English Writing Anxiety among College Non-English Majors in Jiangxi University of Engineering

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Abstract
College English writing is a very important part of college English class, but for non-English majors, it is inevitable to have anxiety when facing English writing. Therefore, this study adopted a mixed-method to investigate the current situation and analyze the causes of writing anxiety to put forward some suggestions that can alleviate writing anxiety and effectively affect the teaching of second-language writing. The sampling method used in the research is random sampling. A total of 30 non-English majors enrolled in the Jiangxi University of Engineering. It is hoped that the findings of this study can give inspiration to the English writing class for non-English majors.
Keywords: Anxiety, English Writing Anxiety, Non-English Majors, English Writing Class, Jiangxi University of Engineering.

Introduction
College English is an indispensable subject in higher education, but there are still many problems in college English teaching. In order to improve the test scores of non-English majors (such as the pass rate of CET-4 and CET-6), colleges pay more attention to the cultivation of English vocabulary memory, reading ability and listening skills, which directly leads to the insufficiency of English writing ability of non-English majors. The English writing course is challenging to activate students' interest, unable to achieve exemplary teaching effect, and even makes them have severe writing anxiety, and has not been well solved. Besides, the College English Curriculum Requirements issued by the Ministry of Education has strict requirements on listening, speaking, reading and translating for non-English majors and put forward a higher requirement on writing. In the face of the new social situation and educational form, teachers should update their teaching ideas in time, contact the actual situation of students, enhance their self-confidence, and flexibly use various types of writing teaching methods.

Writing is both an emotional and cognitive activity (Cheng, 2002). According to Grabe and Kaplan (1996), it is believed that writing is a developmental ability that can be cultivated. Therefore, emotional factors play a crucial role in the writing process, among which writing anxiety is an essential factor. Daly and Miller (1975) first proposed "writing anxiety" and

considered it as "an individual difference in a situation and a specific discipline, involving a person's general tendency to approach or avoid writing, accompanied by a certain degree of evaluation." Daly (1978) believed that "individuals with low writing anxiety performed significantly better than those with high writing anxiety in the writing skill test". Daly has conducted many studies on the first language (L1) writing anxiety using the WAT (Writing Anxiety Test) to measure writing anxiety. However, second language writing is more concerned. Second language learners experience anxiety more frequently and tend to have a negative attitude towards writing in their second language (Krashen, 1982). Anxiety, an influential critical variable in second language acquisition, has been widely concerned. For a long time, there have been many studies on anxiety in second language acquisition (MacIntyre et al., 2003; Woodrow, 2006; Sparks & Patton, 2013; Meng, 2018; Rashid et al., 2021), but the research objects are mainly high school students or college students majoring in English (Zhang, 2010). Although more and more researchers have paid attention to second language writing anxiety, the source of such anxiety has not been determined. Therefore, this study investigates the second language writing anxiety of non-English majors. The primary purpose of this study is to determine the current situation of non-English majors' writing anxiety and analyze the causes of writing anxiety to help alleviate students' second language writing anxiety. It also enables teachers better to understand students' anxiety in the teaching process and adjust their writing strategies. Help students to reduce the level of anxiety in English writing and ultimately improve students' writing ability.

Literature Review
Writing Anxiety
The second language learning anxiety research is developed based on anxiety research (Hilgard & Atkinson, 1971; Eysenck, 1979; Gardner, 1991). Second language writing anxiety is a branch of second language anxiety (Zhang & Zhu, 2012). At first, many researchers have been focusing on the study of speaking or listening anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre, Noels & Clement, 1997). Because they think listening and speaking are common problems for foreign language learners. Daly and Miller (1975) first proposed that writing anxiety refers to the anxious behaviours of learners in the writing process, such as avoiding writing tasks and worrying about others' reading or evaluating their compositions. It has also been pointed out that writing anxiety is not a general psychological pressure but intense anxiety and fear that learners show when facing writing tasks (Daly & Miller, 1975). Scott and Rockwell (1997) believed that English writing anxiety is an avoidance tendency caused by learners' poor performance in the writing process related to the writing situation. Cheng (1999) proposed that foreign language writing anxiety, as a special kind of language learning anxiety specifically related to foreign language writing, needs special measuring tools. Then Cheng (2004) elaborated on the definition of foreign language writing anxiety and compiled the Second Language Writing Anxiety Scale. The test has high reliability and validity and is suitable for measuring foreign language writing anxiety. It consists of 22 items scored on a five-point Likert scale. The scale divides writing anxiety into three factors: somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety and avoidance behaviour. Based on the Second Language Writing Anxiety Scale compiled by Cheng (2004), Guo and Qin (2010) classified English writing anxiety into four categories: conceptual anxiety, classroom teaching anxiety, avoidance anxiety, and confidence anxiety.

In terms of comparing the differences in English writing anxiety among different writing groups, Daly (1977) points out that learners with high writing anxiety tend to write fewer

words and sentences than those with low writing anxiety. Sun (2012) claimed that multiple comparisons reveal that the difference of writing scores is significant between the high-anxiety group and low-anxiety group, the moderate-anxiety group and low-anxiety group, but not between the high-anxiety group and moderate-anxiety group. Naghmeh and Akbar (2015) studied 45 foreign language learners according to Cheng (2004)' s second language writing anxiety scale and found that men had a high degree of cognitive anxiety but no significant differences in physical anxiety and avoidance behaviours. Meng (2018)' s research on writing anxiety was carried out among senior students. It was found that high score students had the lowest degree of anxiety, while low score students had the highest degree of anxiety, and there was no significant difference between middle and low group students. Abu (2005) claimed that poor writing skills caused anxiety for writing skills. In terms of the correlation between English writing anxiety and other factors, Backman (1976) studied some Venezuelan students learning English in the United States, and he did not find the relationship between anxiety and English performance. Eysenck (1979) believed that students with high anxiety did not necessarily have poor academic performance. Young (1991) found that there was no significant correlation between anxiety and oral performance when students' language level was controlled. Clementetal (1997) believed that only in a specific learning environment does anxiety have a direct relationship with foreign language learning performance; that is, a successful learning experience increases learners' confidence gradually, while an unsuccessful learning experience increases their anxiety. Erkan and Saban (2011) investigated students' writing anxiety and writing performance in a Turkish university and found that writing anxiety was negatively correlated with writing performance. The results of Sun (2012)'s study demonstrate that there exists a significant negative correlation between writing anxiety and students' writing achievements. Soleimani et al (2020) indicated that writing self-efficacy and writing motivation had a positive and significant relationship with global L2 writing performance while L2 writing anxiety was a different variable from them, indicating a significant but negative correlation with L2 writing performance.

The Comprehensive Theoretical Basis
The Affective Filter Hypothesis
The Affective Filter Hypothesis is one of the theories of Krashen, an American linguist, in which emotion refers to learners' motivation, attitude and emotional state (Jia, 2006). Lin (2008) pointed out that the affective filter hypothesis is a hypothesis in second language acquisition theory that states that a language learner cannot learn if they have an adverse effect (e.g., embarrassment or self-consciousness) because they have an effective filter that ignores the comprehensible input. This hypothesis forms part of Stephen Krashen's second language acquisition theory but predates Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition. (Dulay & Burt, 1977). According to the affective filter hypothesis, the effect affects acquisition, but not learning, by facilitating or preventing comprehensible input from reaching the language acquisition device. In other words, affective variables such as fear, nervousness, boredom, and resistance to change can affect acquiring a second language by preventing information about the second language from reaching the language areas of the mind. Therefore, the Affective filter hypothesis implies that in our English teaching, the teachers should pay more attention to learners' affective filter and create a relaxed situation that encourages a low filter to facilitate second language acquisition.

Methodology

Research Questions

The research aims to understand the current situation of writing anxiety of non-English majors in Jiangxi University of Engineering, and analyze the causes of SLWA, so as to put forward some suggestions that can alleviate the SLWA and affect the teaching of second-language writing effectively. Based on the above research purposes, the following two research questions are determined in this study.

(1) Do non-English majors in Jiangxi University of Engineering have second language writing anxiety? To what extent?

(2) What are the main causes of non-English majors' second language writing anxiety?

Research Participants

In order to ensure the reliability of the sample, the objects of this study were selected from the students of the faculty of Engineering in the Jiangxi University of Engineering, where the author taught. 30 students were randomly selected from a total of 124 students. The sampling method used in the research is random sampling. Random sampling gives each individual an equal chance of being selected. 30 subjects were aged between 18 and 20. All classes have the same weekly English teaching hours, teaching content, and teaching objectives. All these improve the authenticity of research data. For non-English majors, it is essential to pass CET-4 and CET-6. Of course, it is also challenging for those who do not study English or do not like to learn English.

Nevertheless, because of these English tests, students will study harder. Students often turn to teachers for help during this period and complain of anxiety. Therefore, 30 non-English majors were selected as the research objects. In addition, to understand the causes of non-English majors' Anxiety in English writing from multiple perspectives, this study conducted personal interviews with 6 students. Through the analysis of 30 students' questionnaires, the top 6 students with high anxiety were selected.

Research Instruments

This study adopted a mixed research method, questionnaires and interviews as research tools to investigate the current situation of English writing anxiety among non-English majors at the Jiangxi University of Engineering. The questionnaire used Cheng's English Writing Anxiety Scale (EWAS) (2004), and SPSS26.0 was used for descriptive analysis and correlation analysis of questionnaire data. In addition, to further understand the causes of anxiety about English writing, we selected 6 students to interview as a supplement to the questionnaire survey. The interview questions were based on Meng's (2018) interviews with students.

Questionnaires

The questionnaire of this study is divided into two parts. The first part is about the basic information of students. The second part was a questionnaire adopted and adapted by Cheng (2004), English Writing Anxiety Scale (EWAS), which aimed to assess students' English writing anxiety. There were 22 items in the questionnaire, using a 5-point Likert scale: 1 = totally disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 =neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = fully agree. Besides, seven of the 22 items' responses would be reverse encoded. The maximum score of the questionnaire is 110 and the minimum score is 22. The higher score for each question, the more anxious the objects were. In short, the questionnaire presented three factors of writing anxiety, namely somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety and avoidance behavior, as detailed below:

Table 1

Descriptive of Somatic Anxiety, Cognitive Anxiety and Avoidance Behavior

Factors	Items	Meaning
Cognitive anxiety	1、3、7、9、14、17、20、21	Learner's fear of receiving negative evaluation.
Avoidance behavior	4、5、10、12、16、18、22	Learners' avoidance of English writing.
Somatic anxiety	2、6、8、11、13、15、19	Learners' physical responses to English writing.

Interview

The questionnaire is mainly used to assess the general situation of English writing anxiety. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct in-depth understanding through interviews. In order to further study the causes of English writing anxiety, it selected 6 students to interview as a supplement to the questionnaire survey. Through the analysis of 30 students' questionnaires, the 6 students with high anxiety were selected. The interview questions were based on Meng's (2018) interviews. The author recorded the students' interviews with a recording pen. Subsequently, the author classifies all the contents and analyzes the interview texts.

Data Analysis

The data of non-English major students' English writing anxiety questionnaire were quantitatively analyzed by statistical software SPSS26.0. What's more, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire was verified, and descriptive statistical analysis, correlation analysis were conducted, aiming to understand the current situation of writing anxiety of non-English majors, explore the causes of writing anxiety, and find out some suggestions and inspirations for alleviating English writing anxiety of non-English majors.

Results and Discussion

In this part, descriptive statistics are used to analyze the level of students' anxiety in somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety and avoidance behavior, and students' general situation of writing anxiety and which factor is more prominent in writing anxiety. At the same time, Pearson correlation test is used to verify whether there is correlation between the three factors of writing anxiety.

Table 2
The Writing Anxiety Level

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Variance
Cognitive anxiety	30	33.00	40.00	35.9333	.31048	1.70057	2.892
Avoidance behavior	30	29.00	35.00	32.3000	.30381	1.66402	2.769
Somatic anxiety	30	24.00	34.00	29.0333	.46605	2.55266	6.516
Valid N	30						

As shown in Table 2, we can see the overall situation of students' writing anxiety. The mean value of students' somatic anxiety was 29.033, cognitive anxiety was 35.933, and avoidance behaviour was 32.3, indicating that the mean value of cognitive anxiety was the highest among the three dimensions, which meant that students' cognitive abilities were cognitive anxiety was higher than somatic anxiety and avoidance behaviour. Somatic anxiety has a minor influence on students' writing anxiety; that is to say, students' English writing anxiety is not affected by physical anxiety. The avoidance behaviour of students is to a moderate degree. According to the standards developed by Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995), the author found that students had the lowest level of body anxiety, so it can be considered that students generally do not have somatic anxiety. The level of cognitive anxiety is the highest because students are not satisfied with their current writing level and are eager to change an emotional state. The avoidance behaviour at the medium level indicates that some students lack confidence in their English writing ability and fear that teachers or classmates will give their compositions a lousy evaluation.

Table 3
Relationship between Cognitive anxiety, Avoidance behavior and Avoidance behavior

		cognitive anxiety	avoidance behavior	somatic anxiety
Cognitive anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	-.005	.128
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.980	.502
	N	30	30	30
Avoidance behavior	Pearson Correlation	-.005	1	.265
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.980		.156
	N	30	30	30
Somatic behavior	Pearson Correlation	.128	.265	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.502	.156	
	N	30	30	30

As shown in Table 3, P values of cognitive anxiety, avoidance behavior and somatic anxiety were all greater than 0.01, indicating that there was no significant correlation between the three dimensions of writing anxiety.

To conclude, non-English majors generally have English writing anxiety. The three factors of writing anxiety are cognitive anxiety, avoidance behavior and somatic anxiety, which are much higher than avoidance behavior and somatic anxiety. Secondly, avoidance behavior is also common no matter whether the scores are good or bad. Non-English majors will take an attitude of avoidance and procrastination in English writing. Finally, most students do not have somatic anxiety.

Analysis on Factors that Affect Writing Anxiety (The open-ended Interview)
Error Correction

Interviewee 3: "My English grammar is very poor, so I am afraid of teachers correcting compositions. Especially when I saw the score of my composition, I lack in confidence".

Interviewee 5: "Every time I hand in the writing, the teacher would point out my mistakes clearly. Sometimes there are too many mistakes, and the teacher would explain them to me. The teacher is very careful to correct our mistakes, but when I see so many mistakes, I personally feel very uncomfortable. And I think my English level is very low".

They are afraid of making mistakes and do not want to risk exposing their mistakes in front of others (Young, 1990). As these two interviewers said, although students are grateful for the teachers' correcting their compositions, they do not like this behaviour. When they see many mistakes in their compositions, their self-esteem will be hurt, and they will lose interest in English writing, resulting in severe writing anxiety. They always believe that if there are too many mistakes in their compositions, their English level is poor. However, this is not the case for all students, and many students still hope teachers can appropriately correct their mistakes. Because if the teacher never helps them correct their mistakes, they still feel anxious about the words or sentence structures they use.

Fear of Negative Evaluation

Interviewee 1: "My English score is not good. Every time I get the composition score, I do not want my classmates to see, because he will laugh at me, although I know it is a joke, but it makes me feel very ashamed".

Interviewee 2: "I don' t like the teacher to judge our composition. For non-English majors, our writing ability is generally poor, so the teacher will encourage us. But most of time the teacher will give negative comments on our compositions. For example, too many mistakes in composition, many languages are influent and so on".

Fear of negative evaluation refers to the individual's worry and fear of others' negative or harmful evaluation (Chen, 2002). It can cause test anxiety social anxiety and influence helping behaviour (Liu & Zhang, 2010). Furthermore, in the language class, most students fear being negatively evaluated by their peers and instructors (Young, 1990). Student's view being explicitly pointed out by a teacher as a negative evaluation. Similarly, a meagre score can hurt their self-confidence. If they are excellent in their professional courses, as non-English majors, their English writing ability is not good. They will directly give up learning English. They view peer evaluations and teacher guidance as unfavourable. Because most of the time, teachers' comments on the essays of non-English majors are just pointing out their mistakes. Therefore, students should pay attention to teachers' evaluation of them and to peers' evaluation, both of which can effectively reduce writing anxiety.

Insufficient Language Reserve

As the interviewee 6 pointed out, "When it comes to English writing, I get very anxious. Every time I write a composition, I will write it in Chinese first and then translate it. But a lot of Chinese cannot be translated, so the written composition is very Chinese. Moreover, my compositions are all pieced together with some simple sentences or words. Every time I write a composition, I worry that the teacher will deduct marks for not enough words, so I will find some long sentence structures to piece together".

As an old saying goes, "It is when you are using what you have learned from books that you wish you had read more books than you have." The lack of language knowledge is considered to be an important cause of English writing anxiety (Latif, 2007). First of all, due to the lack of English vocabulary, students cannot master more advanced expressions. They can only list simple sentences to piece together and cannot accurately express their own writing ideas. Secondly, students are not willing to spend time to recite English writing sample essays, which makes students unable to flexibly output writing. In addition, some unfamiliar writing topics can also cause writing anxiety. In a word, the lack of English language knowledge and the inability to flexibly use writing skills make students' writing anxiety very high.

Negative Attitude and Cognitive Misunderstanding

Interviewee 2: "I am a non-English major, my major is not English, so I don't like learning English, especially English writing. I don't want to spend a lot of time on English writing".

Interviewee 4: "I won't be able to use English in my work. For me, learning English is just to pass the exam, so the enthusiasm is not high, I don't feel too much about this aspect".

Interviewee 5: "I wouldn't have taken the initiative to learn English if I didn't have to pass CET 4 or CET 6. I don't think language courses will be effective in the short term. I'd rather study more of my own specialized courses".

Interviewee 6: "Every time I see my English writing grades, I feel very insecure, but I am doing very well in my major courses".

Avoidance behavior is an important factor for students' writing anxiety. Students' negative attitude and wrong cognition towards English writing confirm the existence of avoidance behavior. Non-English major students hold negative attitude towards English writing and have wrong understanding. For non-English major students, they are not willing to spend a lot of time on learning English writing. Because they think the purpose of learning English is just to get the English certificate. And there are quite a number of students to the English examination certificate has no attitude. They never take the initiative to write in English, and because of this, these students lack writing practice. Of course, there are also very serious negative emotions about English writing subconsciously. They believe that it is torture for them to write in English. There are even a small number of students taking courses unrelated to English writing in English writing classes.

Recommendations and Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the non-English majors of the Jiangxi University of Engineering generally have writing anxiety, which is manifested in that writing anxiety exists in students regardless of their English scores. In terms of the factors of writing anxiety, it ranked in the order of cognitive anxiety, avoidance behaviour and somatic anxiety. Moreover, no matter what level of the students, avoidance behaviour is common among non-English majors. Furthermore, there is no correlation between the three factors of writing anxiety.

What's more, in addition to the three common writing anxiety factors, error correction, fear of negative evaluation, insufficient language reserve, negative attitude, and cognitive misunderstanding are also the primary sources of writing anxiety.

Therefore, this research once again confirms that Krashen's affective filter hypothesis is one of the important factors in second language learning. Because he studied how emotional factors, including anxiety, affect the process of second language acquisition. And McKain (1991) pointed out that emotional factors affect English writing, and anxiety is one of them, but it can be alleviated. So, this research attempts to find some enlightenment from these factors to alleviate students' anxiety in English writing. It provides new critical thinking for college English teachers and students. How can teachers help non-English majors to overcome such negative psychological state, so that they can pass cet-4 and CET-6? For teachers, they should give positive feedback on students' s writing, which can help students improve their confidence, stimulate their interest in writing, and alleviate their anxiety in English writing. For students, they should change their negative attitude towards English writing. Meng (2018) claimed that with the help of teachers, students should try to avoid making the same mistakes, gradually enhance writing confidence, and finally improve learning motivation. In summary, there are also some limitations to the study. However, it is hoped that the results of this study can give inspiration to the English writing class of the Jiangxi University of Engineering. It is also hoped that it can arouse the attention of English teachers in Jiangxi University of Engineering to the writing classroom of non-English majors, and guide students to have a positive attitude towards English writing.

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