of assurance when conversing with natives as they believed that the native speakers would recognize the students' non-native status and would make efforts to accommodate their language proficiency levels (James, 2020).

Test Anxiety. Test anxiety ranked as the third most significant factor contributing to English language anxiety in students, as indicated by participants who expressed apprehension about failing the course and feeling anxious during quizzes or

examinations, citing that such nervousness could negatively impact their performance. Test anxiety, characterized by the apprehension of failure or performing inadequately in language tests, has been identified as a prevalent form of foreign language anxiety (Marzec-Stawiarska, 2015; Hu et al., 2021). This is aligned with Gawi's (2020) findings that it is common for Saudi learners to feel worried about failing their tests and exams, as their participants believed their success is measured based on grades and scores. Rezaei and Jafari (2014) found that even students with strong writing skills frequently experience anxiety when it comes to writing tests. Although some academics believe that some level of anxiety is important to complete tasks, the findings of this study show that a high level of anxiety is a debilitating element, preventing pupils from achieving the desired outcome, thus agreeing with the main conclusion drawn in Gkonou et al.'s (2017) that language learner anxiety is primarily negative and detrimental to students' performance and achievement.

In their study, Dewaele et al. (2023) employed advanced statistical modelling techniques to establish how foreign language classroom anxiety had the most significant negative effect on English test performance compared to other emotional components. Özer and Akçayoğlu (2021) discovered that an increase in anxiety levels due to FLA has a detrimental effect on the academic achievement of students. These investigations highlight the significance of managing even the lowest levels of anxiety, as we discovered in our group, to reduce possible adverse impacts on academic performance.

Based on the interview results, some participants reported feelings of extreme anxiety during quizzes and unexpected tasks. For instance, one student remarked that "Quizzes and sudden tasks made me extremely anxious" (Student 1), while another shared, "I hate sudden quizzes; I feel creepy and anxious" (Student 2). These personal

accounts correspond with the survey findings, which revealed that students often fear making mistakes during exams and worry about how teachers correct these errors. Al-Tamimi (2016) explains that learners experience exam anxiety, particularly when they forget information or commit errors, which increases their self-consciousness. Moreover, Al-Tamimi highlights that the way teachers address, and correct mistakes can significantly influence the level of students' exam-related anxiety.

Discussion on Findings of Research Question 2: Levels of Writing Anxiety

The quantitative methodology was also employed to investigate the second Research Question: *To what extent do EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University experience anxiety in English writing classrooms?* The findings indicate that writing anxiety exists among the participants at varying levels. The overall mean score was 2.53, which falls within the moderate anxiety range. However, a closer examination shows variability among the subcategories. The mean score for cognitive anxiety was 2.545 (moderate), for avoidance behaviour 2.549 (moderate), and for somatic anxiety 2.497, which falls into the low anxiety range. These results highlight that somatic symptoms of anxiety are slightly less prevalent among participants compared to cognitive and avoidance dimensions.

Based on the results from the SLWAI, the quantitative results of this research indicate that Saudi undergraduate students studying EFL experienced moderate levels of anxiety when it comes to writing in English. The results showed that there are categories of writing anxiety and the causes of writing anxiety. This proves that the participants, especially those who study English in a Saudi teaching and learning field, often face somatic, cognitive, and avoidance behaviour anxiety. This finding was like

prior studies conducted in EFL contexts among undergraduate language learners, which revealed moderate levels of English writing apprehension in their participants (Afdalia et al., 2023; Elif & Demet, 2019; Mukhaiyar & Wahyuni, 2018; Prasetyaningrum et al., 2021; Ugalingan, 2021). Consistent with the present general results of moderate anxiety levels, Masriani et al. (2018), third-year students at Universitas Negeri Padang experienced moderate levels of writing anxiety, with cognitive anxiety being the most prevalent. Many of the very anxious students reported experiencing physical anxiety. Furthermore, moderate and low-anxiety students exhibited cognitive anxiety. A study conducted by Elif and Demet (2019) indicated that Turkish EFL students experienced moderate to severe levels of writing anxiety, which is somewhat greater than what we discovered. The gap may indicate differences in educational environments. In comparison, Canada and Miralles (2022) found that the level of writing anxiety is moderate in cognitive and somatic anxiety and avoidance behaviour.

The current study contributes to addressing the limited research on writing anxiety among male EFL university students in Saudi Arabia, particularly those in their first and second years. The findings reveal that students experience moderate to high levels of writing anxiety, with a notable emphasis on avoidance behaviour, such as reluctance to engage in timed writing tasks or fear of participating in classroom writing exercises. The anxiety levels observed in this study, which ranged from low to moderate, align with the findings of Alzahrani and Alshaikhi (2023), who reported similar anxiety levels among Turkish and Saudi EFL students. The consistency of these results across different cultural contexts suggests that writing anxiety is a widespread issue in EFL education that transcends national boundaries. The variation observed may be attributed to variances in the demographics of the study participants, the

methodologies employed, or the unique circumstances of the institutions involved. A key strength of this study is its focus on first- and second-year undergraduate students at Saudi University, providing a meaningful understanding of writing anxiety during the initial stages of EFL academic development.

While previous studies, such as Alzahrani and Alshaikhi (2023) and Alharbi (2019), also reported elevated writing anxiety, they primarily emphasized cognitive aspects like fear of criticism or difficulty organizing ideas. In contrast, this study identifies avoidance behaviour as a more prominent pattern among participants. This suggests that, in this context, students are not only mentally anxious about writing but are also withdrawing from writing tasks altogether. These results align with Al-Khresheh and Ben Ali (2023), who identified fear of negative evaluation as a significant factor contributing to writing anxiety. In the present study, this fear is similarly reflected in students' hesitation to write and concerns about being judged by peers or instructors.

Also, the findings show that although most students expressed interest in writing in English, they also expressed low confidence and apprehension about grammatical correctness, vocabulary, and organization. These apprehensions appear to escalate in situations of high stakes, such as examinations or unexpected quizzes, as depicted in both interview and survey feedback. The results gathered emphasize that greater emphasis must be given to support approaches within the classroom, particularly those that address avoidance behaviour and build confidence in early-stage learners. Results such as these must also be interpreted within the broader framework of neoliberalism within higher education, where learning environments become increasingly shaped by competition, performance measures, and accountability (Giroux, 2014; Olssen & Peters, 2005). In such contexts, students are often evaluated primarily on measurable outputs,

such as grades and exam results, rather than holistic learning or personal development (Ball, 2012). This performance-driven culture can intensify writing anxiety, especially in high-stakes subjects like EFL writing, where linguistic and academic competencies are simultaneously evaluated (Han & Xu, 2019; Horwitz, 2001).

As emphasized by Kohn (2011), excessive focus on performance outcomes can undermine student motivation and self-confidence, leading to increased stress and avoidance behaviours. Addressing these structural pressures is essential for creating learning environments that support both academic achievement and emotional well-being. The prevalence of cognitive anxiety and fear of negative evaluation observed in this study may therefore be a reflection not only of individual skill gaps but also of systemic educational pressures that reward achievement over effort and foster fear of failure as a byproduct of constant comparison and academic ranking.

Avoidance Behaviour. The findings demonstrate that the most prominent type of writing anxiety was avoidance behaviour. Participants frequently reported attempts to delay or evade writing tasks, often seeking excuses to avoid engaging in writing altogether. This behavioural response reflects a significant barrier to academic performance, as students' reluctance to write can lead to lower-quality work and reduced motivation. Interview data further illustrate that this avoidance is often exacerbated during exam periods, when heavy module loads and limited preparation time heighten feelings of anxiety and distraction. For example, one student described feeling overwhelmed by multiple modules, leading to increased reluctance to complete writing assignments. Such patterns suggest that avoidance behaviour may serve as a coping mechanism in response to academic pressures.

These findings are in line with previous work by Prasetyaningrum et al. (2021) and Rasool et al. (2023), who indicated that avoidance is one of the common symptoms of writing anxiety among EFL learners and is likely to be accompanied by negative attitudes towards writing and feelings of inferiority. Nevertheless, contrary to some previous cross-cultural research (e.g., Hartono & Maharani, 2020), which outlined avoidance behaviour as the dominant one, the current study suggests a more balanced prevalence of anxiety types in the Saudi context, possibly because cultural and educational factors foster persistence and prohibit task avoidance. Furthermore, the broader educational climate, including the neoliberal focus on intellectual productivity and performance, could be the source of the students' anxiety and avoidance. The pressure to excel in an array of courses may cause students to perceive writing as a task to avoid or fear, rather than as an educational activity.

These findings further reveal how students' avoidance behaviours are not merely individual reactions but can be understood as shaped by systemic academic pressures. The institutional emphasis on measurable outcomes and performance metrics may shape students' perceptions of writing as a task driven by external expectations rather than personal development. This pressure, especially during exam periods, often contributes to increased stress and disengagement. As discussed earlier, avoidance behaviour should not be viewed solely as a lack of motivation, but also as a potential coping mechanism within an environment that prioritizes productivity over deep learning. This interpretation invites a rethinking of writing pedagogy and support structures in EFL contexts, emphasizing the need to create space for risk-taking, reflection, and student-centred support.

Cognitive Anxiety. Cognitive anxiety was the second most common style of writing anxiety found in this study. They claimed to have persistent worries about their capacity to write, concerns with criticism, and persistent negative thinking whenever they were asked to write. This internal psychological component of anxiety explains worries about language capacity and academic taste. This result is reinforced by the findings of other research in other contexts (Afdalia et al., 2023; Kusumaningputri et al., 2018), affirming that cognitive anxiety is a ubiquitous and substantial dimension of writing anxiety among EFL learners. The current data demonstrate the importance of addressing students' emotional and psychological challenges, as cognitive anxiety can severely impair writing performance.

It is surprising to note the level of avoidance behaviour rates as well as the presence of middle anxiety levels, as in the present study. Wahyuni et al. (2019) reported that Indonesian EFL learners experienced middle levels of anxiety in terms of writing. This is in accordance with their research, in which cognitive anxiety was the focal point of priority, and supports the findings of this research. Interestingly, while cognitive anxiety has consistently been named the most prevalent form of anxiety globally (e.g., Cheng, 2004), avoidance behaviour was found to be slightly more frequent in the present study, which implies possible contextual differences. In Saudi Arabia, the education system's focus on rote memory and fewer opportunities for creative writing may especially condition the display of anxiety. The presence of moderate cognitive anxiety with avoidance behaviour means that interventions will have to target both students' psychological fears and their behaviour. Positive feedback techniques, positive classroom climates, and gradual exposure to writing tasks have the potential to reduce cognitive anxiety and promote engagement.

Somatic Anxiety. Somatic anxiety emerged as the third most significant factor contributing to English writing anxiety among students, with participants indicating feelings of heightened heart rate, rigidity, and tension during English writing tasks. These feelings described by the students align with Kusumaningputri et al.'s (2018) explanation of somatic anxiety, which involves autonomic arousal and physical manifestations such as nervousness, sweating, trembling, increased heart rate, headaches, and rapid breathing. This concept is further supported by Alfiansyah et al.'s (2017) research, which revealed that most students experienced feelings of discomfort and intense apprehension when tasked with writing.

Consequently, when required to engage in writing activities, this physiological anxiety quickly escalates into a state of agitation and distress (Hartono & Maharani, 2020). The interviewees also reported that the creepiness and anxiety that students feel when writing is significantly impacted by strict instructions, sudden quizzes, and timed essays (Student 1, Student 2, Student 6 & Student 7). Research indicates that these factors can exacerbate feelings of creepiness and anxiety, leading to a detrimental impact on students' writing performance (Alzahrani & Alshaikhi, 2023). Clear instructions on restructuring techniques and positive thinking could be advantageous in writing lessons. One student (ST5) stated, "My teacher advised me to maintain a positive attitude throughout the learning process," indicating that educators are currently supporting this approach.

In research conducted by Rudiyanto (2017), evidence was presented demonstrating that Indonesian learners of English as a Foreign Language exhibited moderate levels of somatic anxiety. The primary factor attributed to this phenomenon was identified as an insufficiency in the amount of writing practice undertaken. Our

present dataset suggests the presence of moderate levels of somatic anxiety, albeit being a relatively prominent category within this study's findings. In their study, Genç and Yaylı (2019) observed that Afghan students of English as a Foreign Language in Turkey encountered varying degrees of anxiety, ranging from high to moderate, particularly during the act of writing in their non-native language, with test conditions serving as the primary trigger for anxiety. Research findings regarding moderate anxiety levels appear to align to some extent with previous research outcomes.

Discussion on Findings of Research Question 3: Contributing Factors

This section discusses the factors associated with writing anxiety among EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University based on the semi-structured interviews conducted in this study. Semi-structured interviews were used to answer the third question, *What factors are associated with the writing anxiety of EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University?* The participants frequently cited time limits and fear of negative evaluation as the most significant sources of their writing anxiety. These findings align with Wern and Rahmat (2021), who identified limited time and fear of negative feedback as major contributors to writing anxiety in EFL students. One participant expressed, "Well, I think writing anxiety might happen when you're writing and thinking about the final grade and assessment, this will get me nervous" (Student 1), illustrating the impact of evaluative pressure.

Time constraints, especially during exams, were emphasized as exacerbating anxiety. This echoes Nugraheni's (2023) findings, which highlight that insufficient time and pressure during assessments increase anxiety levels. Similarly, students in this

study reported that “written exam time puts me in stressful situations, and I become anxious” (Student 6), reinforcing the crucial role of time management stressors.

Cognitive factors, such as lack of preparation and limited understanding of writing tasks, were also prominent contributors. These align with research by Wahyuni and Umam (2017) and Sabti et al. (2019), who emphasize that limited language proficiency and insufficient practice fuel writing anxiety. Additionally, the classroom environment and teamwork dynamics were noted as influential, suggesting that social and contextual factors contribute alongside cognitive challenges. Encouragingly, low-anxiety students reported that positive teacher feedback and supportive classroom strategies helped boost their confidence, consistent with Qashoa (2014) and Ubaid et al. (2023), who stress the importance of affective teacher strategies in reducing anxiety.

Overall, the findings suggest that writing anxiety among Saudi EFL students is multifaceted, involving cognitive, affective, and contextual factors. The predominance of situational (state) anxiety reflects the influence of external pressures, such as exam constraints and evaluative environments, rather than stable personal traits. This complex interplay supports the call for holistic interventions addressing both emotional support and skill development to alleviate writing anxiety.

Discussion on Findings of Research Question 4: Student Coping Strategies

After the in-depth analysis of the possible causes of students’ writing anxiety, the coping and alleviating strategies were explored by engaging students in semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used to answer the fourth question, *What strategies do EFL undergraduate students use to reduce their English writing anxiety?* although numerous research studies have proposed strategies (Alamri

et al., 2021), the strategies investigated in my research are distinct as they reflect the participants' own life experiences and opinions on this issue.

In terms of affective coping strategies, the study's results from the semi-structured interviews with students revealed several strategies used by the interviewees to cope with writing anxiety, which were categorized as: positive thinking, relaxation techniques, working in groups, preparation, motivation, and peer seeking. The results of my research indicate that Saudi University's EFL undergraduate students implement several strategies to mitigate and alleviate their English writing anxiety. Students reported that positive thinking is a particularly effective strategy for managing cognitive anxiety, as it helps them visualize success and find delight in stressful circumstances. This is especially notable. For example, one student (Student 1) stated, "I think of my family's adventures, trips, and the positive memories I have spent with them to reduce my anxiety in exams. Afterward, I feel thrilled." Another student (Student 4) mentioned that "Especially when I become anxious throughout speaking and writing, I think of my educator's smile, and I feel relaxed." These statements are consistent with Kondo and Ying-Ling's (2004) categorization of anxiety reduction strategies and underscore the significance of cognitive rethinking for handling writing anxiety.

Additionally, students working in groups to generate ideas and edit papers with their peers is one of the most utilized strategies among all participants to cope with the writing anxiety (Cheng, 2004). The advantages of collaborative writing and supportive peers were frequently mentioned by students, which may be indicative of the cultural principles involving collaboration and solidarity that are prevalent in Saudi Arabian society. For instance, students have reported feeling more assured when collaborating, as expressed in statements like, "I feel confident when I work with a group" and

“Working in groups is shared responsibility and that helps reduce anxiety” (Student 1 & Student 3). Meanwhile, it has been revealed that learners feel more comfortable when they receive both form and content-focused feedback, as group dynamics allow for the exchange of ideas and constructive feedback, which can enhance individual writing skills and promote a sense of community among peers, as reported by Student 7. This means that the students can also use cooperative learning, in which they can elaborate with others freely and comfortably. This finding is somewhat like Jawas (2019), who confirms that collaborative work is good for idea development. This is also aligned with Kassem (2017), who argued that working in groups is recommended to reduce students’ anxiety, and students should be provided with the evaluation criteria upon which their writings will be evaluated.

Participants additionally frequently talk about relaxation techniques as a method of alleviating physical signs of anxiety. In addition, the participants in the current study indicated that they engaged in deep breathing exercises before verbal or written communication and increased their physical activity, which contributed to a sense of calmness and preparedness aimed at mitigating anxiety. For example, Student 5 stated that "I take deep breaths before speaking or writing to prevent anxiety," while Student 6 stated that, "I exercise for half an hour before an exam or presentation to prevent anxiety." This strategy directly addresses the somatic components of anxiety, as defined by Cheng's (2004) multidimensional framework for writing anxiety. Afdalia et al. (2023) referred to these types of strategies as "creating a self-suggestion to maintain composure and adopt a positive mindset," as their subjects similarly reported employing strategies to counteract anxiety in writing that included (i) formulating a self-suggestion to remain calm and think positively, (ii) seeking out additional articles with strong credibility for

reference, and (iii) establishing straightforward English writing practices within their daily routines.

The results obtained both confirm and expand upon prior research on strategies for managing anxiety in English as a foreign language writing. The focus on relaxation techniques and positive thinking is consistent with the findings of MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012), who emphasized the physiological and psychological advantages of relaxation in foreign language learning environments. Nevertheless, the present study offers more detailed illustrations of how Saudi EFL students implement these strategies in their writing practices. Further, the implementation of peer seeking and collaboration as anxiety alleviation techniques correlates with Kondo and Ying-Ling's (2004) framework; however, the present study's results indicate that these strategies could be especially significant in the Saudi context. The advantages of collaborative writing and supportive peers were frequently mentioned by students, which may be indicative of the cultural principles involving collaboration and solidarity that are prevalent in Saudi Arabian society. Student 1 asserted, "I never experience anxiety while I collaborate with a group," emphasizing the potential of cooperative work to alleviate anxiety. One student (Student 6) stated, "I have a private teacher to assist me in mastering the English language, particularly writing, so I will not experience anxiety in future assignments and will never consider anxiety." This suggests that some students may have supplementary resources that affect their levels of anxiety and coping strategies. One student (Student 6) observed, "I make a conscious decision to keep a positive mindset in any anxiety-inducing setting I encounter during an exam or speaking in the classroom." The responses provided by the students demonstrate the significance of cooperative work and support from others, suggesting that social strategies are essential

for anxiety management. This is similar to Canada and Miralles's (2022) findings, which show that students would employ their social/affective methods more frequently if the learning assignments were challenging. Hence, students tend to be more likely to seek help and effectively manage their anxiety.

“Preparation” was another important strategy identified by the respondents. “Preparation helps me succeed in all my courses, and I don’t feel anxious in the classroom” (Student 6). Also, by doing revisions, students can tolerate the anxiety of learning English writing. This phenomenon was similarly observed by James et al. (2023), who noted that the participants regularly engaged in revision by evaluating their finalized assignments. For example, “my brother teaches me every day, so I feel confident about my progress” (Student 4) and “my teacher every day requests a revision of our next lesson, I prepare week, so that helps a lot” (Student 5). Furthermore, Student 2's assertion that "I studied thoroughly beforehand class to prevent any sudden quizzes or tests that caused me anxiety" indicates that students comprehend the significance of being adequately prepared to manage anxiety. This study highlights the importance of revision as a tool for both skill enhancement and anxiety reduction in English writing contexts. According to Zhang (2019), the more nervous students are, the lower their writing achievement is because they lack confidence in their abilities and skills to write.

A remarkable discovery was the very little emphasis on avoidance behaviours as a means of coping skills, which diverges from certain prior investigations, such as Hartono and Maharani (2020). Further, the limited focus on these behaviours indicates that students at Saudi University may not identify avoidance in writing tasks as a reaction to anxiety, potentially affecting their perception and articulation of challenges. The variation can be attributable to the distinct educational environment at Saudi

University or to the changing perspectives on writing among Saudi students studying English as a foreign language. Individuals such as Student 1, who expressed their inability to comprehend anxiety in writing tasks and exams, may not completely comprehend or accept their discomfort. This lack of recognition could potentially lead to reduced perceptions of avoidance behaviour, thus manipulating the findings.

Discussion on Findings of Research Question 5: Teacher Strategies

Semi-structured interviews were used to answer the fifth question, *What strategies do EFL undergraduate teachers use to reduce their students' English writing anxiety?* Analysis of the responses from the semi-structured interviews by teachers revealed several strategies used by the interviewees to help their students cope with writing anxiety. The results of this investigation suggest that EFL instructors at Saudi University implement a combination of strategies to alleviate their students' anxiety regarding English writing. Effective communication, the implementation of group work, the demonstration of empathy and compassion, the provision of constructive criticism on oversights, the provision of sufficient time for writing tasks, and the provision of motivation and positive reinforcement are the most notable strategies that have been discussed by teachers.

The provision of adequate time for writing assignments was identified as a critical approach. For example, Teacher Faisal expressed his anxiety when assigning timed essay assignments, stating: "I observe my students quit writing and abandon the task empty. I believe that timed essays should be reserved for proficient students, rather than undergraduates." A different teacher (Teacher-Sami) stated, "I believe students

should be given sufficient time to write while writing exams, for as long as pupils aren't overwhelmed by time, they will accomplish the tasks properly." This is in line with the findings of Wern and Rahmat (2021), who identified the time constraint factor as a contributing factor to writing anxiety, which such a strategy directly addresses.

Further, teachers also frequently identified motivation and positive reinforcement as effective strategies. Teacher Faisal highlighted, "It is within your rights to achieve success, and this obligation is simple to fulfil. Constantly strive to maintain their enthusiasm and consistently praise students, consequently increasing their positive reinforcement and encouragement." This is consistent with the affective strategies that Oxford (1992) recommends for the reduction of language anxiety. As Student 7 stated "my teacher's phrases and motivation are supporting me in learning properly and comfortably," suggesting that the interaction between teacher strategies and learner coping strategies could be an appealing field for further investigation.

Correcting errors was one of the most utilized strategies by teachers. Teachers emphasize the importance of providing positive and constructive feedback when correcting students' writing errors. Cheng (2004) proposed that anxiety can be alleviated by refraining from overcorrecting errors and permitting multiple versions. Consequently, the emphasis on ensuring sufficient time is consistent with this approach. Despite this, our research emphasizes the unique significance of this approach in the Saudi context, where time constraints seem to be a major anxiety trigger. Some teachers explain that they are attempting to lessen students' anxiety about making mistakes when learning languages by instilling positive attitudes and convincing them that learning via mistakes is an important element of growing writing skills and abilities. Teachers suggested that correcting students' errors in writing should be positive and productive,

such as commenting, providing feedback, and marking. The students' anxiety about the teacher's negative comment demonstrates that they are unaware of the objective of writing skills. They do not write to express their voices; rather, they write to the teacher only to earn a good mark and pass their exam (Rezaei & Jafari, 2014). For example, one interviewee reported that “I avoid mistakes given by students and provide oral encouragement and positive feedback, most of them feel confident and calm frequently”. (Teacher Omar). Similarly, a positive attitude towards making mistakes and receiving corrections from teachers or peers appears to help students reduce their writing anxiety (Canada & Miralles, 2022).

Teacher-effective communication” is a crucial strategy identified by teachers for reducing student writing anxiety and enhancing learning outcomes. The results of the interview indicate that teachers utilize various communication strategies, including communicating and talking informally, avoiding translating directly, and facilitating understanding in EFL classrooms that mitigate writing anxiety, thereby improving student writing performance (e.g., one interview: Teacher Faisal). The emphasis on effective communication as a strategy to alleviate writing anxiety is consistent with the research conducted by Hsu et al. (2021) on efficient approaches for lowering anxiety. Furthermore, the role of teachers in creating a supportive environment is emphasized, as their strategies can foster a relaxing classroom atmosphere that mitigates anxiety (Atifnigar, 2024).

Additionally, a group team discussion with students and the instructors was also reported as a coping strategy that teachers use, and which can reduce the levels of anxiety in writing classes. Nevertheless, our analysis indicates that Saudi teachers may possess a heightened awareness of the advantages of learning together in decreasing

writing anxiety. Teacher Sami observed that organizing pupils into cooperative groups, such as groups A, B, and C, can encourage them and effectively decrease their anxiety levels when it comes to writing assignments. As such, a potentially relaxing conversation between teachers and students enables teachers to discuss the anxiety impact and show students how to work out practical ways for confronting it. It should not be forgotten that teachers' respect, warmth, and other positive characteristics play an important role in promoting success in language learning and reducing writing anxiety.

To sum up, it could be understood from the above discussion that teachers suggest eclectic cognitive coping strategies, such as teachers' feedback and support, students themselves can utilize some coping mechanisms, motivations, and compliments, and seek social support from peers and teachers to alleviate students' fears and stress in writing classes. They adopt the process writing approach to relieve students from the accuracy concern, and they improve vocabulary knowledge indirectly by encouraging a supportive learning environment in which students feel comfortable. The above-discussed strategies would help language teachers in the study context to create low, if not free from anxiety, English writing classes. The findings suggest that students experience anxiety in different ways, highlighting the importance of teachers being aware of these individual variations. Several participants emphasized the value of empathy and understanding from their teachers, which appeared to help reduce their stress levels and enhance their classroom engagement.

This chapter has discussed students' and teachers' perceptions of how educational experiences influence anxiety reduction in English classes, providing a

foundation for the following chapter, which discusses these findings in relation to the research questions and relevant literature.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter presents the overall conclusion of the study, discusses implications for classroom practice, and offers suggestions and recommendations for future research. It also highlights the gap that allows further investigations into this critical aspect of language learning. In addition, this chapter reflect on the limitations of the study, providing a balanced perspective on the findings and their relevance in comparable EFL contexts.

Conclusion

This study used a mixed-methods approach that applied a quantitative method to explore and investigate the level of anxiety and writing anxiety among English language learners at one Saudi university, and a qualitative method to collect data from EFL students and teachers in Saudi Arabia. For the latter, thematic analysis was employed to identify emerging themes. The themes were then analysed for their potential implications for teaching and learning EFL writing.

The first research question revealed the level of FLA among EFL undergraduate students at Saudi University. According to quantitative and qualitative studies, most participants at Saudi University experienced moderate anxiety levels and the prevalence of anxiety of negative evaluation. Average anxiety levels have been consistently found in Saudi and additional EFL situations (Alsalooli & Al-Tale, 2022; Bensalem, 2018;

Tanielian, 2017; Gawri, 2020; Jamshed et al., 2024; Alsaleh, 2018; Faqihi, 2024), indicating that this is a widespread issue that demands constant focus and consideration. One possible topic for concentrated solutions in Saudi EFL classes is the prevalence of fear of negative assessment, as shown in this investigation and others that have focused on Saudi students.

The second research question examined the level of writing anxiety among undergraduate learners studying EFL utilizing the SLWAI. After analysing the SLWAI according to anxiety levels, another area to analyse was the type of anxiety. The SLWAI was divided into three anxiety types: cognitive, somatic, and avoidance. The findings indicate that there were moderate levels of anxiety observed in all three of the categories: avoidance behaviour, cognitive anxiety, and somatic anxiety. Among various kinds of behaviour, avoidance behaviour was the most prominent, but only slightly so. It goes against the trend of most prior research in EFL settings, where cognitive anxiety has been found to predominate. (Cheng, 2004; Afdalia et al., 2023; Rasool et al., 2023; Kusumaningputri et al., 2018; Syarifudin, 2020; Kurniasih et al., 2022; Hartono & Maharani, 2020; Wahyuni & Umam, 2017). The outcome may stem from participants' tendency to manage anxiety by avoiding writing assignments instead of addressing their feelings of anxiety. This may be affected by insufficient writing practice, apprehension over errors, or a lack of confidence in the English language. Such factors may cause participants to withdraw from writing as a means of reducing anxiety.

The third research question is the essential part of the research to determine the factors contributing to writing anxiety. According to the data collected through interview questions, the most common factors associated with the writing anxiety of EFL undergraduate students were time limits, fear of negative evaluation, lack of

student understanding, classroom environment, exam, lack of preparation, working team in writing class, previous writing experiences, and lack of motivation in the writing classroom. The reasons for learners experiencing writing anxiety seemed to connect more to time limits and fear of negative evaluation.

The fourth and fifth research questions are about the strategies that arise from EFL undergraduate students and teachers to reduce students' English writing anxiety. Diversified coping strategies arise from the interviews with students and with EFL teachers. From the students' perspectives, different tactics and strategies are suggested and mentioned, particularly by the interviewees. The strategies include positive thinking, relaxation techniques, working in groups, preparation, motivation, and peer seeking. The prevalence of relaxation techniques and positive thinking suggests that students take an active role in the management of their anxiety, instead of merely avoiding writing assignments. Further, these results enhance our comprehension of how sociocultural and educational environments can affect the selection and utility of anxiety coping strategies. From the teachers' perspective, effective alleviating strategies are reported, such as correcting students' errors, compassion and empathy, group work, teacher effective communication, motivation, and praise, and enough time for writing tasks and exams. The utilization of encouragement and motivation emerges as a crucial tactic, in line with research highlighting the significance of affective aspects in language acquisition. This suggests that Saudi EFL teachers should adapt to the emotional requirements of their students. Further, teachers explicitly emphasize the necessity of time management, specifically pointing out the crucial influence that fundamental factors, for example, examination circumstances, have on student anxiety levels.

This research emphasizes the essential role performed by educators in minimizing and alleviating student writing anxiety. Teachers can establish a more supportive and productive learning environment for EFL writing by implementing a variety of strategies that target both the emotional and cognitive aspects of anxiety. This, in turn, may result in enhanced student engagement, confidence, and eventually, more effective writing in English for Saudi students of EFL. Further research and scholarship might gain insight from ongoing investigations that explore the growth of these strategies over time, in addition to experimental methods that evaluate the relative efficacy of various approaches. Providing more in-depth guidelines for EFL writing instruction in Saudi Arabia could be achieved by investigating the interaction between these strategies and specific writing tasks or genres.

In conclusion, this research emphasizes the significance of providing individuals with a comprehensive array of anxiety management strategies that are customized to the unique cultural context and requirements of Saudi EFL learners to facilitate their writing progress in English. The findings of the present study would be useful not only in the Saudi educational setting but also in all educational contexts where writing skills are practiced. Concurrently, Saudi EFL students must develop their self-confidence, minimize writing anxiety, and take the initiative to seek help, feedback, and guidance from their instructors and peers.

Implications of the Study

The implications presented in this section are drawn directly from the findings of this study, which revealed that students's writing anxiety is influenced not only by language ability but also by emotional concerns, particularly the avoidance behaviour,

highlighting the need to address both cognitive and effective aspects in writing instruction. The insights gained from the students and teachers in this study suggest that supportive and flexible teaching practices can play a meaningful role in reducing anxiety and encouraging participation. The strategies discussed are not only beneficial for students who struggle with writing apprehension, but they can also contribute to a more inclusive and balanced learning environment for all learners.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of writing anxiety among Saudi university students, particularly those in their first and second years of study, who have received relatively limited attention in previous research. While writing anxiety has been examined in various educational settings in Saudi Arabia, much of the existing work has focused on general levels of anxiety without closely exploring students' lived experience or the specific factors that shape their responses to writing tasks. By combining quantitative data with students' personal reflections, this study highlights writing anxiety not only as an individual psychological challenge but also as a sociocultural phenomenon influenced by educational expectations, classroom dynamics, and norms surrounding academic performance in the Saudi context.

First, this study offers a clear and empirical understanding of writing anxiety among Saudi EFL university students. By examining anxiety across its cognitive, physical, and avoidance dimensions, the study highlights not only that students experience anxiety, but also how they feel and respond to it in real classroom situations. For example, the survey results showed that avoidance behaviour was the strongest dimension of anxiety, while the interview data illustrated how some students chose to delay or avoid writing when they were unsure of their ideas. This shows that writing

anxiety is not only about language ability, but also about how students feel, how they see themselves, and how comfortable they are in the classroom. It is both an emotional and academic issue.

Second, this study makes a methodological contribution by using a mixed-methods approach rather than relying only on quantitative data, as many previous studies have done. By combining the survey results with the students's own descriptions of their experience in semi-structured interviews, the study was able to capture not only the level of anxiety, but also the reasons behind it and how students attempted to cope. This combination provided a fuller and more grounded understanding of writing anxiety, showing, for example, how the fear of being negatively evaluated translated into hesitation, self-doubt, and even avoidance when students were asked to write. In this way, the mixed-methods design strengthened the interpretation of the findings and highlighted the personal and contextual dimensions of writing anxiety that might remain unseen in quantitative data alone.

Third, this study contributes theoretically by drawing attention to how widely used measurement tools, such as the SLWAI and the FLCAS, operate within the Saudi context. While these instruments were helpful in identifying the general patterns and levels of writing anxiety among students, the findings also suggest that some aspects of anxiety may be shaped by cultural expectations surrounding academic performance, classroom interaction, and evaluation practices. This indicates that tools developed in other educational settings may not fully capture the nuance of students' experiences in Saudi universities. As a result, the study highlights the importance of adapting such

instruments to better reflect local educational and cultural norms, or developing assessment tools that are specifically designed for use in the Saudi context.

Fourth, this study helps connect theoretical understanding with actual classroom practice by highlighting the coping strategies used by both teachers and students to manage writing anxiety. The interview findings showed that some teachers attempted to ease students' anxiety by offering reassurance, encouraging collaboration, or allowing time for idea development, while some students relied on discussing ideas with peers or planning their writing in advance to feel more in control. These insights demonstrate that writing anxiety can be addressed through everyday classroom interactions, not only formal instructional techniques. They also highlight that teachers play an essential role in shaping the emotional tone of writing classrooms. Recognizing and supporting these coping strategies can help create learning environments that reduce anxiety and promote confidence, ultimately improving students' engagement and writing performance.

Fifth, the study's findings indicate that avoidance is a common factor associated with writing anxiety. The interviews showed that students tended to avoid writing when they felt uncertain about their ideas or feared negative evaluation. Understanding avoidance as an emotional coping mechanism rather than a lack of motivation suggests the need for further research to explore its causes and develop interventions that support students in engaging with writing more confidently.

From a practical point, the findings of the present study underscore the need for more supportive and empathetic classroom practices in the Saudi EFL context. Avoidance emerged as the strongest factor contributing to influencing writing anxiety, as students often delayed or avoided writing when they were unsure of their ideas or feared being negatively judged. This indicates that writing challenges are shaped not only by students' linguistic ability but also by their emotional experiences and perceptions.

To address this, teachers can adopt a more supportive, process-focused approach to writing instruction. Feedback that emphasizes progress and clarity rather than accuracy alone can reduce anxiety and encourage participation. Low-stakes writing tasks, collaborative activities, and opportunities for idea exploration may help students develop confidence before producing a text. Additionally, using various forms of assessment, such as portfolio and formative evaluation, can help lessen the anxiety associated with high-stakes grading.

Teachers need to institute a more supportive and empathetic classroom environment to help reduce students' fear of negative evaluation, a chief cause of writing anxiety. Instead of emphasizing error correction or perfection, teachers need to labour toward providing constructive, process-oriented feedback that indicates student development. Freewriting, peer support, and low-stakes writing exercises can help lower affective filters and encourage students to engage. Gradually increasing the difficulty of communicative tasks can also increase students' confidence levels while reducing anxiety levels over time.

Following the research on test-related anxiety, educators can utilize diversification of evaluation procedures. The utilization of formative assessments, portfolios, and group work can provide alternative methods of evaluating student writing that do not result in high anxiety. Educators should also be aware that formal testing may heighten anxiety, so assessments should emphasize growth and learning instead of accuracy alone.

Getting students to recognize symptoms of writing anxiety and realize how it can be managed is also an important part of supporting students. Teaching students self-regulating strategies, such as relaxation techniques, time management skills, and positive self-talk, can help to promote the confidence to approach writing assignments. Asking students to select subjects that interest them, and not criticizing them when they write, can give students autonomy and reduce anxiety.

Universities and language departments should provide teachers with training in the identification and management of language anxiety. Institutional support in the form of writing centres or workshops on anxiety reduction could be included in language studies to aid struggling students. Additionally, the curriculum itself should contain explicit aspects that teach students how to cope with academic pressure and writing issues.

For curriculum planners and policymakers, this research emphasizes the importance of considering and responding to the affective aspects of second language acquisition. Curricula must be framed with flexibility to serve the varied needs of learners and incorporate psychological factors such as writing apprehension. The integration of strategies for the reduction of anxiety within course design by fostering

collaborative activities, scaffolded writing tasks, and inclusive assessment policies can promote a more nurturing atmosphere for EFL learning. One key area where this can be operationalized is in classroom instruction. Teachers play a critical role in implementing emotionally supportive practices, and specific techniques such as teaching pre-writing and drafting strategies can significantly reduce writing anxiety and build learner confidence.

Teaching Pre-writing and Drafting Strategies

The findings of this study show that many students experience writing anxiety at the initial stage of writing, particularly when they are unsure of how to begin writing or when they fear negative evaluation from their instructors, which often leads them to avoid writing tasks. The quantitative data indicated a moderate level of writing anxiety, with avoidance behaviour being the most influential factor. This was also evident in the interview responses, where five out of ten students stated that they sometimes avoided writing tasks because they worried their ideas might be perceived as weak or insufficient.

Based on these results, integrating pre-writing strategies can play an important role in reducing anxiety. Activities such as brainstorming, guided idea mapping, and collaborative planning help students to organize their thoughts before drafting. Four out of ten students interviewed in this study mentioned that discussing ideas with classmates or outlining their points helped them to feel more prepared and less stressed. For these students, having time organize their ideas gave them a clearer starting point. Also, this made the writing process feel less overwhelming.

Moreover, teaching writing as a process rather than a final product can reduce anxiety. Encouraging students to write drafts and revise gradually shifts the focus from

producing a perfect text to improving their ideas over time. This aligns with the interview findings, where three of the students stated that planning or outlining their ideas before writing helped them feel calmer and more confident when beginning a task. Teachers in this study also emphasized the importance of providing supportive feedback that avoids judgment and comparison (Rasool et al., 2023). Creating a classroom atmosphere where mistakes are treated as part of learning can further reduce writing anxiety and encourage risk-taking in language use. Overall, these findings highlight the importance of explicit instruction in pre-writing and drafting strategies, along with a supportive and encouraging classroom environment. Such practices not only help students manage writing-related anxiety but also allow them to engage more confidently and independently with academic writing tasks.

Relaxation Methods

Because of the similarity in mean scores across the three types of anxiety, a comprehensive approach to reducing anxiety is needed. Possible solutions include incorporating relaxation or meditation techniques into writing lessons. Stress management and emotional support can also be provided. Furthermore, teachers should be trained to recognize the different forms of writing anxiety and how to manage them. Alshehri (2024) also suggests that teachers should be trained on how to manage anxiety levels among foreign or second language students in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, access to workshops, conferences, and online resources can help teachers stay abreast of the latest trends in language teaching and best practices, leading to better learning outcomes for students.

This study can offer insight to learners to handle the physical symptoms of writing anxiety by incorporating strategies for stress reduction and relaxation activities into their studies. Some anxiety-relieving activities, such as deep breathing, looking for pleasure or imagining success, exercise, drawing, preparation, outlining tasks, and meditation, may aid learners in overcoming the unpleasant emotions that they may experience in the foreign language lesson. Participants in the study reported using a range of relaxation techniques to manage anxiety. For example, one student stated, “I deep breathe before I speak and write to avoid anxiety” (Student 5). Another shared, “Before exams or presentations, I exercise for half an hour to combat anxiety” (Student 6). These responses suggest that implementing a variety of relaxation strategies can help accommodate students’ diverse needs.

Participation and Collaboration

Avoidance behaviour is so prevalent in this Saudi setting that it is also recommended that Saudi Universities should provide opportunities and solutions that are culturally sensitive. One is to investigate how culture affects the development of writing anxiety as well as avoidance. The other is to create interventions that are responsive to the needs for education in Saudi Arabia. By creating a greater level of engagement on the students' part in writing courses and by selecting writing topics that are close to the students' cultural identities and academic aspirations, teachers can enhance engagement and motivation on the part of Saudi students. The Saudi EFL students' seeming preference for collaboration could be utilized by promoting collaborative writing exercises and peer support groups.

Responding to Students' Errors

Feedback can help EFL learners reduce their writing anxiety and build confidence in English writing (Jin et al., 2021). It would also be useful to give direct feedback to novice writers, who are perhaps not able to identify and indicate the correct form themselves or cannot edit structural or lexical mistakes themselves. These writers require more explicit directives and authoritative texts to enable them to identify such errors (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2013). Indirect correction would be suitable for more advanced writers. This approach has long-term advantages as it shifts the responsibility of error identification to the students themselves (Ferris & Hedgcock 2013). Teachers must correct common errors and encourage learners to identify linguistic features that can hinder comprehension to increase writers' confidence (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2013).

Peer Feedback

Peer grading of ungraded writing tasks, such as journal writing on a topic, and the integration of vocabulary-enriching aids can also ease the problem. The approach allows learners to learn from each other, engage with others, advance self-evaluation and self-monitoring capabilities, and minimize writing anxiety through a realization of their peers' experience with the same writing difficulties. According to Rasool et al. (2023), peer feedback on ungraded composition exercises (e.g., keeping a topical diary) and the use of vocabulary-expansion tools are just a few suggestions for helping learners overcome this hurdle. Thus, in order to reduce writing anxiety and increase self-efficacy, teachers can incorporate activities such as peer feedback sessions and have students practice peer assessment (Huang et al., 2024).

Motivation and Receiving Praise

Teachers of EFL should be trained in the most effective motivating approaches and positive reinforcement systems that can be adapted to writing courses. The appropriateness of this is clear from the statement by Teacher Rami: "Having an overwhelming sense of motivation and being complimented are essential. Teachers ought not to criticize students publicly and always give them compliments". The most significant thing is that students and instructors are cognizant of the fact that writing anxiety takes place in the writing process and that teachers need to know the best methods to help students cope with it. Furthermore, writing teachers need to recognize anxious students through changes in their behaviour and attitude when writing. This would assist writing instructors in devising better writing skills and strategies for students. They will be able to perform better and be more self-assured, and in managing their nervousness and reducing any negative impact on their performance (Aripin & Rahmat, 2021).

Development and Expansion of the Curriculum

Improving the curriculum should provide greater opportunities for collaborative writing and peer review, given the perceived effectiveness of group work in reducing stress. Institutions could consider shifting toward a more empathetic and supportive teaching style, perhaps by organizing sessions on emotional intelligence in language teaching (Gkonou & Mercer, 2017). Teacher Faisal suggests that additional activities, such as the English Club, which is not part of the formal college assessment, could enhance students' confidence and practices.

Furthermore, research has shown moderate levels of writing anxiety among Saudi EFL students, primarily related to task avoidance. The findings highlight the importance of evaluating and possibly reconsidering the EFL curriculum in Saudi universities to support learners who avoid writing. Efforts to make writing more engaging and less challenging could include a greater focus on writing instructional techniques, maintaining a balance between academic tasks and creative or imaginative writing activities, and utilizing multimedia and technical tools such as audiovisual content. These results indicate that educational objectives in Saudi universities should foster a clear understanding of students' writing needs and help reduce fear of assessment and evaluation based on writing level and proficiency.

Methodological Contributions

This study makes a significant methodological contribution by adopting a mixed-methods approach, wherein quantitative and qualitative data are merged to analyse FLA with a specific focus on students' writing anxiety. Although previous studies have primarily employed quantitative questionnaires or qualitative interviews separately, this study integrates both to make the phenomenon clearer. The use of questionnaires provided quantitative evidence for the prevalence and severity of writing anxiety among students to give broad quantitative data. Accompanying this, semi-structured interviews supplemented information concerning students' and teachers' perceptions of writing anxiety and effective coping strategies. This combination of methodologies enabled richer triangulation of the data, enhancing the validity and richness of the findings. It also enabled the research to examine not only how much anxiety exists but also why and how it can be alleviated from multiple perspectives. Therefore, this study broadens existing research by showing the power of mixed

methods to meet the degree and complexity of academic writing apprehension, offering a template for future research looking to examine similar education issues.

Limitations of the Study

Although this research provides practical information on writing anxiety among Saudi EFL students, several limitations should be critically highlighted. To begin with, the sample included undergraduate male students from a single Saudi university. This significantly restricts the generalizability of the results, as it does not capture the heterogeneity of EFL students across different regions, institutions, and genders in Saudi Arabia. Because of the gender-segregated nature of the education system (Tanielian, 2017), the absence of female respondents not only creates a gender bias, but also means that the voices, experiences, and coping strategies of female students are missing from the picture. Their perspectives could have enriched the understanding of writing anxiety in meaningful ways. Future studies must attempt to have a more representative sample by trying to obtain cooperation among institutions or by having female research assistants to be able to access female cohorts.

Additionally, the study did not consider participants' prior experiences in learning English as a foreign language, which may significantly influence their anxiety levels and coping strategies. Omitting this factor limits our ability to distinguish between anxiety resulting from current learning and previous experiences and may skew the results. Future research should control for or directly examine this factor to improve our understanding of its influence. The study relied heavily on self-collected data through online surveys, which, while effective for gathering information on a large scale, are naturally subject to social research bias and the limitations of self-awareness.

Respondents may have underestimated their anxiety levels or overestimated their coping strategies to suit ideal situations. While semi-structured interviews were used to corroborate data and reduce ambiguity, they may also have been influenced by participants' desire to appear positive. The use of mixed methods is an advantage, but improving methodological rigour, such as incorporating classroom observations or performance-based assessments, would enhance the reliability of the results.

Furthermore, the SLWAI, despite its widespread adoption, may not accurately reflect cultural differences in anxiety expression among Saudi students. This instrument, developed in Western contexts, may fail to address culturally specific pressures or behaviours that influence writing anxiety. Cultural adaptation and validation of these instruments are essential to ensure their relevance and accuracy in non-Western contexts.

The cross-sectional structure of the study is another limitation, as it only provides a snapshot of learners' anxiety levels and coping mechanisms at one point in time. This method prevents investigating how these variables change with continued exposure to different teaching methods or over the course of an entire semester. A longitudinal approach could provide a deeper understanding of causal relationships and the evolution of coping strategies over time. Furthermore, although teachers' use of anxiety-reducing strategies is noted, the study does not assess the implementation or effectiveness of these strategies in actual practice. For example, while teachers reported using group work, the study does not quantitatively determine the frequency, structure, or outcomes of these activities. Without observational or performance-based data, it is difficult to determine whether these strategies have a tangible impact on students' anxiety or writing performance.

Finally, a significant limitation is the lack of an analysis of the direct effect of writing anxiety on actual writing performance. Although anxiety levels were measured, the study did not correlate them with objective writing outcomes, missing an opportunity to understand how anxiety can truly impact academic performance.

Recommendations for Future Research

The investigation contributes to the expanding literature on EFL writing anxiety, especially in the Saudi setting. It offers helpful information that could influence teaching methods, course development, and student assistance programs for EFL undergraduates at Saudi University and maybe further Saudi universities. Future investigations ought to attempt to overcome the constraints of this investigation by integrating qualitative methodologies to investigate the fundamental factors contributing to avoidance behaviour, investigate the link between anxiety and writing proficiency, and conduct long-term investigations to monitor fluctuations in the level of anxiety over an extended period. Also, teacher observations could be utilized in future investigations to verify self-reported teacher tactics, as well as long-term research to investigate the evolution of these strategies over time and their subsequent effects on student apprehension levels. Furthermore, the improvement of EFL writing instruction in Saudi Arabia would likely be facilitated by experimental studies that compare the efficacy of various teacher strategies.

Second, conducting comparative research across different Saudi institutions might assist in determining if the occurrence of avoidance behaviour is limited to Saudi University or is a more widespread pattern in Saudi English as an EFL instruction. The results obtained highlight the value of encouraging and free-of-anxiety writing settings

that promote enthusiastic engagement instead of avoiding it. By specifically targeting writing anxiety, especially avoidance behaviour, instructors can assist Saudi EFL students in overcoming challenges to writing competency and subsequently enhancing their general competence in the English language.

Third, the study used self-report questionnaires, which could have been biased by a social desirability bias or limited by students' self-awareness. Subjects' anxiety levels may have been understated or inflated based on their impression of social norms. Future study efforts could benefit from incorporating data from observers or writing performance metrics to supplement self-reported data. Physiological measures such as heart rate changes can be utilized to objectively confirm self-reported anxiety during writing, as stated in MacIntyre's *idiodynamic*, the combination of actual time biological information with reported emotional states facilitated by exclusive software, which provides a comprehensive method of studying anxiety (Macintyre & Ducker, 2022).

Fourth, the present study focused on identifying the primary factors that contribute to writing anxiety rather than investigating the potential dynamic between those variables or their variations across different categories of students, such as those with varying proficiency levels or academic majors. A thorough analysis of these connections could yield in-depth insights into the complex mechanics of writing anxiety. Furthermore, the cross-sectional strategy of our work limits our ability to observe the potential changes in writing anxiety over time or across various instructional strategies. Continuous research that tracks learners' anxiety and writing performance in their academic careers could provide valuable insights into the development of writing anxiety and the long-term impact of interventions.

Finally, while the analysis focused on quantitative indicators of anxiety, it did not cover all the complex and subjective experiences of students suffering from writing anxiety. Further research, such as in-depth interviews or group discussions, may provide a better understanding of how students perceive and handle writing anxiety in their daily academic activities. The effectiveness of writing anxiety strategies in this particular social and academic setting should be investigated in future studies, and researchers should explicitly measure the association between anxiety scores and academic indicators within Saudi EFL learners. The objective of my research was to contribute to the existing body of literature on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing anxiety. It was carried out by drawing attention to the prevalence of avoidance behaviour, as well as the idea that cognitive anxiety is always the dominating form of anxiety. A more comprehensive knowledge of the experiences of students is provided because of the combination of qualitative and quantitative research findings. These findings provide useful insights that can be used to improve teaching approaches and support programs. Additionally, they suggest that future research should investigate the relationship between anxiety and writing proficiency in greater depth.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Participant Information Sheet

University of Essex

Participant Information Sheet

[Foreign Language writing anxiety]

[November 2022]

My name is Bader Alshammari, and I am a postgraduate research student, studying English Language Teaching at the University of Essex. Before you decide whether to take part or not, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of this study?

This study aims to investigate and review the potential factors of foreign writing anxiety among undergraduates. This study will help teachers to figure out the causes and level of writing anxiety among undergraduate students. Also, it will use coping strategies to help students reduce their level of writing anxiety.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate in this study because your participation will make a valuable and major contribution to better understanding and managing foreign language writing anxiety and addressing this gap in the research field. Also, because my study will be conducted among undergraduates, Participants will cover the gap research in this field.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to provide written consent. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. Withdrawal will have no impact on your marks, assessments, or future studies. If you choose to withdraw, your data will be destroyed immediately. If you have a question about the ethical nature of this study, please contact the researcher, **[Bader Alshammari. Ba16317@essex.ac.uk]**.

CONSENT FORMTitle of the Project: **Foreign Language writing anxiety**Researcher: **Bader Alshammari** (Department of Language and Linguistics)

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Information Sheet dated 06/11/2022 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these questions answered satisfactorily.	<input type="text"/>
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving any reason and without penalty.	<input type="text"/>
Participating involves completing two online questionnaires and taking part in an interview. Interviews will be audio recorded and will last approximately 10 minutes.	<input type="text"/>
3. I understand that the identifiable data provided will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher and supervisor, and that confidentiality will be maintained.	<input type="text"/>
4. I understand that my fully anonymised data will be used in a report, which will summarise the findings of the project. The report will be submitted to the University of Essex as part of my coursework.	<input type="text"/>
5. I agree to take part in the above study.	<input type="text"/>

Participant Name

Date

Participant Signature

Researcher Name

Date

Researcher Signature

Bader Alshammari

10/10/2022



Appendix 2 Survey of the main study link: <https://questionpro.com/t/AWUrgZxcyc>

CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project: **Foreign Language writing anxiety**

Researcher: **Bader Alshammari** (Department of Language and Linguistics)

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Information Sheet dated **22/03/2023** for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these questions answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving any reason and without penalty.

Participating involves completing two online questionnaires and taking part in an interview. Interviews will be audio recorded and will last approximately 10 minutes.

3. I understand that the identifiable data provided will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher and supervisor, and that confidentiality will be maintained.

4. I understand that my fully anonymised data will be used in a report, which will summarise the findings of the project. The report will be submitted to the University of Essex as part of my coursework.

5. I agree to take part in the above study.

Participant Name

Date

Participant Signature

Researcher Name

Date

Researcher Signature



Participant Information Sheet

[Foreign Language writing anxiety]

[22 March 2023]

My name is Bader Alshammari, and I am a postgraduate research student, studying English Language Teaching at the University of Essex. Before you decide whether to take part or not, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of this study?

This study aims to investigate and review the potential factors of foreign writing anxiety among undergraduates. This study will help teachers to figure out the causes and level of writing anxiety among undergraduate students. Also, it will use coping strategies to help students reduce their level of writing anxiety.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate in this study because your participation will make a valuable and major contribution to better understanding and managing foreign language writing anxiety and addressing this gap in the research field. Also, because my study will be conducted among undergraduates, Participants will cover the gap research in this field.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to provide written consent. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. Withdrawal will have no impact on your marks, assessments, or future studies. If you choose to withdraw, your data will be destroyed immediately. If you have a question about the ethical nature of this study, please contact the researcher, [Bader Alshammari. Ba16317@essex.ac.uk].

What will happen to me if I take part?

This study requires participants to answer two questionnaires and participate in interviews which will be audio recorded too. Your words may be quoted or summarised in the findings of the study. You will not be identifiable as your real names and any personal data will not appear in this study.

Appendix 3 The sample of translated scale of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

العبارة	وافق بشدة	وافق	لا اوافق ولاأختلف	أختلف	أختلف بشدة
1- لا أشعر بالثقة بنفسى تماما عندما أتحدث باللغة الانجليزية					
2- لا أشعر بالقلق عندما أرتكب أخطاء في الفصل					
3- أشعر بالقلق عندما أعرف أن المعلمة سوف تنادي على اسمي خلال الدرس					
4- أشعر بالتوتر عندما لا أفهم ما نتحدث به المعلمة باللغة الانجليزية					
5- لن يزعجني على الإطلاق لو أخذت دروس لغة انجليزية اضافية					
6- خلال صف اللغة الإنجليزية أجد نفسى افكر فى أشياء ليس لها علاقة بالدرس					
7- أشعر دائما بأن الطلاب الآخرين أفضل منى في دراسة اللغة الانجليزية					
8- لا أشعر بالقلق وقت اختبارات اللغة الانجليزية					
9- أشعر بالفرح عندما اضطر الى الحديث باللغة الانجليزية بدون استعداد مسبق في الفصل.					
10- أشعر بالخوف من عواقب الفشل في دراسة اللغة الانجليزية					
11- لا أفهم لم ينزعج البعض من دروس اللغة الانجليزية					
12- في فصل اللغة الانجليزية , يمكن أن أصبح متوترة جدا لدرجة أنى أنسى الأشياء التي أعرفها.					
13- أشعر بالاحراج عندما أتلوع للاجابة باللغة الانجليزية في الفصل					
14- لاأشعر بالتوتر عند التحدث مع أشخاص لغتهم الأولى هي الانجليزية					
15- أشعر بالانزعاج عندما لاأفهم الخطأ الذي تحاول المعلمة تصحيحه لى					
16- على الرغم من استعدادي لحصص اللغة الانجليزية , الا اننى لا أزال أشعر بالتوتر					
17- أشعر عادة بعدم الرغبة للذهاب الى حصص اللغة الانجليزية					
18- أشعر بالثقة عند التحدث باللغة الانجليزية في الفصل .					
19- أشعر بالخوف من استعداد المعلم الدائم لتصحيح كل خطأ أرتكبه					
20- أشعر بقلبي ينبض بشدة عندما ينادى على اسمي في فصل اللغة الانجليزية					
21- كلما ذاكرت أكثر استعدادا لامتحان اللغة الإنجليزية شعرت بالارتباك					
22- لا أشعر بالحاجة للاستعداد الجيد لدروس اللغة الانجليزية					
23- دائما أشعر بأن الطلاب الآخرين يتحنون اللغة الانجليزية بصورة أفضل منى					
24- أشعر بالقلق جدا عما أتحدث باللغة الانجليزية أمام زملائي					

Appendix 4 Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125-132.

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

12. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

17. I often feel like not going to my language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

23. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

25. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree
nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

Appendix 5 The main questionnaire of the study:

<https://questionpro.com/t/AWUrgZxcyc>

ix 1

ing Anxiety Questionnaire I--- based on Second Language Writing Anxiety I
(Cheng, 2004)

fale Female

Year: ---- Freshman

----Sophomore

1:

the following statement and express your degree of agreement / disagreement by
he appropriate column.

that SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, U=Uncertain, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Dis

Statement	SA	A	U	D
hile writing in English, I'm not nervous at all.				
feel my heart pounding when I write English mpositions under time constraint.				
hile writing English compositions, I feel worried and easy if I know they will be evaluated.				
ften choose to write down my thoughts in English.				
usually do my best to avoid writing English mpositions.				
y mind often goes blank when I start to work on an english composition.				
don't worry that my English compositions are a lot orse than others'.				
remble or perspire when I write English compositions der time pressure.				
my English composition is to be evaluated, I would my about getting a very poor grade.				
lo my best to avoid situations in which I have to write in				

13. I often feel panic when I write English compositions under time constraint.					
14. I'm afraid that other students would deride my English composition if they read it.					
15. I freeze up when unexpectedly asked to write English compositions.					
16. I would do my best to excuse myself if asked to write English compositions.					
17. I don't worry at all about what other people would think of my English compositions.					
18. I usually seek every possible chance to write English compositions outside of class.					
19. I usually feel my whole body rigid and tense when I write English compositions.					
20. I'm afraid of my English composition being chosen as a sample to be discussed in class.					
21. I'm not afraid at all that my English compositions would be rated as very poor.					
22. Whenever possible, I would use English to write compositions.					

Appendix 6 Interview Questions: Students

First round of questions:

Tell me about yourself:

- 1- When did you decide to study the English language as your major, and why?
- 2- Do you like it? Do you not like it? Why?
- 3- How would you evaluate your experience studying English as a university student?

Writing Anxiety:

- 1- What do you feel in the writing classroom?
- 2- What does writing anxiety mean to you? How would you define it?
- 3- In what situations in the writing class do feel anxious?
- 4- Describe how you felt?
- 5- What types of classroom tasks trigger your writing anxiety?
- 6- What is the influence of your teacher on your writing anxiety? How?
- 7- When you feel anxious, is there anything you do to calm yourself down in the writing classroom?
- 8- When you feel anxious, is there anything that your instructor does to calm your anxiety in the writing classroom?

Conclusion:

- 1- What do you think will help you not to be an anxious student when you write?
- 2- In your opinion, do your teachers and classmates help you to overcome your writing anxiety?
- 3- Is there anything you would like to add, or ask me?

Appendix 7 Interviews for Teachers

Interviews for teachers:

Tell me about yourself:

- 1- When did you decide to study the English language as your major, and why?
- 2- Do you like it? Do you not like it? Why?
- 3- How would you evaluate your experience teaching English as a university student?

Writing Anxiety:

- 1- What do you feel in the writing classroom?
- 2- What does writing anxiety mean to you? How would you define it?
- 3- In what situations in the writing class do your students feel anxious?
- 4- Describe how you felt?
- 5- What types of classroom tasks trigger your students writing anxiety?
- 6- What is the influence of the teachers on your students writing anxiety? How?
- 7- When your students feel anxious, is there anything you do to calm them down in the writing classroom?
- 8- what strategies do you use to reduce your students writing anxiety?

Conclusion:

- 1- What do you think will help you not to be an anxious student when you write?
- 2- In your opinion, do your teachers and classmates help you to overcome your writing anxiety?
- 3- Is there anything you would like to add, or ask me?

Appendix 8 The coding scheme of the qualitative data analysis (Student and Teacher).

Theme	Subtheme	Quotes
	1-Time Limit.	
1- Factors of FLA writing anxiety among Saudi undergraduate students	-Time limit is a source of writing anxiety in classroom.	<p>"I feel pretty much anxious. Sometimes if there's a short time limit writing task. Like, for example, you have a long essay to write, but the time is just very short. Sometimes you get pretty much nervous, and you get anxious to be completely honest with you". (Student 1)</p> <p>"Yeah, it's not easy, to write within limited time I'll write about anything I know, but I know it will be not relevant due to the time set. It will cause anxiety, and my heart rates increases quickly as well". (Student 2).</p> <p>"Yes, like in examination time final exam there's so much to write and little time. that's very pressuring time. Yes, the amount the length of the things I must write and the amount of time I must spend are not fair.</p> <p>That brings anxiety in writing during examination period". (Student3)</p> <p>"Yes, some teacher is hard. when I have been told you have got 10 minutes to write. 10 minutes left? So, yeah time pressures me. Hurry up, come on guys. Yeah, that's bad. it triggers anxiety in writing.</p> <p>Especially when there is another exam in same day".(Student 4).</p>

Theme	Subtheme	Quotes
		<p>“Exactly, that's what I want to say is time pressure like timed essays. Most of the students say that it triggers anxiety and makes students paranoid”. (Student5).</p> <p>“, I would definitely feel anxious in writing exam, it is because of time limit during exam. I'm thinking of my writing is going to impact my outcome due to the limited time and interfering ideas”. (Student 6).</p> <p>“My problem in writing class was, when teachers rush us to write quickly, or give us a short time to rush to write long essays. which wasn't helpful, but compared when they gave us more time. You know, I feel relaxed to be honest, not nervous”. (Student 7).</p> <p>“time limit is the biggest problem in classroom. a lesson is only 1 hour in some courses. I can't fully focus and write at the same time”. (Student 8).</p> <p>“the time in exams periods is not enough it's really an obstacle we face always”. (Student9).</p> <p>“Always the problem is time limit in writing, Maybe like I have something, but time increased bad feelings. Hydrate. Yeah, hydrate and shaking. Like shaking a little bit and I don't know, it's like a bad feeling in general”. (Student 10).</p>

Theme	Subtheme	Quotes
	2-Fear of negative evaluation.	“I totally feel anxious when I set timed-essay task, I see my students give up writing and leave the task empty. I think timed essay must be in advanced learners not undergraduates
	-Fear of negative evaluation is a source of writing anxiety in classrooms. Such as course criteria, tasks, classmates’ judgment, teacher judgment, final grades.	Also teacher should help his students in writing by Hook or Crook, I mean by any possible means”. (Teacher Faisal) “Well, I think writing anxiety might be happens, when you're writing and thinking about the final grade and assessment this will get me nervous” (Student1). “Yeah, I think any student would feel anxious about the grad and negative evaluation. Exactly. Yeah. About performance. For me, I'll be worried about the grades too, but I think I'll do my best. No one will blame me because I did my best” (Student 2). “Indeed, yes, when low grade and low evaluation came out, it would influence my evaluation. I become anxious thinking how is my grade looks, I might fail in future tasks”. (Student 4). “My teacher is demanding, he always gives 2 tasks in the week and told us to practise in weekends, this makes me anxious and not relaxed all the period of the term”. (Student 1).

Theme	Subtheme	Quotes
		<p>“A teacher told us to write and present it in front of students. when I presented mine, I had some mistakes, and I felt that the students laughed at me and make fun of me. the teacher did not do anything to stop it unfortunately” (Student 5).</p> <p>“when my classmates show me their grades and asked me about mine. I feel blocked and my classmates will laugh at me due to my performance”. (Student6)</p> <p>“When my teacher gives us a task to write and it has many strict instructions, I feel anxious because I expect to write something I know and the rest I don’t know I thought it might reduce my grade”. (student 7).</p> <p>“Spelling-mistakes caused many problems to me, it embarrassed me. I feel anxious when my teacher asked me what you mean by certain words and phrases”. (student 8).</p> <p>Sometimes I pretend I understand all the questions during the tasks. I feel anxious to ask my teacher, I think he would expect my writing is low and poor”. (Student 9).</p> <p>“I am anxious when my teacher read my writing answers and highlight the mistakes in front of my classmates, this is so embarrassing and terrifying”. (student 10).</p>

Theme	Subtheme	Quotes
	3-Lack of students' understanding is a source of writing anxiety in classrooms. Such as comprehension, speaking, lack of vocabulary.	<p>“what scares me is when final marks come out, the department would post them in the public boards at the campus within our names and grades. This way terrifies me because of the judgments I will have from my colleagues and teachers”. (student 9).</p> <p>It's really anxiety when my teacher required to write the tasks by hand not by Laptops because my font in English is not good and I feel embarrassed and anxious” (Student 8).</p> <p>“I feel anxious when my teacher speaks quickly because I can't get the whole words and phrases” (Student 1).</p> <p>“I feel anxious because I can't understand the lessons and write fully due to the lack of vocabulary”. (Student6).</p> <p>“I pretend that I understand due to the teacher's nervousness and tiredness, I can notice it” (Student 7).</p>
	4- Classroom environment is a source of writing anxiety in classrooms. Such as class size, design, lack of posts and creativity. Formality in classroom	<p>“I can't understand the lesson or ask my teacher a question when the classroom is noisy and having many students, I feel shy and anxious”. (student 10).</p> <p>“my teacher speaks very fast in the classroom, and I couldn't understand the lesson clearly”. (Student 5).</p> <p>“my teacher always writes and speaks in advanced English language and it's difficult to comprehend sometimes” (Student8).</p>

Theme	Subtheme	Quotes
		<p>“I feel anxious to study and write when the class is small and includes more than 50 students, I can’t think sometimes” (student 5).</p> <p>“I feel boring and anxious during the formal silent classroom such as lack of cooperation and activities” (Student 6).</p> <p>“the formal class is creepy and the wall in my classroom is empty, there is no boards ideas or motivational phrases”. (student 7).</p> <p>“I dislike the classroom when the tables are linked not separated, so, no personal space I feel anxious”. (Student 9)</p> <p>“some classroom has no heat system or air conditioning in winter which discourage me to attend the class and study”. (Student 10).</p>
	<p>5- Exam:</p> <p>is a source of writing anxiety in classrooms.</p> <p>Such as strict instructions, sudden quizzes, and times and essays.</p>	<p>“I feel anxious and overwhelmed when my teacher surprised us by quizzes in writing classroom” (Student 3).</p> <p>“I hate sudden quizzes; I feel creepy and anxious”. (student 2).</p> <p>“I feel anxious because I have to read the details of the strict instructions on the exam booklet” (student 4).</p> <p>“quizzes and sudden tasks made me extremely anxious”. (Student 1).</p>

Theme	Subtheme	Quotes
		<p>“written exams time puts me in stressful situations, and I become anxious” (student 6).</p> <p>“I think when we have plenty of time in exam, anxiety would fade away” (Student 7).</p> <p>“my teacher gave us set of essays topics to choose in the exam which caused me overwhelmed and anxious” (Student 5).</p> <p>“In exams there should not be an essay to write, I caused anxiety and lack of confidence” (Student 8).</p> <p>“This term I have 25 hours, I can’t prepare all the courses. I know I’ll feel overwhelmed by the exam period” (Student2).</p> <p>“I feel anxious and distracted in exam period due to lack of preparation and also loads of modules I have had” (student 3).</p> <p>“I can’t prepare 8 modules at weekends. It caused anxiety and ambiguity” (student 4).</p>
	6- Lack of preparation. Is a source of anxiety, due to loads of courses, distraction, challenges in some courses.	<p>“I feel stressed sometimes because of the tasks we have the preparations and attentions we have to provide in the term” (Student 5).</p>
	7. Work team in writing class. Negative	<p>“My mistake I don’t prepare properly before exam, so that why I am anxious always in exams” (Student 6).</p>

Theme	Subtheme	Quotes
	Competition and fear, roles of students.	<p>“Some courses like writing are difficult to prepare it requires a lot of readings, so that’s why I am anxious in writing”. (Student7).</p> <p>“I don’t feel relaxed in working groups because I feel my classmates judge me thoughts and writing” (student 1).</p> <p>“I become anxious when my teacher required to gather in groups, I like independent works”. (Student 2).</p> <p>“Working in groups with classmates is terrifying competition to me”. (teacher 3).</p> <p>“I feel overwhelmed because my classmates will compete and know my language skills in working groups” (Student 4).</p> <p>“I feel anxious in work group because there is only one leader who speaks, and the rest are silent” (Student 6).</p> <p>“I feel anxious in work groups because my teacher will stare at me and judge my competition” (Student 7).</p> <p>“I feel anxious Working in groups it is negative competition”. (Student 8).</p>
	8- Previous writing experiences. Style, lack of training, experiences, and easy courses.	<p>“Writing at university level increases my anxiety because when I was in high school, my teacher didn’t train us properly to write in daily basis” (Student1).</p> <p>“At high school we didn’t study writing properly because the course</p>

Theme	Subtheme	Quotes
		was short and general, so that's why we struggle in writing". (Student 2).
		"I feel anxious towards writing at university because in high school we used to write short sentences" (Student 3).
		"Writing style in high school is easy, whereas at university is challenging" (Student 4).
		"I feel anxious because my previous teacher at high school didn't train us well in writing". (Student 5).
		"I wish I could have good teacher at high school, so I can handle the challenging of writing currently" (Student6).
2-Teacher	9- Lack of motivation in writing classroom.	"the writing in high school was not helpful, so this the potential reason of my anxiety". (Student7).
		"my teacher hasn't promoted my grade after the feedback I changed, I feel writing is boring and challenging" (Student 1).
		"I can say with pretty much 90% of them, tries to help the students get out of this anxiety. But some teachers trigger anxiety for student by talking loud in class. yes, some of teachers are negative and their words threatens me I can't write and speak sometimes". (Student 1).
		"I met a lot of teachers; I interacted with a lot of doctors. Yeah, we have
	3-The teacher as a source of writing anxiety. Such as: attitude, personality, formality, feedback, lack of motivation and communication, reaction, and Teacher's L1 language.	

Theme	Subtheme	Quotes
		<p>good teachers and bad teachers. We have bad writing materials too. Some teacher's personalities are causing anxiety in in learning English" (Student 2).</p> <p>Foreigner teachers they don't communicate with us. they are strict formal. This demotivated me in many courses including writing". (Student 2).</p> <p>"I dislike some courses due to some teacher's behaviour. I remember I got into a class with my cup of coffee. The teacher was upset and told me to get the cup out of class. I think he wanted to show his discipline management, I stopped participation then". (Student 3).</p> <p>"I feel anxious, when my teacher give me negative feedback with full of details like punctuations, grammar mistakes. I like it when talk to me verbally is better." (Student 4).</p> <p>"Yeah, that's an excellent question. I feel nervous when others know my name. I will explain it furthermore. So, for example, when a teacher tells us to write something, whether it's an essay or a short story, etc.</p> <p>And then he would tell us to write our names and then come out on the board and read it out loud, I would feel nervous because I feel teacher and</p>

Theme	Subtheme	Quotes
		<p>others would judge my writing is bad and inadequate.” (student 5).</p> <p>“That's a very important thing, there is lack of motivation of our teachers. I wish that all teachers remind their students that they should never give up writing. It's okay to struggle, it's okay to fall and then get up but not to give up”. (Student 5).</p> <p>“I feel anxious and disappointed when my teacher prizes some good students for their performance in writing and some tasks in front of us. I think it's not fair for some students” (Student 6). Some teachers are firmly strict, and they don't show any connection with their students. So that would affect me. Even the greatest students would be affected by that. So, if the teacher wasn't connected with his students by any means, that would affect them negatively even when writing the writing exam”. (Student 6)</p> <p>“I feel anxious when Some teachers translate the whole story or piece of writing in classroom from English to Arabic. in the meantime, they don't allow us to bring a translator tool in exam. This would freeze me to write in exam”. (Student 7).</p> <p>“I remember in first year I was going to change my major; my teacher told us if you speak Arabic in English classroom, you will get low mark in</p>

Theme	Subtheme	Quotes
		your assessment. This is terrifying". (Student 8).
		"I like to speak English in class, but I remember I was anxious when I met my teacher outside the building, he was speaking English, and I was speaking Arabic. I think he is so strict and formal". (Student 4).
		"Some teachers look upset about my repetition; I feel anxious when they are not happy. There was a teacher once told me that you are a good writer, but you must stop repetition. You do a lot of repetition. I felt like threatening about my progress. His tone of voice was a bit high". (Student 9).
		"I remember last year teacher said no one can't take A+ in this course due to its demanding requirements, you need a lot of efforts. This is Absolut frustration" (Student 10)
		"Most of teachers are Strick when they communicate in English. The lecture is very formal". (student3).
		"What frustrates me is when my teacher prefers individual work during writing tasks likewise an essay; some teachers allow their students to cooperate and share thoughts in their writing tasks groups". (Student 8).
		Some teachers use grades like weapons specially before exams, so we are always anxious. (Student 10).

Theme	Subtheme	Quotes
		<p>“I dislike it and I feel anxious when my teacher compared between me and my colleague during course assessment”. (Student 7).</p> <p>“I don’t know why personalities of foreigner teachers are strict and more formal than the local teachers. Mostly they are chilling”. (Student 1).</p> <p>“I remembered las year my teacher required summary of the course, writing 2 essays in the last 2 months of the course.in order to enhance our mid-grades. It’s too much and all the students were struggling”. (Student 1).</p>

Appendix 9 Kondo and Ying-Ling's Coping Strategies as applied by this study's participants

Themes	Strategy	Quotes
Strategies suggested to be used by Saudi undergraduate learners to reduce their anxiety.	Positive Thinking	<p>“To reduce my anxiety in exams, I think of my family and positive memories I spent with them then I felt thrilled”. (Student1)</p> <p>“I read and think positively to myself that I will pass the exam then I found it easy”. (Student2).</p> <p>“Thinking positively during exam helped me to become calm”. (Student 3).</p> <p>“When I get anxious during speaking and writing, I think of my teacher’s smile, and I feel calm”. (Student 4).</p> <p>“My teacher told me to think always positively in the learning process”. (Student 5).</p> <p>“When I become anxious in classroom, I tend to lower my head and think of motivational and positive stories of successful people during challenges”. (Student 6)</p> <p>“During my anxiety I visualise and imagine myself as one of the best teachers in the futures” (Student 7).</p> <p>“I stick to think positively in any anxiety situation I have during test or speaking in classroom”. (Student 8).</p> <p>“I think the best way to lower your anxiety in exam or speaking is to visualize and imagine positive scenery and forget about anxiety” (Student 9).</p>

Themes	Strategy	Quotes
		<p>"I talk to myself in quizzes or exams that there are many chances left for me. So, I don't feel anxious". (Student10).</p>
Relaxation Techniques		<p>"When I become anxious in speaking or writing English, I always hold my hand and open it to reduce my anxiety". (Student 1).</p> <p>"In exam or speaking I always have water because my tongue becomes dried when I get anxious". (Student 2).</p> <p>"I turn up my eyes in speaking or writing, so I become relaxed". (Student 4).</p> <p>"I deep breath before I speak and write to avoid anxiety". (Student 5).</p> <p>"Before exam or presentation, I exercise for half an hour to combat anxiety". (Student 6).</p> <p>"During writing exam, I draw and write on my notes, so I can reduce my tension and anxiety". (Student 7).</p> <p>"When I get anxious in writing I stick to drawing and highlighting words". (Student 8).</p> <p>"I breathe deeply and meditate during my anxiety, so I become relaxed and calm". (Student 9).</p>
Working in groups		<p>"I feel confident when I work with a group, I never feel anxious" (Student 1).</p> <p>"Working in groups helps an individual not to be in charge of the whole task given, so few students shared the task and that reduced my anxiety". (Student 2).</p>

Themes	Strategy	Quotes
		<p>“Working in groups is shared responsibilities and that helps reducing anxiety” (Student 3).</p> <p>“I like working in groups, it’s motivating myself and reduced my anxiety”. (Student 4).</p> <p>“I feel excited to work with groups and that reduces any feelings of anxiety”. (Student 5).</p> <p>“Working with groups helps me overcomes my anxiety because nobody can notice my anxiety”. (Student 6)</p> <p>“Working with groups in quizzes helps me write and share many thoughts without anxiety”. (Student 7).</p> <p>“Dividing the class into groups help many anxious students to share and write effectively”. (Student 8).</p> <p>“When we work together, my teacher doesn’t criticise my ideas in writing, he said groups 1 or 2 is false or correct, and it helps me a lot” (Student 9).</p>
	No strategy used	<p>“I can’t imagine anxiety in writing task and exam”. (Student 1).</p> <p>“I never thought I am anxious, so I can write properly”. (Student 4).</p> <p>“I have a private teacher to help me master English language specially writing, so I’ll not be anxious in future tasks never think of anxiety”. (Student 6).</p>
	Preparation	<p>“I study well before i go to class to avoid any sudden quizzes or test that caused me anxious” (Student 2).</p>

Themes	Strategy	Quotes
		<p>“My brother teaches me every day, so I feel confidence about my progress” (Student 4).</p> <p>“My teacher everyday requests a revision of our next lesson, I prepare week, so that helps a lot”. (Student 5).</p> <p>“Preparation helps me succussed all my courses and I don’t feel anxious during classroom” (Student 6).</p>
Motivation		<p>“My teacher’s supportive words help me combatted my anxiety and increased my confidence”. (Student 1)</p> <p>“My teacher’s words and behaviour play a role in my anxiety level in classroom” (Student 2).</p> <p>“I like my teacher when he says you have got a plenty of time and you don’t need to be worried, I felt calm” (Student 3).</p> <p>“My teacher is my role model in the educational process, he supported me when I failed once, and he gave me a chance to retest and encouraged me” (Student 4).</p> <p>“My teacher speaks nicely and encourage us always in the classroom, I like his character and his course”. (Student 5).</p> <p>“When I get my feedback, my teacher provides me a chance to write again and. I feel encouraged and pleased during the course”. (Student 6).</p> <p>“My teacher’s words and encouragements are supporting myself to study properly and confidently” (Student 7).</p> <p>“I like a teacher who speaks nicely and encourages me by compliments and motivations” (Student 8).</p>

Themes	Strategy	Quotes
		<p>That's a very important thing; there is lack of motivation of our teachers. I wish that all teachers remind their students that they should never give up writing. It's okay to struggle, it's okay to fall and then get up but not to give up". (Student 5).</p> <p>"I feel anxious and disappointed when my teacher praises some good students for their performance in writing in front of us. I think it's unfair for some students, we need encouragement and compliments" (Student 6).</p>
	Peer Seeking	<p>"I always rely on my peers for revision a task and writing, so I feel confident". (Student 1).</p> <p>"I share my answers with my peers, so I can check my answers and correct them in case". (Student 2).</p> <p>"Sharing my assignment with my colleague helps me double check my task and reduce my anxiety of fail" (Student 3).</p> <p>"I like to share my essay task with my colleague, I feel calmer and confidence" (Student 4).</p> <p>"I feel anxious to do my task individually compared to peer sharing I feel confident" (Student 5).</p> <p>"My peer helps me by sharing thoughts in a writing task also we can exchange ideas" (Student 6).</p> <p>"I feel motivated and active to be with a peer in classroom". (Student 7).</p>

