

Are the Socio-Economic Factors Predictors of EFL Students' Writing Anxiety? A Study of Bangladeshi Tertiary Students¹

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Abstract

Writing is a very complex productive process that involves a number of socio-psycho-cognitive factors. So, a study on how all these factors affect students' performance in Academic English courses could enable ELT practitioners to help them improve their writing ability. Hence, the objectives of this study were to explore the probable correlation between tertiary level students' socio-economic background and their anxiety towards English writing, particularly with reference to their academic writing performance. Taking a quantitative approach, a survey design was employed to collect data from 78 EFL undergraduate students. Multiple regression was used for the data analysis. The results of the study revealed that most of the participants suffered from writing anxiety. The medium of school and an educated family background emerged as key points in the data analysis to lessen writing anxiety among the students. In addition, more prominently, father's education was responsible for having less anxiety level in students' English writing. Not only was father's education the most contributing predictor of students' anxiety in writing but it also had the largest effect on explaining students' anxiety in writing. The findings of this study would have implications for EFL practitioners who deal with, and facilitate tertiary students' effort to overcome writing anxiety, particularly in the context where the students come from various socio-economic backgrounds, along with distinctive affective factors.

Resumen

La escritura es un proceso productivo muy complejo que involucra una serie de factores socio-psycho-cognitivos. Por lo tanto, un estudio sobre cómo todos estos factores afectan el rendimiento de los estudiantes en los cursos de inglés académico podría permitir a los profesionales de ILE ayudar a mejorar la escritura de sus estudiantes. Por lo tanto, los objetivos de este estudio fueron explorar la probable correlación entre el origen socioeconómico de los estudiantes de nivel terciario y su ansiedad hacia la escritura en inglés, particularmente con referencia a su rendimiento académico en escritura. Tomando un enfoque cuantitativo, se empleó un diseño de encuesta para recopilar datos de 78 estudiantes universitarios de inglés como lengua extranjera. Además, se utilizó regresión múltiple para el análisis de datos. Los resultados del estudio revelaron que la mayoría de los participantes sufría de ansiedad por escribir. El medio escolar y los antecedentes de educación familiar surgieron como puntos clave en el análisis de datos para disminuir la ansiedad por escribir entre los estudiantes. Además, de manera más destacada, la educación del padre fue responsable de tener un menor nivel de ansiedad en la escritura en inglés de los estudiantes. La educación del padre no solo fue el predictor que más contribuyó a la ansiedad de los estudiantes al escribir, sino que también tuvo el mayor efecto al explicar la ansiedad de los estudiantes al escribir. Los hallazgos de este estudio tendrían implicaciones para los profesionales de ILE que facilitan el esfuerzo de los estudiantes terciarios para superar la ansiedad por escribir, particularmente en el contexto donde los estudiantes provienen de diversos entornos socioeconómicos, junto con factores afectivos distintivos.

Introduction

In Bangladesh, the English language gained momentum during the age of British colonization. After the independence in 1971 and due to the Bangla Implementation Act in 1987, the Bangla language got the foremost priority in every sphere of social, political, and educational life of the then Bangladesh. The status of English was reduced to a foreign language which had a significant impact on the overall English language teaching (ELT) situation (Rahman, 2009). Since then, several education commissions have been formed in Bangladesh by different governments with a view to revamping the education system. Due to several adverse situations, ELT in Bangladesh has been facing several challenges. Among these, the ambiguous status of English in the country poses a serious question on the very context of English learning in Bangladesh, whether it is English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL). Recently, researchers have decided that English is taught and learned in an EFL context in Bangladesh (Rahman and Pandian, 2018).

After the failure of Grammar Translation Method in improving the English competence of the Bangladeshi students, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was introduced in the school and college curriculums in

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2001. The aim of this major change was to equip the pre-tertiary students with communicative competence; however, the performance of these students in the public exams indicates the failure of its successful implementation in the education system (Rasheed, 2011). The syllabus, textbook, methods of teaching and testing were not in agreement with the age-old practice of teacher centered classroom teaching, as was the demand of CLT to give students practice in all four skills; and the result was that only reading and writing skills were given emphasis as only these two were tested in the board exams (Kabir, 2015; Sultana, 2014). The ELT scenario is worse in the remote rural areas due to the lack of proper teacher training and expert ELT practitioners (Rahman and Pandian, 2018).

Along with the introduction of the CLT approach in the Secondary and Higher-Secondary levels, all the universities in Bangladesh were recommended to introduce a three-credit compulsory English course in all disciplines (Chandan, 2016). In 1979, after the failure of the University Grants Commission to introduce English for Special Purposes at the undergraduate level, a compulsory fundamental course in English was offered beginning in 1998 at public universities across all disciplines (Rahman, 2009). The contents and materials are all designed to give practice in and test the reading and writing skills of the tertiary students. To be able to read and understand the text is fundamental to pass the test, which is conducted in writing mode, thus excluding speaking and listening (Kabir, 2015). So, the fundamental English course for the beginner undergraduate students in public universities requires all of them to go through only reading- and writing-based practices in class. Moreover, the students are assessed on the basis of their competence in writing in this course. In the private universities, two compulsory English courses are offered to beginners. In a few universities, the first course incorporates practices in all four skills and the second course is on advanced academic writing (Rahman, 2005). But most universities offer the first English course based on fundamental grammar rules and the second one on English composition and both of them are practiced and tested in reading-writing mode. So, English courses at universities tend to teach and evaluate students' academic writing as based on their ability to express ideas through writing paragraphs, essays, letters, and grammatically correct sentences (Afrin, 2016). In addition, most other university courses offer textbooks, lectures, and exams in English. Therefore, academic English writing is crucial for students to successfully complete the undergraduate studies.

The ever-increasing importance of writing at the tertiary level presupposes more research studies in this area, especially since English writing is more challenging for EFL learners in the Asian context (Bai and Wang, 2021; Yu et al., 2019). In this study, I focus on the correlation between the students' socio-economic factors with the affective factor anxiety in acquiring academic writing. An awareness of the probable connection between the students' socio-economic status and their writing anxiety could help the ELT practitioners address their students' manifestations of academic writing anxiety from a more comprehensive viewpoint. Having knowledge of this probable association could help the teachers and students to create an atmosphere at home that would be conducive to overcoming academic writing anxiety.

Literature Review

Socio-economic factors

Socio-economical, psychological, and individual factors such as the educational attainment of the learner's parents, their economical background, motivation, attitude and gender are considered crucial in EFL learning (Ahmad, 2014; Ellis, 1985; Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

The learner and their family's viewpoint of learning and the responsibility of the learner in school may play a significant role in making the learner self-determining (Fonseka, 2003). In addition, according to Benson (2007), financial issues which may or may not ensure the availability of the learning materials can influence the learner's determination to learn (Kormos & Kiddle, 2013).

In his socio-educational model, Gardner (1985) focuses on the crucial impact of social factors in EFL/ESL contexts. "It interrelates four aspects of L2 learning: the social and cultural milieu (which determines beliefs about language and culture), individual learner differences (related to motivation and language aptitude), the setting (formal or informal learning contexts), and learning outcomes" (p. 40). In relation to the family educational background, one of the aspects of the learner's social milieu, it was found that students with highly educated parents who knew French well did better in their French courses in contrast to those who did not have that family support. Other social factors, such as having more French speaking friends played a more positive role for students of French as a second language in their successful comprehension of complex French passages. The same study revealed that among the students who were studying French as

a second language, the ones who came from a more socio-economically disadvantaged family background did not exhibit proficiency in the French course despite being intellectually talented (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). So, socio-economic factors are one of the decisive indicators of learners' success or failure in learning a second language (L2).

In their study of Jordanian postgraduate students from University Utara Malaysia, Huwari and Aziz (2011) found a significant relationship between socio-economic status and writing apprehension. Their findings suggest that socio-economic status significantly affects students' writing apprehension. Usually, writers coming from a low socio-economic background remain more apprehensive than those with high socio-economic status.

Anxiety in learning L2

Over the last three decades, there has been much research in the field of language anxiety. According to Scovels (1978), anxiety is associated with feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension or worry. When it comes to anxiety in learning an L2, the researchers made a distinction between two types of anxiety: trait anxiety which refers to the natural characteristic of a person to be nervous regardless of particular circumstances, and state (situational) anxiety which is the nervousness caused at a particular moment in response to some outside stimulus (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). Researchers believe that language learning anxiety is different from that of other anxieties in a number of ways because it involves a complicated fabric of personal viewpoint, confidence, emotion, and manners in a setting of learning procedure (Horwitz et al., 1986). Learners with high motivation, self-confidence and low anxiety are likely to put more effort in L2 learning and vice versa. It means that high anxiety could raise the learner's affective filter high which might eventually lead the learner to be less enthusiastic about the target language (Ellis, 1985). In relation to the socio-economic factors of the EFL learners who suffer from higher level of anxiety, a study disclosed that Afghan tertiary students coming from a lower socio-economic background were found to suffer from higher EFL anxiety in class (Zia & Safi, 2020).

Anxiety in L2 writing

Writing anxiety, or writing apprehension, refers to an inhibiting anxiety when the learner is assigned a writing task (Daly & Miller, 1975). Second Language Writing Anxiety (SLWA) is defined as the tendency for writers to avoid situations demanding writing anything in the second language which will be evaluated (Hassan, 2001). So, SLWA includes the fear or inhibition that anxious learners feel while writing or composing something for academic evaluation. In case of L2 writing this anxiety manifests itself in the forms of avoidance behaviour, procrastinating homework, forgetting rules, and test anxiety. (Horwitz et al., 1986).

A number of psychologists and cognitivists (Hayes, 1981; Hayes & Flower, 1980; Liu, 2006) have studied students' writing anxiety in EFL contexts. In Pakistan, a study on undergraduate students of various disciplines noted that 62% of students in both public and private universities in Pakistan suffered from an average level of writing anxiety (Dar & Khan, 2015). Research findings suggest that writing anxiety could result from the learners' poor linguistic competence, cognitive difficulties regarding the writing process, classroom context, and the lack of self-confidence (Hassan, 2001; Holladay, 1981). Tsai (2008) revealed that a high level of anxiety causes learners to believe they have less expertise. The study of Hassan (2001) also indicated that the less confident and highly anxious learners tended to produce shorter and less qualified compositions than their less anxious counterparts. In the research of Holladay (1981), self-confidence was found to play a crucial role in deciding the affective response of the learners towards their writing tasks (Holladay, 1980). The reception of negative evaluation in the writing task also increases the students' anxiety, not only that, but a high level of anxiety also causes less self-confidence and in turn, less proficiency in writing; as a result, these students view themselves as poor performers (Jones, 2008; Shang, 2012; Shang, 2013). Daly (1985) also observed that students who suffered a high level of writing apprehension obtained low scores on standardized tests of writing and their essays received lower evaluations by the instructors.

Researchers such as Aldrick (1979, 1982) and Weil and Lane (1956) investigated the causes of writing anxiety among students and revealed a number of factors: insufficient preparation, the dearth of techniques to handle difficulty in writing, too much criticism by the instructor etc. The studies of Bloom (1980) and Hayes (1981) revealed that less anxious writers compose better because they can control their time and actions better due to having more time to concentrate on the order of thoughts in comparison with anxiety-stricken writers who remain obsessed with their apprehension.

Bangladeshi context

According to Nimat (2013), among Bangladeshi undergraduate students, the main reasons for the learning anxiety of EFL students were found in terms of the students' personal characteristics, teachers' characteristics, and classroom activities. This research finding indicates that a high level of anxiety significantly affects students' performance in academic courses (Nimat, 2013). Another study by Huda & Kamal (2011) found that the written tasks were the most challenging to the undergraduate EFL students at a private university. Many students struggled with understanding the sentence structure, putting ideas in the correct order, and in arranging the right vocabulary when writing in English. This research revealed that 10% undergraduate students performed fairly, 20% performed on an average whereas 70% performed poorly in English academic writing in a semester. Lack of self-confidence de-motivated 65% of tertiary students from maintaining a portfolio plan which would require them to revise, re-write, and modify their academic write-up.

Ferdous (2012) contends that an adverse foreign language learning situation may increase learning anxiety which may result in poor student performance. This research also highlighted factors, such as student characteristics, teacher characteristics and classroom procedures as the anxiety causing variables. The students' socio-economic backgrounds remain largely ignored in her research.

Sultana (2018), who studied the reasons for writing apprehension of cadet college (colleges specialized in military education) students, found that the prevalent reasons for becoming anxious in English classes included the classmates', guardians', and sometimes the mentors' unfriendly reactions to their performance in English in the class. Fifty seven percent of students felt anxious when they did not understand the teachers' lectures in English; and 67% of students got anxious when using English to take a test. It is obvious that the reasons for Bangladeshi students' writing apprehension have been explored in relation to the classroom contexts or the individual students' personality factors, and most studies were done on the intermediate level learners. To fill the research gap for the tertiary students, this study was conducted in relation to the students' socio-economic background which may have had a significant impact on their academic writing anxiety.

Research Questions

To find the ratio of the students who become anxious while writing for academic purposes and whether the educational and socio-economic background has any relation to the students' attitude towards writing and their writing anxiety, the following research questions were posed:

1. *What percentage of the first- and second-year undergraduate students experience anxiety in academic writing?*
2. *Is there any correlation between the students' socio-economic background and their feeling of anxiety in academic writing?*
3. *Which socio-economic factor(s) contribute(s) most in predicting the academic writing anxiety of the students?*

Methodology

Participants

A total of 78 first- and second-year undergraduate students from the English and Business Administration Department of Manarat International University, Bangladesh participated voluntarily in this study. The selection criterion of the students was their passing in Fundamentals of English course. Those students who passed this course were selected for the current study. The Fundamentals of English course was equivalent to A2-B1 level in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference. The students studied English for twelve years, and English was considered a foreign language for them. Their ages ranged from eighteen to thirty. Among them, there were 61 females and 17 males. Their native language was Bangla. All of them had to take two compulsory English courses in their first year.

Thirty-nine students were from the English Department and 39 students were from the Business Administration Department. The participants of this study were from English and BBA majors which could be a limitation of the study because they might learn English for different purposes.

These students were selected, because they came from different socio-economic and educational family backgrounds that served the purpose of providing all types of data that was necessary for this research.

Instruments

The questionnaire was divided into two parts and was administered to the students in their classrooms before mid-term tests. The questionnaire was developed in English. The first part, i.e., the socio-economic background, had eight items, and the set was designed to bring out the information of the students' age, gender, their family's monthly income, their parents' formal educational attainment. The family's monthly income and the medium of education in secondary school certificate (SSC) and higher secondary school certificate (HSC) were indicators of economic and the father's and mother's education, the medium of education in SSC and HSC were included as indicators of social factors of the students' backgrounds. This personal profile provided a good overview of the students' family background of the socio-economic and educational status. Other demographic information was collected in terms of gender, age, relation with parents (whether they had friendly, formal or unfriendly relation with their parents) etc. This part offered three-option multiple choice items that yielded the personal profile of the students. The other part, i.e., the writing anxiety portion was composed of seventeen items which were adapted from Dally and Miller (1975): (1) Writing Apprehension Scale, (2) Writer's Block Questionnaire, and (3) Reading and Writing Activities. Some specific items of the Writing Apprehension Scale received particular attention such as: 'I avoid writing', 'I am afraid of writing essays when I know they will be evaluated', 'I don't think I write better than other people do', 'I am nervous about writing', 'I don't like my compositions to be evaluated', and 'I am no good at writing' etc. These statements are directly linked to the students' affective variables. The items that directly address feelings of anxiety towards academic writing were selected leaving out items that address feelings of satisfaction towards writing and also attitude related to other types of writing which could make the questionnaire too long. A five-point measurement scale was used to assess the feeling of anxiety the students go through while writing in English in their academic life. Before they started filling out the questionnaire items, the students were informed of the research purpose of the data to be collected and they were assured of their anonymity. They were also encouraged to be frank in their responses. The researchers explained the items one by one while they answered; some items were also explained to them in their mother tongue. The explanation of some items in their mother tongue might not have any impact on their answers as it was done in addition to the explanation of all the items in English.

Reliability measurement

The level of internal consistency among various computations of a variable is assessed by a reliability measurement (Hair et al., 2010). The result of the measurements will be alike if it is used repetitively by other researchers. Cronbach's alpha coefficient method in SPSS was used to check the internal consistency of the items used in the questionnaire. The closer the alpha value is to 1, the higher its consistency is assumed. Table 1 shows the Cronbach's alpha value of all the items used in the current study.

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Writing Anxiety	17	.846

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha value of writing anxiety.

The reliability statistics of the variables exceeded the level of acceptable reliability which is from .60 to .70 as recommended by Hair et al. (2010). So, the Cronbach's Alpha values of all variables in this study exhibit a good level of internal consistency of the items included to measure the writing anxiety of the students.

Results Analysis

To answer the first research question which asked for the percentage of the students who experience anxiety when it comes to academic writing, a frequency analysis was done on SPSS. Table 2 presents the results.

Nervous about writing	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	7	9.0
Disagree	11	14.1
Neutral	5	6.4
Agree	53	67.9
Strongly agree	2	2.6

Table 2: Percentage of the students who suffer from Writing Anxiety

Table 2 shows that almost 68% of students were nervous or faced anxiety that is associated with their writing performance. This indicates that writing anxiety is a crucial factor that needs to be addressed in order to help them overcome it in all probable ways.

If we want to look at the gender ratio of this writing anxiety factor, we find that the mean of the male students is higher than the female ones which is shown in Table 3.

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	3.06	17	1.088
Female	2.75	61	1.027

Table 3: Means of the anxiety of male and female students

The result indicates that male students face a slightly higher level of anxiety than their female counterparts while going through academic writing.

Table 4 presents the ages of higher writing anxiety among tertiary students.

Age	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
18-22	2.9936	26	.70629
23-27	2.7300	50	.70622
28-32	2.333	2	.47140

Table 4: Means of the students' anxiety factors at different ages

The mean status of the students of various age-groups suggests that the younger the students are, the higher their means of anxiety factors are. As a result, the students from the age-group 18-22 have the highest means. This indicates that they suffer from the highest level of anxiety among all the age groups.

To answer the second research question, i.e., "Is there any correlation between the students' socio-economic background and their feeling of anxiety in academic writing?", a two-tailed Pearson correlation analysis was done, using SPSS. The results are shown in Table 5.

	Medium of Education	Father's Education	Mother's Education	Family Relation	Monthly Income	Anxiety Factors
Medium of Education	--					
Father's Education	.05	--				
Mother's Education	-.08	.50**	--			
Monthly Income	-.12	.08	-.13	.10	--	
Anxiety Factors	.26*	-.35**	.10	-.10	-.30*	--

Note. * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
 ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 5: Correlations between variables of interest

As shown in Table 3, the inter-correlations between Mother's Education and Father's Education, Medium of Education and Anxiety Factors, Father's Education and Anxiety Factors, Family Relation and Mother's Education, and Anxiety Factors and Monthly Income are statistically significant. A strong positive correlation at the 0.05 level ($r=.50, p=.000$) existed between the level of Father's Education to that of Mother's Education. This means that one parent's educational level tends to be close to that of the other parent in a family.

A statistically significant and positive correlation at the 0.05 level ($r=.26, p=.02$) was found between the Medium of Education which was Bangla for 87.17% of students and Anxiety Factors. This implies that there lies a small positive association between the Medium of Education of the students and their writing anxiety at the tertiary level. The coefficient value above .50 suggests a strong correlation, whereas the r value between .30 and .49 indicates a medium relation and the r value between .1 and .29 denotes a small association (Cohen, 1988).

A statistically significant negative correlation at the 0.05 level ($r=-.35, p=.002$) existed between the Anxiety Factors and Father's Education. This indicates the possibility that the higher the father's education was, the lower the anxiety level the student had. Another statistically significant and negative correlation at the level .05 ($r=-.26, p=.02$) existed between Monthly Income and the Anxiety Factors. This suggests the possibility that the more affluent the upbringing of the student was, the less their writing anxiety was.

An interesting moderate, positive, and statistically significant correlation at the level of 0.05 ($r = .27, p = .01$) was found between Mother’s Education and the student’s relation with family. This indicates the probability that educated mothers are likely to nourish a more friendly relation with their children.

In order to address research question three (Which socio-economic factor(s) contribute(s) most in predicting the academic writing anxiety of the students?), a multiple regression analysis was done on SPSS to predict the writing anxiety based on the independent variables such as, Medium of Education, Father’s Education and Mother’s Education. The results are shown in Tables 6 and 7.

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	ANOVA			
				df	Mean Square	F	P
.56*	.32	.29	.5510	3	3.487	11.484	.000*

Table 6: Prediction Value of Independent Variables

The ANOVA table shows that the p value is .000 which is less than alpha .05. Therefore, the model is a significant one. The r^2 value is .32 which means that 32% of the variance in the Writing Anxiety Factors was explained by the predictor variables in the model. The coefficients are presented in Table 7.

Standardized Coefficients		t	sig.	Correlations		Collinearity Statistics	
IV ¹	Beta			Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
MeED ^a	.334	3.282	.002	.356	.315	.983	1.018
FE ^b	-.523	-5.084	.000	-.509	-.488	.739	1.354
ME ^c	.424	3.612	.001	.387	.347	.735	1.360

a. Dependent variable: Anxiety factors; IV1= Independent variables, a-Medium of Education, b-Father’s Education, c-Mother’s Education.

Table 7: Coefficients of the predictor variables

From Table 7, squaring the part coefficient $(.315)^2$ of the Medium of Education variable would explain about 9.92% variance in the Anxiety Factors variable. The square of the part coefficient value $(-.488)^2$ of Father’s Education variable alone would explain 23.8144% variance in the dependent variable Anxiety Factors. If we square the part coefficient $(.347)^2$ of the independent variable Mother’s Education, it will explain 12.0409% variance in the Writing anxiety factors. The highest predictor in the variance of Anxiety Factors was the independent variable Father’s Education. This explains about 24% variation in the writing anxiety of the students. The above discussion highlights that Father’s Education was the most significant contributing predictor of students’ anxiety in writing.

The researchers formulated research question 3 to investigate which socio-economic background criteria would contribute to predicting the writing anxiety factors of the students. As shown in Table 7, father’s education had the largest beta value ($\beta = -.523; t = -5.084, p = .000$ (significant) ($p < .001$)). Mother’s education had the second largest beta value ($\beta = .424; t = 3.612, p = .001$ (significant) ($p < .05$)). In addition, medium of instruction had the third largest beta value ($\beta = .334; t = 3.282, p = .002$ (significant) ($p < .05$)). The above discussion highlights that the father’s education, out of all the other socio-economic variables or criteria, affected the students’ writing anxiety the most.

Discussion

The objectives of this research were to investigate the ratio of the tertiary students who experienced writing apprehension, and the probable relationships between writing apprehension and socio-economic status of the student’s family. Some interesting results emerged from this study. First, the majority of the participants suffered from writing apprehension in case of writing an English composition in class. The reasons include fear of evaluation, fear of poor performance, and lack of confidence in English writing. This finding is consistent with the research of Horwitz et al. (1986), Liu (2006), Shang (2012), etc. Regarding the gender ratio, this study found that the male students suffered from more anxiety than the female students which is unlike the situation in Taiwan where the female students’ anxiety level was higher in comparison with their male counterparts (Cheng, 2002).

This study revealed that the students coming from a more educated (having parents who were graduates) and well off (having a monthly income of more than 50,000 BDT or above) family background tended to have less anxiety when it came to academic writing. This confirms the findings of Huwari and Aziz (2011)

who discovered the same relation between the socio-economic background of Jordanian students studying in Malaysia and their academic writing apprehension. This finding is also consistent with the findings of Zia and Safi (2020) who also discovered that tertiary students in Afghanistan who came from a lower socio-economic family background suffered from a higher level of anxiety in the EFL classroom. In Bangladesh, the study of Ahmad (2014) uncovered a powerful impact of the socio-economic backgrounds on the EFL students; students coming from a more solvent family backgrounds had a higher motivation in learning English. To the best knowledge of the researchers, little is known about the research that investigated the correlation and prediction of the socio-economic background criteria to students' writing anxiety in an EFL context, particularly on Bangladesh. As a result, it is not practical to compare or contrast the results of the present study with other studies.

The higher level of educational achievement of the parents of the students may play a vital role in the students' having less writing anxiety at the tertiary level which is congruent with another research findings that found differences in written performances by the students which varied according to their parents' educational level (Zou and Zhang, 2011). Previous studies also confirmed that parents with higher socio-economic backgrounds and education felt stronger responsibility to their children's study and a firmer belief in their child's academic capabilities and success and were more engaged in supporting directly and indirectly their child's English learning. The findings showed that both direct and indirect engagement of the parents with their child's learning was positively associated with their socio-economic status which in turn elevated their expectation of their child's success. On the other hand, parents holding low socio-economic status started lowering their expectations of their children's success as their children became seniors in school (Butler, 2013). Other studies report that parents with a low socio-economic background had less involvement with their child's study (Calzada et al., 2015; Tekin, 2011). So, there might be a convenient atmosphere and emphasis on regular studies at the home of the students whose family members are highly educated.

In case of a disadvantaged socio-economic background, institutions could train the parents to provide at least indirect assistance including creating a congenial learning atmosphere and ensuring having a good number of books at home, in situations where direct assistance with language learning is impossible. Also adopting the "effort model" recommended by Stevenson and Stigler (1992) could bring positive outcome. This model supports the parents for having a firm belief in their child's success in learning as long as the child puts good efforts for it as this belief turned out to be a strong predictor of success in the students' acquiring a foreign language.

Lastly, as far as gender difference is concerned, male students seemed to experience a higher level of writing anxiety in comparison with female students. This finding is, to some extent, consistent with the result of Spielberg et al's (1983) research who contends that females are more emotionally stable than males in their reaction to highly stressful circumstances. This finding is also in agreement with the findings of Jebreil et al. (2014) and Janfaza et al. (2014) who found that in the Iranian context, the males experienced a higher level of anxiety in writing performance in comparison to their female counterparts. However, this finding differs from the Indonesian context where females suffered from a higher level of anxiety while writing compositions compared to the males (Salikin, 2019). Some studies reported negative impacts of writing anxiety on the students' written performances (Altukruni, 2019; Choi, 2014) and a negative correlation between the students' anxiety and their performance in the written tests in English (Janfaza et al. 2014). Future research could explore the probable relations between the students' writing anxiety and its impact on a foreign language test based on gender.

This study discovered that many students became anxious when it came to academic writing. This type of student might be given a choice regarding the topic for their free handwriting tasks, such as brainstorming, clustering or creating a rough outline. In this regard, if the situation is less threatening and less apprehensive, then it may generate among the students the feelings of self-potency and later on, a sense of writing achievement. (Shang, 2013). Also, the teachers could play an effective role in reducing the test anxiety of the students in the cases in which the students are inspired to view their performance more positively and to focus on their capability to accomplish their writing tasks (Shang, 2013). More research needs to be done on the effective use of many such techniques to address the writing anxiety of EFL learners.

Implication and Conclusion

Since English is a foreign language in Bangladesh, the presence of anxiety in English writing class needs to be addressed using some pedagogical initiatives in order to boost up the students' confidence and better

performance in writing. To develop appropriate pedagogical plans and to reduce writing apprehension of the students, the instructors need to be aware of the socio-economic factors that play a determining role in increasing or decreasing the students' positive attitude towards writing in EFL/ESL contexts.

This study revealed that English writing classes at the tertiary level in Bangladesh are permeated with anxiety. Students who generally avoid writing or suffer from lack of confidence in academic writing need more a supportive home environment and in the classroom, positive feedback from the teachers which might lead to an increase in their confidence level. Another reason of anxiety for students is the knowledge that their writing will be evaluated. So, potentially, fear of negative feedback and a low grade increases their anxiety. Positive feedback from the teachers is again, very important here. In some classes, they might let go without any formal evaluation at all, only with some effective comments from the teacher. The students can write in pairs or groups, then individuals may experience less fear. Most importantly, as the younger students face higher writing anxiety, the beginners should be provided with 'feedforward' instead of with 'feedback' which may gear them up towards future attainment with more enthusiasm instead of shying away from showing their write-up to their instructors. Additionally, when teachers possess knowledge of the in-class sources of the students' writing anxiety, they can suggest better writing strategies to students in EFL classes. Moreover, a knowledge of the probable reasons of writing anxiety of the students who had their upbringings in a vulnerable socio-economic condition may enable the teachers to implement effective pedagogical strategies to reduce the students' writing anxiety level.

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