

## EFL Writing Apprehension: The Macro or the Micro?

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### ABSTRACT

*This study was part of a doctoral project to explore the writing apprehension levels of 121 second-year undergraduate Saudi student writers who were studying English as a foreign language and for specific purposes in a Saudi industrial college. The study draws on Dörnyei's (1994) framework of L2 motivation levels and their micro-motivational conditions in L2 learning situations, and addresses EFL writing apprehension in strategy-related conditions. For data collection, a Writing Strategy Apprehension Scale (WSAS) was developed and adapted from a test designed by John Daly and Michael Miller (1975) and from the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) designed by Cheng (2004). The participants were classified into three levels of apprehension (apprehensive strategy users, average apprehensive strategy users, and low apprehensive strategy users). The results show while the majority of the participants (57.9%) were average in their stress and apprehension levels towards writing strategies, almost a third of them (31.4%) were highly apprehensive. In addition, the most stressful strategies were those that indicate the lack of generating ideas, the care about accuracy, and the follow of teacher's expectations.*

**Keywords:** EFL writing apprehension, EFL writing strategies, undergraduate writing strategies, ESP writing in Saudi Arabia.

### 1. Introduction

Writing is claimed to be an emotional as much a cognitive activity (see McLeod, 1987). Its affective constituents strongly influence all stages of the writing process. Affect includes emotions, feelings, attitudes, and motivation. Interest in writers' affect began in the mid-1970s when Daly and Miller (1975) developed their well-known Writing Apprehension Test (WAT). Daly defines writing apprehension as "the general avoidance of writing situations perceived by individuals to potentially require some amount of writing accompanied by the potential for evaluation of that writing" (Daly, 1979, p. 37). This definition draws a correlation and interaction between three constructs: 1) individual attitudes (e.g., positive or negative judgment); 2) emotions and feelings (e.g., fear or anxiety); and 3) avoidance behaviors (e.g., blocking or resistance). In literature (Hettich, 1994, p.1), these constructs are elusive and so closely related to the extent that it might be difficult or even impossible to precisely identify the relationship between them. Accordingly, investigating this intangible interaction will be out as part of the present study. Operationally, the study defines writing apprehension as 'the abnormally high level of an anxious, nervous, agitated or stressful feeling in a writing-strategy-related situation, regardless of blocking<sup>1</sup> and evaluation'. In other words, the researchers took a strategy-related apprehension as a point of concern for investigation. The current study's definition, therefore, views apprehension as a situational, strategy-based affective construct.

Daly (1985, p. 65-73) classifies writers' perceptions and feelings into two main categories: (1) dispositional, and (2) situational. They seem similar to Spielberger's (1983) trait-state dichotomy of anxiety. The former refers to the somehow consistent feelings such as attitude to writing and writing outcome expectancy (perceived importance and value of writing). The latter refers to task-based feelings like writing anxiety (feelings of discomfort while writing) and writing self-efficacy (confidence in one's writing ability and skills). Daly distinguished between apprehension and anxiety. He viewed apprehension (avoidance of writing situations) as one of the dispositional feelings, while anxiety was seen as a situational feeling.

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<sup>1</sup> A writer's block is defined as "an inability to begin or continue writing for reasons other than a lack of basic skill or commitment" (Rose, 1984, p. 4). Not all blockers are apprehensive and not all apprehensive writers are blocked.

The causes of apprehension can be conceptualized within two theoretical frameworks: (1) the deficit theory, and (2) the interference theory. The deficit theory (see Sparks, Ganschow&Javorsky, 2000) claims that apprehension might be the cause of linguistic deficiency. It argues that only unskilled, poor writers can experience writing apprehension. On the other hand, the interference theory (see Smith, 1984; Horwitz, 2000)says that apprehension interferes with skill development and may interact with low skills, but it is not limited to any ability level.

## **2. Prior Research**

Many studies have been conducted on the macro level of writing apprehension and its causes and effects in learning to write (see the reviews of Daly & Wilson, 1983, p. 327-29; Smith, 1984, p. 1-5; Stapa; 1994, p. 52-56). Nevertheless, very little research has investigated writing strategy-related apprehension. A number of studies (AbdeLatif , 2009; Daud, Daud, & Abu Kassim, 2005; Hassan, 2001; Jones, 1985; Lee &Krashen, 2002) reported that general writing apprehension is caused by or at least associated with language-related writing aspects. For example, Hassan (2001) investigated the impact of writing apprehension on quantity and quality writing of 132 Egyptian university students and found a possible correlation between apprehension and poor skill, lack of proper writing processes, and teacher-centred writing instruction with product-oriented mode of writing. In Daudet *al.*'s (2005) study, Malaysian EFL university students' writing apprehension was also found to correlate positively with the language-related dimensions (namely, vocabulary and language use). The higher they were concerned about those dimensions due to their low proficiency, the higher apprehensive they become. However, there was a non-significant correlation between level of writing apprehension and aspects related to content, organization and mechanics. Furthermore, in a case study to test the implications of Krashen's Monitor hypothesis on L2 writing, Jones (1985) compared two ESL writers: one as a monitor over-user and the other as a monitor under-user. The results revealed that the monitor over-user (the ESL student with an L2 background based on grammar and translation) was an apprehensive writer and had a high focus on form and correctness. The monitor under-user (the ESL student with an L2 background based on communicative competence), on the other hand, showed less concerns with form and surface aspects and instead was able to turn the attention to the process of writing, and discovering meaning.

Conversely, Gungle & Taylor (1989) did not find that high apprehension correlates with attention to form or low apprehension correlates with attention to content. In addition, Masny&Foxall(1992)found that low apprehensive students were more concerned about form than were high apprehensive students. However, the study concluded that process-oriented classroom writing may reduce apprehension since itdeals with exploring ideas and content. Such a view is also supported by Akpinar (2007) who investigated the effect of process-oriented writing instruction on 48-Turkish university students' writing apprehension and other variables. The findings showed that the students who had process-oriented writing instruction experienced less writing apprehension than the participants who had product-oriented writing instruction. However, it is argued that researchers need to be very careful when claiming that certain type of instruction would result in certain type of proposed outcome (Alnufaie & Grenfell, 2012). Although, apprehensive writers might show some concerns about product-related aspects of writing, it would be mistaken to conclude that process-oriented classrooms can alone reduce apprehension. It might be argued that if writing apprehension is associated with language forms and product aspects of writing, this might be due to the lack of adequate product-related rather than process-related writing instruction.

Anyhow, the previous contradictory studies took us to the dictionary definition of apprehension. Apprehensionis the “<sup>2</sup>uneasy anticipation of the future” or the “<sup>3</sup>anxiety about the future, especially about dealing with something unpleasant or difficult”. Thus, is an apprehensive writer worried or nervous about writing per se or about something that he is going to do in writing? This paper is concerned with this question and its potential answer.

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<sup>2</sup>*The American Heritage College Dictionary*

<sup>3</sup>*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*

### 3. Research Questions

It is argued that there is a gap in terms of having a comprehensive catalogue of the negatively and positively affective writing strategies that students use or could use to either promote or demote ESL/EFL writing skills. This study is an attempt to add something to the catalogue of research on writing strategies. The research questions of this study are:

- Based on writing strategy-related apprehension, what are the apprehension levels of EFL college students in a Saudi Arabian context?
- What are the most stressful strategies?
- What are the least stressful strategies?

### 4. Subjects and Research Setting

The population for the research were second-year undergraduate Saudi student writers who are studying English as a foreign language in one of the Saudi industrial colleges: Jubail Industrial College (JIC). The total number of the research population was approximately 400 students, and the total number of the participants who took part in the survey was 121 participants. The population can be described as intermediate<sup>4</sup> non-native speakers and writers of English who speak and write English for specific purposes: technical and business. The selection was on a voluntary basis from 4 writing classes taught by 4 different teachers: two natives and two non-native speakers.

### 5. Writing Apprehension Scales

The majority of the ESL/EFL studies have used the Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) and its L2 version (SLWAT) as a research instruments for measuring writers' apprehension. The Daly-Miller's (1975) Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) is believed to be the first systematic instrument to measure writing apprehension and the most commonly used research tool in measuring ESL/EFL writing apprehension (e.g., Elkhatab, 1984; Hadaway, 1987, Masny&Foxall, 1992; Wu, 1992; Cheng, Horwitz&Schallert, 1999; Lee, 2005). However, many researchers (McKain, 1991; Chip, 1992; Hettich, 1994; Cheng, 2004; Poff, 2004) have criticized the WAT for the following reasons. First, it was developed originally for L1 writers, and some essential aspects of second language might not be considered (Cheng, 2004). Second, there were some questions raised about its validity because it defines apprehension as a uni-dimensional construct but measures more than one construct without subscales (McKain, 1991). Furthermore, the WAT does not make clear distinction "between anxious feelings and attitudes; [...] by distinguishing attitude and anxiety, we can get a clearer picture of the factors that contribute to and constitute writing apprehension (Hettich, 1994, p. 6). Supporting the multidimensional perspective, Cheng (2004) developed what can be considered as the first devised, self-report measure of ESL writing anxiety. She called her measurement tool the 'Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory' (SLWAI). This scale consists of three subscales: Somatic Anxiety, Cognitive Anxiety and Avoidance Behaviour.

Cheng's (2004) ESL writing anxiety scale did not seem completely suitable for the present research. The reason for this is that Cheng (2004, p. 319) defines L2 writing anxiety "as a relatively stable anxiety disposition associated with L2 writing, which involves a variety of dysfunctional thoughts, increased physiological arousal, and maladaptive behaviours". The present research, however, defines writing apprehension as 'the abnormally high level of anxious, nervous, agitated or stressful feelings in ESL/EFL writing-strategy related situations, regardless of blocking and evaluation'. They, therefore, differ in the dispositional-situational nature of apprehension. In addition, Cheng (2004) believes that anxiety is a construct of three independent but associated and interactive constructs, as mentioned above. It is assumed they reinforce each other in some way, leading to writing anxiety. Nevertheless, those constructs seem to be quite incomprehensible to the extent that it might be difficult to precisely identify their relationship or investigate their intangible interaction. Thus, apprehension in this study is specifically and operationally viewed as a situational feeling specific to a writing strategy. Accordingly, such a definition entails to develop an instrument measuring writing apprehension as a situational feeling (strategy-related) rather than cognitive or avoidance behaviour.

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<sup>4</sup> In the intermediate level, students can generally meet the specifications of B1+ level in the Common European Framework.

## 6. Developing and validating a Writing Strategy Apprehension Scale (WSAS)

As noted earlier, WSAS was developed and adapted from Daly and Miller's WAT and Cheng's SLWAI. The WSAS consisted originally of 22 items before reliability amendments (see the appendix). Those items were equally divided into positively loaded items with apprehension and negatively loaded items without apprehension. Both types of items were randomly sequenced to avoid the bias of choice and being evident to the participants. In addition, the scoring system of Daly and Miller's WAT was used to reduce the bias of choice and social desirability. All items were worded to be directly or indirectly related to the micro level of writing strategies except items 13 and 20, which are related to the macro level of English writing in general. The rating scale followed the normally used Likert-scale of five responses: strongly agree=1, agree=2, uncertain=3, disagree=4 and strongly disagree=5.

In the context of developing and validating the scale, three steps were followed: (1) defining writing-strategy apprehension; (2) writing, selecting and adapting the items of the scale; and (3) checking the validity and reliability of the scale.

*The first step* was to define writing apprehension that is more situation-specific and strategy-related than the general-state phenomenon of a foreign language writing apprehension. Writing-strategy apprehension, therefore, is defined as 'the abnormally high level of an anxious, nervous, agitated or stressful feeling in ESL/EFL writing-strategy-related situations, regardless of blocking and fear of evaluation'. This definition, therefore, excludes negative attitudes, blocking and avoidance behaviors (fear of evaluation). It focuses mainly on feelings that are writing-specific and strategy-related.

*The second step* was to select, adapt, and write the items of the test. A number of scales measuring writing apprehension (Daly & Miller, 1975; Hadaway, 1987; Gungle&Taylor, 1989; Masny&Foxall, 1992; Cornwell&McKay, 1999; Hassan, 2001; Cheng, 2004) were reviewed. The review showed that almost all of those scales and others were either a replication or a modification of Daly and Millers' seminal WAT (1975), except Cheng' SLWAI (2004) which is believed to be an original contribution to the measurement of L2 writing apprehension. The researchers, therefore, depended on those two measures for adapting items that are consistent with their definition of writing strategy apprehension. In addition, more items were devised based on readings on language anxiety (Cheng *et al.*, 1999; Horwitz, Horwitz&Cope, 1986) in general, and writing anxiety in particular (Cheng, 2002; 2004). The added and adapted items of the first WSAS (see Appendix) can be illustrated in the following table:

Table 1. Writing-strategy Apprehension Scale Items Source

Daly's and Miller's (1975)		Cheng's (2004)		Added items
Selected Items	Modified Items	Selected Items	Modified Items	
0	2, 22	20	15, 19	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 21.

From Daly and Miller's WAT, no item was selected and 2 items were modified. Item 2, for example (See the appendix), *'I feel nervous when I have to change my ideas'*, is modified from *'I have a terrible time organizing my ideas in a composition course'*. This item originally does not seem to be obviously related to feeling and not worded in a way that makes it seem strategy-related. Writers might be either rigid or flexible in their strategies. Being nervous when changing ideas might indicate a rigid strategic action, and vice versa. Similarly, from Cheng's scale (2004), item 15 and 19 were modified to meet the existing study's definition. In Cheng's scale item 15 says *'I feel my heart pounding when I write English compositions under time constraint'*. Although it measures feeling, it is not directly or indirectly related to any writing strategy. It was, therefore, rewritten to relate it to the strategy of L1 use: *'I feel tense when I write English compositions without using Arabic'*. Moreover, item 19 was modified to start with *'I feel apprehensive'* instead of *'I worry'* because worrying seems to be related to cognition or mental anxiety more than feelings (Cheng, 2004).

*The third step* was to check the validity and the reliability of the WSAS. The scale was piloted twice, for face validity and reliability. Unfortunately, the 22 items of the WSAS were statistically proved to be unreliable. The Cronbach's Alpha was .242. This disappointing result might be due to the low number of the participants in the pilot studies (6 participants only). On the other hand, it was noticed from the statistics that the cause of this

might be the 11 negatively loaded items mentioned above. When they were isolated from the scale, the reliability increased to .652. Still, an alpha of .65 seems to indicate a low reliability.

In the final column of the Item-Total Statistics of the positively loaded items(see table 2 below), you can notice the value that Cronbach's alpha would be if a particular item is deleted from the scale. The table shows that if item 10 (*I feel tense when I write English compositions without using Arabic*) is deleted, the reliability will increase dramatically. Removal of statement 10, therefore, would lead to a big improvement in Cronbach's alpha from .65 to .74. As noted by many SPSS analysts (DeVellis, 1991; George & Mallery, 2003; Pallant, 2005) the Cronbach's alpha of .80 to .89 is very good and .70 is the cut-off value for being acceptable. The value as low as .60 is questionable but it is not uncommon in exploratory research.

Table 2. Item-Total Statistics For The Positively Loaded Items

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Total Correlation	Item-Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1) I feel nervous when I have to change my ideas.	26.3333	27.467	.400	.609
2) I get nervous when editing my writing.	24.8333	30.567	.242	.642
3) It bothers me to revise and reread what I have written.	25.8333	34.967	-.052	.676
4) Grammatical mistakes make me feel apprehensive.	26.3333	27.067	.645	.569
5) Spellings and punctuations are stressful.	26.0000	27.600	.280	.644
6) I get apprehensive when I don't understand what the topic is talking about.	26.3333	27.067	.518	.586
7) I get apprehensive when I don't know the right word to express my ideas.	26.6667	29.067	.821	.581
8) I feel more tense and nervous in writing skill than in other language skills.	26.5000	29.900	.297	.632
9) I feel pressure when I do not write as many words as the teacher expects.	26.8333	33.367	.130	.655
<b>10) I feel tense when I write English compositions without using Arabic.</b>	25.0000	37.600	-.263	.745
11) I feel apprehensive to use expressions and sentence patterns incorrectly.	26.0000	25.200	.849	.529

In addition, and in order to obtain further internal reliability, the split-half reliability (to measure consistency of responses across two randomly divided sets of items) of the 10 items was checked and found .70 on the estimate of Spearman-Brown coefficient. Moreover, the correlation coefficient was .92 for the test-retest method of reliability(to measure consistency of the over-all scores of the participants from time to time). After these acceptable values of reliability, the 10-item scale was used instead of the 22-item one<sup>5</sup>.

The scoring system of the 10-item scale, therefore, has changed after this amendment. It would not be possible to follow the scoring system of Daly and Miller's WAT, noted earlier. The new scoring system is much easier. It depends on adding the points without subtracting. The scores for the levels of apprehension were divided equally for high and low levels. However, we needed to distinguish between the two levels by adding a middle

<sup>5</sup>It was not the main purpose of this study to construct a highly valid and reliable measure of writing-strategy apprehension scale; otherwise, it would be informative to check for construct and convergent validities and do factor analysis.

level where we can acknowledge the grey area. For this area 9scores were given. Adding a middle level is a new contribution in this study since the majority of previous studies in writing apprehension and anxiety used only a cutting score for two levels, which does not seem to be fair.

Table 3. Scores Distribution of Apprehension Levels

10 – 25	26-34	35-50
High apprehensive	Average	Low apprehensive
16 scores	9scores	16 scores

#### Data analysis

Due to the quantitative nature of the research questions, data was analyzed using the SPSS program for descriptive statistics. Two methods of descriptive analysis, therefore, were used (frequency tables and measures of central tendency and dispersion) to be able to summarize the frequency and mean of data for writing strategy-related apprehension levels of the participants and understand the variability of their scores through the standard deviation.

## 7. Results& Discussion

As far as research question 1 is concerned (**Based on writing strategy-related apprehension, what are the apprehension levels of EFL college students in a Saudi Arabian context?**), the participants were tested to know their writing apprehension levels in terms of their writing strategies. In table 3 below, we can see that the participants were classified (based on their scores) into three groups: (1) high apprehensive writers, (2) average apprehensive writers, and (3) low apprehensive writers. The results show that the majority of the participants (57.9%) were normal in their writing strategy-related apprehension. However, almost a third of them (31.4%) reported that they had the abnormally high level of anxious, nervous, agitated or stressful feelings in their writing-strategy related situations. On the other hand, only 10% of the informants ( $N= 13$ ) did not generally have apprehensive feelings towards the statements of the scale.

Table 3. Levels of Writing Strategy-related Apprehension

		Frequency	Valid Per cent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid	More Apprehensive	38	31.4		
	Average Apprehensive	70	57.9	1.7934	.61803
	Low Apprehensive	13	10.7		
	Total	121	100.0		

In addition, as shown in table 4 below, measures of central tendency and dispersion were computed to summarize the data and understand the variability of scores and responses for the participants' strategy-related writing apprehension ( $N=121$ ,  $M=27$ ,  $SD=7$ ), their over-all responses across the scale ( $N=121$ ,  $M=2.7$ ,  $SD=0.7$ ), and their levels of apprehension after scoring ( $N= 121$ ,  $M= 1.7$ ,  $SD=0.6$ ). When you look at the statistics of the 3 means, they show that the participants' scores, responses, and apprehension levels tended to be almost in the middle. This was supported by a low variation in the standard deviation. For example, when we look at the mean of the scale responses, it points to the general tendency for a middle position. The participants were tending to be 'uncertain' about their agreement or disagreement with the scale items. This tendency does not seem to vary a lot across responses ( $SD=0.7$ ).

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Apprehension Scores	121	10.00	50.00	27.0000	7.07931
Scale Responses	121	1.00	5.00	2.7099	.70586
Levels of Apprehension	121	1.00	3.00	1.7934	.61803

Regarding research questions two and three (**2- what are the most stressful strategies? 3- what are the least stressful strategies?**), table 5 below ranks the scale items in terms of their stress and apprehension based on the participants' frequency of agreement. It also describes how anxious, nervous, agitated and stressful feelings are

conceived in the scale statements. For example, item 1 (*I get apprehensive when I don't understand what the topic is talking about.*) is agreed upon by almost all of the participants ( $N=98$  out of 121). It is argued that when a writer is inhibited by a topic and starts to be abnormally anxious, it might indicate that he lacks a pre-writing strategic competence to generate ideas and overcome the unfairly imposed topics.

Furthermore, item 10 below, which indicates the least stressful item in the scale, is a surprising result. It is the only item in the scale that was meant to measure stress in terms of the macro level of writing skill. The analysis of the agreements on the scale items ranks the items as if they say (hypothetically) that stress in strategies can lead to stress in writing skill as a whole. The micro might lead to the macro.

Table 5. The Apprehension Order of the Scale Items

Scale Items	Description	Number of Strongly Agree	Number of Agree	Total of agreements
1- I get apprehensive when I don't understand what the topic is talking about.	Apprehension here is related to the absence of a strategic behavior to generate ideas.	60	38	98
2- I feel pressure when I do not write as many words as the teacher expects.	Pressure is related to the strategy of following rules.	23	57	80
3- I get apprehensive when I don't know the right word to express my ideas.	Apprehension is related to the absence of a strategic behavior to overcome the problem of vocabulary.	32	43	75
4- I feel apprehensive to use expressions and sentence patterns incorrectly.	Apprehension is related to the strategy of accuracy which might be caused by language shock.	23	42	65
5- Grammatical mistakes make me feel apprehensive.	Apprehension is related to the absence of a strategic behavior to overcome grammatical issues.	19	39	58
6- I feel nervous when I have to change my ideas.	Nervousness is related to the strategy of changing ideas.	14	44	58
7- I feel nervous when editing my writing.	Nervousness is related to the strategy of editing.	11	35	46
8- Spellings and punctuations are stressful.	Stress is related to the strategy of checking mechanics.	16	26	42
9- It bothers me to revise and reread what I have written.	Bother is related to the strategy of revising.	18	21	39
10- I feel more tense and nervous in writing skill than in other language skills.	This item is related to the macro level of writing skill rather than the micro levels of strategies.	14	20	34

On the other hand, results analysis showed that the majority of the 38 apprehensive writers (36, 33, and 32, respectively) agreed with the following statements: (1) *I get apprehensive when I don't understand what the topic is talking about*, (2) *I get apprehensive when I don't know the right word to express my ideas*, (3) *I feel apprehensive to use expressions and sentence patterns incorrectly*, and (4) *I feel pressure when I do not write as many words as the teacher expects*. The previous 4 statements indicate directly and indirectly that the most stressful strategies for the high apprehensive participants might have something to do with the lack of content-related strategies (ideas generating strategies), caring much about accuracy, and following teacher's expectations. These results seem to corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous work in this field (Daudet *et al.*, 2005; Hassan, 2001; Jones, 1985).

Furthermore, 12 of the 13 low apprehensive writers disagreed with the following statements: (1) *It bothers me to revise and reread what I have written*, (2) *I feel nervous when editing my writing*, (3) *Spellings and punctuations are stressful*, and (4) *I feel more tense and nervous in writing skill than in other language skills*. The previous 4 statements indicate that the least stressful strategies for the low apprehensive participants were related to both content (revising and rereading) and form (mechanics), as well as to the macro level of writing skill. In other words, the low apprehensive participants reported that they did not feel apprehensive or stressful at both the micro levels of strategies (both content and form) and the macro level of writing skill in general.

## 8. Conclusion

This quantitative study set out to answer questions concerning 121 Saudi students' EFL writing strategy-related apprehension. The results showed that while the majority of the participants were average in their stress and apprehension towards their writing strategies, almost a third of them were highly apprehensive. In addition, the top stressful strategies were those that indicate the lack of generating ideas, the care about accuracy, and the follow of teacher's expectations.

It is argued that in the existence of anxious, stressful feelings towards the absence or presence of particular strategic behaviors "the most innovative techniques and the most attractive materials [might be] inadequate, if not useless" (Arnold & Brown, 1999, p.2). EFL writing teachers, therefore, need to be more aware of the presence of stress and apprehension in their students' writing strategies and they need to be innovative in the ways to handle them (ibid.). When teachers understand the stressful and agitating side of their learners' strategies, they can help them overcome problems created by those strategies and suggest facilitative strategies instead.

The current study, however, does not permit us to draw firm conclusions as to whether either content-related strategies or form-related strategies are directly related to writing apprehension. However, what is clear is that certain writing strategies seem to be more apprehension-related than others. EFL teachers, therefore, need to be sensitive to those strategies; they might impede the quality, quantity and time of students' writing. Nevertheless, more research on this topic needs to be undertaken before the association between strategy and apprehension is more clearly understood.

Last but not least, the question that seems very complicated to answer is that: Are stressful strategies so stressful because of being highly challenging, or because of receiving insufficient instruction on them? For example, if the strategy of checking grammar is stressful for a student, then, can we attribute this stress to the strategy per se, or to the insufficient grammar lessons received by students?

All in all, the findings, while preliminary, can provide the following implications that echo most of Oxford's (1999, p. 67) suggestions for diminishing language anxiety. Since stress is found to be present in students' writing strategies, teachers are recommended to:

- Encourage reasonable acceptance of stressful writing strategies.
- Allow students to write less than perfect sentences and paragraphs.
- Motivate students through relaxing games and music.
- Use familiar topics in writing tests and quizzes.
- Allow students to use dictionaries and topic-related sources during writing exams.
- Provide diverse writing tasks and activities that require diverse writing strategies.
- Help students to identify and handle stress and apprehension signs in their writing strategies.

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## Appendix

Below are a series of statements about writing in English. There are no right or wrong answers. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you as honestly as possible. They require that you reflect on your writing. Sometimes it might be difficult to answer because you have to analyse what you actually feel, not what you wish you could feel. It would probably be best to recall exactly what you felt when you wrote a recent paper.		Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		1	2	3	4	5
1	It relaxes me to plan my ideas first before starting to write.					
2	I feel nervous when I have to change my ideas.					
3	I feel nervous when <u>editing</u> my writing.					
4	I feel comfortable when I write a long essay.					
5	It bothers me to revise and reread what I have written.					
6	It does not bother me to read about the topic before starting to write.					
7	It does not bother me to start writing without having any plan or outline.					
8	Grammatical mistakes make me feel apprehensive.					
9	Spellings and <u>punctuations</u> are stressful.					
10	It does not bother me when I have to change a word or a sentence.					
11	I get apprehensive when I don't understand what the topic is talking about.					
12	I get apprehensive when I don't know the right word to express my ideas.					
13	I feel more tense and nervous in writing skill than in other language skills.					
14	I feel pressure when I do not write as many words as the teacher expects.					
15	I feel tense when I write English composition without using Arabic.					
16	It does not bother me to write more than one <u>draft</u> before handing in the final one.					
17	It does not stress me to write words that I do not know their spellings.					
18	It does not bother me to follow a model of English writing written by a skilled writer.					
19	I feel apprehensive to use expressions and sentence patterns incorrectly.					
20	I usually feel comfortable and at ease when writing in English.					
21	It does not bother me to hand in my essay without checking the <u>neatness</u> and the <u>layout</u> of the content.					
22	Practicing writing with others is an enjoyable experience.					

The 22-item Writing Strategy-related Apprehension Scale (SWAS)