Exploring Writing Anxiety on Chinese EFL Undergraduate Thesis and its Coping Strategies

Peng Yanping
Lyceum of the Philippines University, Philippines
Minzu Normal University of Xingyi, China
yanping.peng@lpunetwork.edu.ph

Abstract

Compared to other language skills, writing is a complicated skill that requires more efforts. Being English majors, they must master English language knowledge and express themselves correctly in English. Thesis writing has become one of the most challenging and difficult topics for Chinese students majoring in English as a foreign language (EFL). Affective factors have always been considered to be a major aspect affecting individuals' writing. Among the emotional variables, anxiety cannot be ignored. Anxiety is one of the factors that affect the learning process. Second language writing anxiety has been investigated for several years but the researches on EFL undergraduate thesis writing anxiety at a Chinese context are quite a few. The study aims to examine the level, causes and coping strategies of writing anxiety among Chinese EFL undergraduate students. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed and the data was evaluated through SPSS. The findings of the study discovered that students experienced writing anxiety throughout the process. Writing anxiety is higher in the stage of pre-writing and post-writing than that in the stage of while-writing. Writing is negatively correlated with proficiency, with girls are more anxious than boys throughout the writing process. In addition to some possible causes of thesis writing anxiety, suggestions for students to alleviate writing anxiety were presented.

1. Introduction

Graduation thesis occupies an important position in higher education and has become a necessary part for undergraduate students to get their bachelor degrees. Students need to develop their research skills, summarizing and paraphrasing information with the help of teachers. As for EFL undergraduate students, they need to master the concepts and content of their subject area and develop an ability to express themselves and appropriately in English as well.[1] Students should learn to present their ideas and organize their articles logically and smoothly. The researchers have long been aware of the correlation between anxiety and foreign language writing. There is less research on the anxiety of college students in the second language, especially the study of the anxiety of English undergraduate thesis.

Thesis writing has certain features, a specific format, more academic words, and complex sentences, and the argument is logically progressed taking into consideration the audience for whom it is written. The language used in thesis writing should be clear and accurate to ensure that the reader can understand the meaning and avoid any bias or ambiguity easily. It is believed that the writing process is beneficial and effective because students go through the process from the beginning to the completion of the writing. The writing process runs through pre-writing, while-writing and post-writing stages, which can lead to writing anxiety in students.

Anxiety has been researched as one common phenomenon in foreign language learning since 1970s. Horwitz et al. firstly put forward the Foreign Language Classroom Language Anxiety (FLCAS) to conduct an investigation into the dynamics of foreign language anxiety.[2]

Recognizing the importance and difficulty of thesis writing, the study attempts to explore the levels of writing anxiety in the different writing stages, examine the relationship between writing anxiety and proficiency

level, writing anxiety and gender, and figure out the possible causes of writing anxiety and its coping strategies. In theory, the study can provide further understanding of the causes and solutions for writing anxiety in specific situations, and offer hypotheses for the study of academic writing anxiety. In practice, it provides a clear picture of writing anxiety tendency and attempts to improve writing ability through alleviating writing anxiety.

2.Literature review

2.1 writing

Checkett and Feng-Checkett claimed that to make a good writing, a writer has to keep writing as short and simple as possible without leaving out any important information, and forbidden to use slang language or confusing expressions, but use a combination of content and proper punctuation.[3] Writing is the most challenging area in learning second language. It is based on appropriate and strategic use of language with structural accuracy and communicative potential.[4] Writing can be viewed as a complex cognitive activity involving attention at multiple levels: thematic, paragraph, sentence, grammatical and lexical. Writing is not only seen as a cognitive activity but also perceived as an emotional activity. Researchers such as Pajares and Valiante thought writing can be a cognitive activity and an emotional activity as well. Thesis writing difficulties are associated with the lack of summarizing a text or paraphrasing it accurately, determining whether a quotation is required or not, plagiarism, as well as a lack of knowledge in documenting sources within the text in a scientific way. In my understanding, thesis writing is a very complex process of thinking, discovery, communication and creation.

Content, register and topic are three basic principles that should be considered in a piece of academic writing. Brookes and Grundy added that students in some academic disciplines are trained to write evaluation papers or proposals, such as project work papers, work experience papers, or thesis writing.[5] Current research focuses on undergraduate thesis writing as a form of academic writing. Hardling stated that "Writing a thesis is an exercise in carrying out research and writing an account of that research activity."[6] The difficulties of writing a thesis might be the objective of a research, the data for the research, findings of the research, and the whole research based on the proved ratio. In order to write a good thesis, we need to identify the critical points in writing a good thesis.

2.2 Anxiety

Anxiety play a considerable role in influencing EFL writing in various studies. Anxiety is viewed to be a major factor affecting academic performance by a large amount of researchers. Cheng defined a multidimensional understanding of anxiety and its effects on language learners. His three dimensional analysis of writing anxiety included somatic anxiety, nervousness and suspense psychological anxiety, and withdrawal and avoidance related behavioral anxiety.[7] Anxiety has long been established as a common factor that affects the sustainable development of students' learning. Further, anxiety often arises in different stages of students' learning. Field claimed that anxiety is one of several affective factors influencing learners' attention and leading to backward in language performance. [8] In my opinion, anxiety can be seen as a feeling of nervousness, worry or fear that brings about something unpleasant to happen. Anxiety can be experienced at various levels, so trait and state anxiety has aroused great attention. The anxiety discussed in the study is related to state anxiety, which comes from a specific situation, as opposed to trait anxiety, which is more like a personality trait associated with anxiety.

EFL teachers are often challenged by students' poor writing performance and writing resistance, which can stem from anxiety. The research on second language writing anxiety has attracted more and more attention. The definition were accepted as "a situation and subject specific individual difference associated with a

person's tendencies to approach or avoid situation perceived to potentially require writing accompanied by some amount of perceived evaluation"[9]. Another description by Bloom defined that foreign language writing anxiety is a combination of beliefs, feelings and behaviors that hinder the learners' ability to begin, go on and finish a given task which they are capable of doing.[10] This definition not only leads us to anxiety in different writing stages but also look at writing anxiety from a multidimensional perspective. Students may develop anxiety about writing because of nervousness, avoidance, and procrastination. In order to measure the scales of writing anxiety, Cheng developed SLWAI which consists of three elements: somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and avoidance behavior.[7] To a large extent, Tobias' theory threw light on the investigation of academic writing anxiety. The theory developed the input anxiety, processing anxiety and output anxiety scales measuring the anxiety in the three writing stages. [11]

2.3 The relationship between anxiety and EFL writing

Anxiety is like a virus that contaminates the way the students gain their learning achievement. It is harmful for students improvement and prevents the students from thinking clearly. Horwitz indicated a moderate negative relationship between anxiety and achievement showing students with higher levels of foreign language anxiety received lower grades than their less anxious counterparts.[12] Horwitz agreed that higher levels of language anxiety are associated with lower language achievement. That is to say, students who are more anxious tend to get lower course grades. In Asian EFL context, Liu stated that the students with high English proficiency tended to be less anxious through the study of 100 students with three different proficiency levels.[13] Llinas and Garau proposed that language anxiety actually differed across proficiency levels.[14] The more anxious a students is, the lower his proficiency level will be. It can be proven that anxious students are unlikely to write in class, volunteer to answer questions, and participate in less activities than less anxious students. Previous studies threw lights on the relation of anxiety to gender but the findings conflicted with each other. There are at least three different opinions. First, females are more anxious than males with regard to foreign language learning. Female were more anxious compared to their male counterparts even though they performed better than males in learning English. Second, males are more anxious than females with regard to foreign language learning. Females are better language learners and less anxiety ridden than males by investigating the role of gender in foreign language anxiety among students. Third, there is no significant correlation between writing anxiety and gender difference. Dewaele suggested that gender 6does not correlate significantly with communicative anxiety in either English or French as a foreign language.[15] However girl students may have higher level of anxiety than boy students when taking writing performance because of their week psychological and physical factors.

Cheng stated that L2 writers' anxiety among Chinese EFL students is possibly caused by instructional practices, personal beliefs about writing and learning to write, self-perceptions and interpersonal threats through a questionnaire and an interview.[16] In another study, Heaton and Pray indicated that several causes of writing anxiety can be as follows: having a little time to plan, write and revise; absence of good writing skills including writing instruction and practice, brainstorming ideas, organization of ideas and mechanics of writing such as penmanship, punctuation and vocabulary; teachers' negative comments.[17] EFL undergraduate students face various writing problems at different stages of their learning. It is argued that poor writing skills

originate from two main factors: the teacher and the learner. Teachers lack appropriate pedagogic approach to teach writing, including providing prompt and effective feedback to students, and most crucially, teachers lack of ability to motivate students. On the other hand, students face numerous challenges: effects of L1 transfer lack of reading, motivation, and practice.

3.Methodology

Based on the purpose of the study, three research questions were addressed in the following:

1. What is the relationship between writing anxiety and proficiency levels, writing anxiety and gender?

2. What level and factors are related to the writing anxiety of undergraduate thesis in the different stages?

3. What strategies are effective for coping writing anxiety?

3.1 Participants

Two classes of students (49+51) were invited to participate in the study and they were EFL undergraduates in a local university of China. The students were mainly dominated by female students, with a male-female ratio of 13 to 87. Two classes all participated a course named *A Guidance to Thesis Writing* once a week in a semester with the textbook of *How to Write a Dissertation in English*. 90 students completed the questionnaire and among them were 10 male students and 80 female students. A male and a female student were chosen to participate in semi-structured interviews.

3.2 Instruments

The study uses a hybrid design to increase the validity and reliability of the findings through valid data sources with both qualitative and quantitative instruments. To investigate students' anxiety in their graduation thesis writing, questionnaire and interview were conducted. By analyzing the results of the questionnaire, the study collected the information related to the research questions. Through the analysis of the interview results, the study explored more detailed information that can help to answer the research questions.

3.3 Procedures

To address the research questions, a questionnaire was administered to 100 students and 90 valid answers were obtained. According to the average score of students' TEM 4, the top 25 students were assigned to group 1 (the highest level), the middle 40 students were group 2 (moderate level) and the last 25 percent students were group 3 (the lowest level). Based on the results of the questionnaire, descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA, Pearson Correlation Analysis and independent T-test were used to discuss the first and the second research questions. After the questionnaire, a semi-structured interview was conducted by telephone. These questions were sent to them before the interview, giving them enough time to prepare for the interview. The content of each interview was recorded, classified, transcribed and translated to obtain more detailed data for the research questions.

3.4 Data collection

The study divided 26 items of questionnaire into four parts, measuring the feeling of students in the stages of

pre-writing, while-writing and post-writing stages. One-way ANOVA and Pearson Correlation Analysis were carried out to see whether there is a significant correlation between writing anxiety and proficiency levels. The independent T-test was added to observe whether there was a significant correlation between writing anxiety and gender. The questionnaire was completed and 10 questions were designed for interviews. Interviews includes students' writing anxiety levels in the different stages, the correlation among writing anxiety, proficiency levels and gender, causes and coping strategies of writing anxiety. The interview data was analyzed to make clear about the correlation between writing anxiety and proficiency, the main factors and writing anxiety.

4. Results

The students' response to the questionnaire was analyzed in terms of descriptive and inferential statistics. To address the research questions, the data were analyzed using ANOVA, PCT and T-test. One hundred English major undergraduates were invited to fill in the questionnaire and they all experienced the whole process of thesis writing. As a result, 90 answers were obtained. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of students' thesis writing anxiety. According to the anxiety degree of the questionnaire, the students' writing anxiety was high in my sampling, because the mean of the entire writing process reached 3.78. The mean of students' anxiety in the stage of pre-writing was 3.81, indicating they were very anxious. During the while-writing stage, the mean of students' writing anxiety was 3.45 and it presents a bit of anxiety. Anxiety was very high in the stage of post-writing stage because the mean got to 4.08.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics for thesis writing anxiety

Stages	N	Min	Max	M	(SD)
The whole process	100	1.00	5.00	3.78	(0.76)
Pre-writing	100	1.00	5.00	3.81	(0.76)
While-writing	100	1.00	5.00	3.45	(0.71)
Post-writing	100	1.00	5.00	4.08	(0.95)

4.1 Correlation analysis between writing anxiety and proficiency levels

To address the first research question, students were divided into three groups of different proficiency levels according to their scores of Test for English Majors Band 4 (TEM 4) in the two years since TEM 4 is a high-stake national exam for English majors in China. Group 1 represented the top 25 students, group 2 for the moderate 50 students and group 3 for the lowest 25 students. In order to explore the relationship between writing anxiety and proficiency levels, ANOVA and PST were carried out. As you can see from table 2 below, students in different levels of the whole process of writing are very different in writing anxiety because sig is 0.005, which was much smaller. Meanwhile there was a significant difference between writing anxiety and proficiency levels in the stage of post-writing based on the sig (0.019).

Table 2: Results of ANOVA for different proficiency levels

Stages	M (SD)			F	Sig
	Group 1	Group 2	Group3		
The whole process	3.33 (0.63)	3.87 (0.82)	4.05 (0.56)	5.617	0.005
Pre-writing	3.87 (0.88)	3.80 (0.75)	3.78 (0.69)	0.078	0.925
While-writing	3.50 (0.79)	3.35 (0.66)	3.60 (0.73)	0.889	0.415
Post-writing	3.78 (1.06)	3.99 (1.02)	4.57 (0.35)	4.178	0.019

To further investigate the relationship between writing anxiety and proficiency levels, we conducted PCT test, as shown in Table 3. Two numbers (-0.259* and -0.252*) indicated that students' TEM4 scores had a significant negative correlation with writing anxiety in the whole writing process and the post-writing stage. However, TEM4 scores were not significantly associated with writing anxiety before and during writing because the numbers were 0.011and -0.022 respectively. Because the anxiety characteristics of the three writing stages are slightly different, the relationship between writing anxiety and proficiency will also be different. To put it bluntly, the more proficient students were, the less anxious they would be in the post-writing stage and throughout the writing process.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Test

	TEM 4	The whole process	Pre-writing	While-writing	Post-writing
TEM 4	1	-0.259*	0.011	-0.022	-0.252*
The whole process			0.651**	0.662**	0.705**
Pre-writing				0.767**	0.667**
While-writing					0.569**
Post-writing					1

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

4.2   Comparing male and female students through independent T-test

In the study, independent T-test was conducted to compare the differences in thesis writing anxiety between boy and girl students. Table 4 showed that the mean of thesis writing anxiety for boys was 3.06 but 3.88 for girls in the whole writing process. As the level of significance was 0.001, which was less than 0.05, it can be concluded that there were significant differences between males and femals in writing anxiety during the thesis writing process. Generally speaking, female students were more anxious than male students because the anxiety means of females outweighed those of males.

Table 4:   T-test of different stages

Stages	M (SD)		t	sig
	Male	Female		
The whole process	3.06(0.86)	3.88(0.69)	-3.404	.001
Pre-writing	3.14(1.08)	3.91(0.66)	-3.150	.002
While-writing	2.68(0.73)	3.56(0.63)	-3.976	.000
Post-writing	3.07(0.99)	4.23(0.86)	-3.909	.000

4.3   Results of the interview

The above data analyses on writing anxiety was carried out by quantitative methods. Quantitative data offered some valid evidence but qualitative methods were also important in the study because they provide further findings by surveying participants' true perspectives. As a result, semi-interviews was conducted in this session. All participants were offered by pseudonymous names. To further address the research questions, 2 respondents (one boy is called John ; one girl is called Lucy) were interviewed separately. Each interview lasted about 50 minutes.

4.3.1 The effects of writing students' anxiety on writing performance

Questions 1, 2 and 3 were designed to ask respondents how writing anxiety affected their writing performance in the three writing stages. In this regard, the responses of two respondents shed light on how writing anxiety affects their writing.

John: In the pre-writing phase, it made me angry... I was anxious when I wrote some passages, because the errors in expression and the messy sentence structure needed to be modified several times... I felt very painful, especially in the late phase of writing, because I was asked to make big adjustments and changes, but the time was too limited. According to the teacher's request, I must modify the contents of the two chapters and change their order...

Lucy: Because I couldn't find more valuable resources, I became angry at the stage before writing. I threw the useless print in the dustbin angrily, though it spent some money... I have a lot of red spots on my face and I'm

in low spirits. I have made progress in the middle phase of writing, because the direction is on the right way to the final destination. One of the things that bothered me was my advisor's suspicion. She once asked me if I asked my classmates to help me write some parts of my thesis. In the late phase of writing, the advisor suddenly pointed out many problems in my third manuscript. I was asked to do a lot of proofreading of the text organization... I remember that time I cried several times. I became more and more anxious at that stage...

4.3.2 The main problem and the most anxious stage of thesis writing

Questions 4 and 5 were to ask the main problems and the most difficult stage of students' thesis writing.

John: Lack of self-confidence and writing experience were the two major problems in thesis writing. Because of these reasons, I had low efficiency in writing thesis and a lot of sentence mistakes and errors appeared afterwards... I was so poor in grammar and vocabulary that I always lag behind others in speed and felt quite anxious particularly in the stage of post-writing.

Lucy: Language expression was the biggest problem in my thesis writing. I found I couldn't find the right way to express my ideas…. The post-writing stage would be the most anxious one of the three stages. There were so much to do in a very limited amount of time. I couldn't feel asleep and often forgot things at that moment. The terrible thing for me to do was to revise the manuscript time and again based on the feedback of the supervisor….

4.3.3 Writing anxiety among students with different proficiency levels and gender

Questions 6 and 7 were asked to understand the correlation between writing anxiety and proficiency levels, the correlation between writing anxiety and gender.

John: Thesis writing anxiety is negatively correlated with the high proficiency level of English majors….We Chinese students often write the theses in the Chinese way of thinking way even though we are required to write it in English. Thesis writing becomes a big challenge for low students…. Student with high proficiency levels may spend less time on English expressions than students with lower students. Top students may have lower writing anxiety but slower students may have higher writing anxiety…As for gender differences, I don't think there is any relationship between writing anxiety and gender, because different people have different personalities whether they are males and females...

Lucy: I agree that writing anxiety is negatively correlated with proficiency levels. Writing anxiety for high level students is likely to be lower than that of low level students…. Because thesis writing is a long and heavy task for the author, it requires a high level of language foundation and writing ability. High level students should be better than low level students in these aspects. The latter made more errors than the former. As a result, the better the students' English is, the lower their writing anxiety might be…. As for gender differences, I think that females are probably more anxious than males because females are more likely to be angry, annoyed and irritable than males. In addition, females are more influenced by affective factors and become less calm when encountering difficulties. Therefore, I think that females have a higher degree of anxiety in thesis writing, and males have a relatively lower degree of anxiety in thesis writing.

4.3.4 The causal factors and strategies of thesis writing anxiety

Question 8, 9 and 10 were designed to explore students' perspectives on causal factors and coping strategies of thesis writing anxiety.

John: I think linguistic difficulties and lack of self-confidence are two of the main factors causing me anxious in thesis writing. My grammar is very poor and vocabulary is too limited so I always make mistakes in writing…. I have no confidence so I worry about many things in writing and I must be a very slow writer. In addition, the format of the thesis changed many times, which led me into anxious situation…. The way to relieve my writing anxiety was to listen to music, play the guitar and talk to my friends…My advisor helped me a lot with making an outline...

Lucy: Writing task, linguistic problems and personal characteristics are the main factors that lead to my anxiety in thesis writing. I seldom practice writing and the longest article I have ever written is a composition under 500 English words…. When I was informed that we need to write a paper with no less than 3000 English words, I suddenly felt overwhelmed and became anxious. My English level prevents me writing papers quickly and I often feel frustrated and exhausted... I'd like to have something delicious to eat if I feel anxious so my friends call me a foodie and sometimes I go for karaoke to sing songs. These are effective ways for me to alleviate anxiety...My writing teacher gave me some help in collecting information. However, I'm a shy person and I dare not to ask for more help from my advisor even though I have many questions...

5. Discussion

5.1 The correlation between writing anxiety and proficiency levels

The results of the ANOVA and Post Hoc Test all indicated that there is a negative significance between writing anxiety and proficiency levels during the writing process. Respondents believed that there was a strong negative relationship between writing anxiety and proficiency levels. They thought that students with high level of proficiency might be easier to understand than students with low levels when writing a paper.

Many previous studies have found a negative correlation between language anxiety and language achievement. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope indicated that there is a consistent moderate negative relationship between anxiety and achievement.[18] This result also confirms the study by Young, which stated that anxiety affects foreign language learners with low levels more than those with high levels of proficiency.[19] Liu's (2006) study also showed EFL students with advanced proficiency levels in English seemed to have less anxiety.[13] It is discrepant with the study of Llinas and Garau that noted that advanced learners showed high levels of anxiety than beginning and intermediate learners.[20] However, there was no significant differences between the pre-writing stage and while-writing stage for students of different levels. The results are consistent with the study which denoted that there is no significant relationship between anxiety and EFL proficiency[21]. Because the important thing for students to do before writing was to choose the topic and select the information. For the while-writing stage, most students imitated others' work or wrote a lot in their own words. They might not get much feedback from the advisor during these two stages. When they finished their first manuscripts, the advisor went over their drafts and asked them to do a lot of revision work. Students with high levels did much better than lower students at this stage. In short, high level students seemed to have low-levels

of anxiety and low level students had high level of anxiety throughout the essay writing process and in the post-writing stage.

5.2 The correlation between writing anxiety and gender

According to the independent T-test in table 4, girl students had high anxiety than boy students in the process of thesis writing. The respondents agreed that girls had higher level of anxiety and boys had lower level of anxiety for psychological and physical factors. Generally speaking, there was a significant correlation between writing anxiety and gender. In other words, girls were significantly more anxious than boys.

The above result from the quantitative analysis is in line with Cheng's study which claimed that female students had higher anxiety of English writing in classes than male counterparts.[22] The result of the qualitative analysis may be consistent with the study of Sadighi, Sahragard, and Jafari, which results showed that male were less anxious than females.[23] However, the results contrast with Na's study which presented the fact that male students were more anxious than female students.[24] Since there were more female students than male students, and two-thirds of the students were at the intermediate proficiency level. It's common to see that females were more anxious than males in thesis writing in the study.

5.3 The casual factors of writing anxiety

Linguistic difficulties, insufficient writing practice and techniques, topic choosing problem, low self-confidence, fear of teachers' negative feedback, time pressure, insufficient resources, demands for repetition rate checking and oral defense are the possible factors causing anxiety in thesis writing.[25] Among these factors, poor language, lack of confidence, time pressure, topic choice problem, and defense might be the main factors associated with writing anxiety in the study. In the process of writing , generating ideas, interpreting arguments and summarizing results are presented through language knowledge. Students' poor language problems might lead to their writing anxiety and affect writing performance.

The result is consistent with the study of Hyland [4] which indicated that most obvious factor that distinguishes ESL writers is the difficulty they are expressing themselves in English. Time pressure and topic choosing problem might also be important factors of writing anxiety. In summary, the causal factors of anxiety in thesis writing are too complicated, and there are many reasons for students to feel anxious in the whole process.

5.4 The students' coping strategies of writing anxiety

The interview data revealed that students had their own ways to alleviate their writing anxiety. Rebuilding self-confidence is a basic strategy for reducing fear and anxiety. Student may listen to music, watch movies or TV plays, sing songs in Karaoke, do some sports, chat with friends, go out for dinner, go shopping, and stop writing for a few days. Wei put forward a series of anxiety coping strategies such as preparation, peer seeking, relaxation, and positive thinking.[26] In summary, the strategies to alleviate anxiety may include promoting self-confidence, enhancing background knowledge, creating positive attitudes, peer feedback, relaxation exercises, good preparation, more practice and training on writing essays, imitating some good samples and so on.

Based on the above research results, this paper provides some teaching implications for future research: First, EFL undergraduate students should have a clear understanding of graduation thesis writing and learn to manage their writing anxiety in the different stages of writing. They should make full use of resources, develop good writing habits and become good writers. Second, teachers should reflect their teaching on appropriate approaches to teaching writing, the dynamic roles in classroom teaching, and effective feedback on students' written assignments. Third, researchers should further study the factors that cause writing anxiety and how to deal with it effectively. At last but not least, future studies also need to investigate some other variables such as computer anxiety, library anxiety, and communication anxiety. More attention should also be paid to age, ethnic group, region and cultural background.

References

1. Christopher, T. (1996). Writing in academic and study settings. In T. Christopher (Ed.), Writing (pp.82-102). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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

3. Checkett, L.＆Gayle F. C. (2004). The White Start with Readings: Sentences to Paragraph, Second Edition, United States: Pearson Education.

4. Hyland, K. (2003). Second Language Writing. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

5. Brookes, A., ＆Peter G. (1991). Writing for Study Purposes: A Teacher's Guide to Developing Individual Writing Skills. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

6. Hardling, C. (2004). Planning and Organising a Master' Thesis. United Kingdom: Studymates Limited.

7. Field, J. (2004). Psycholinguistics: the key concepts. Routledge, Taylor＆Francis Books Ltd.

8. Cheng, Y.-S., (2004). A measure of second language writing anxiety: Scale development and preliminary validation. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 13(4), 315-335.

9. Daly, J. A. & Wilson, D. A. (1983). Writing apprehension, self-esteem, and personality. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 17(4), 327-341.

10. Bloom, L. (1981). Why graduate students can't write: Implications of research on writing anxiety for graduation education. *Journal of Advanced Composition*, 2, 1-2.

11. Tobias, S. (1986). Anxiety and cognitive processing of Instruction. In R. Schwarzer, Self-related cognitions in anxiety and motivation Hillsdale, *NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum*. 35-53.

12. Horwitz, E. K. (2001). Language anxiety and achievement. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*,21, 112-126.

13. Liu, M. H. (2006). Anxiety in Chinese EFL students as different proficiency levels. *System*, 34, 301-316.

14. Llinas, M. M. & Garau, M. J. (2009). Effects of language anxiety on three proficiency-level courses of Spanish as a foreign language. *Spring*. 94-111.

15. Dewaele, J. M. (2002). Psychological and sociodemographic correlates of communicative anxiety in L2 and L3 production. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 6(1), 23-38.

16. Cheng, Y. S. (2004a). EFL students' writing anxiety: Sources and implications. *English Teaching and Learning*, 29(2), 41-62.

17. Heaton, H., & Pray, P. (1982). Writing anxiety: Reasons and reduction techniques. *Wisconsin English Journal*, 24(3), 2-7.

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

19. Young, D. J. (1991). Creating a low-anxiety classroom environment: What does language anxiety research suggest? *Modern Language Journal*, 75, 426-439.

20. Llinas, M. M. & Garau, M. J. (2009). Effects of language anxiety on three proficiency-level courses of Spanish as a foreign language. *Spring*. 94-111.

21. Bashosh, S., Nejad, M. A., Rastegar, M., & Marzban, A. (2013). The relationship between shyness, foreign language classroom anxiety, willingness to communicate, gender, and EFL proficiency. Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 3(11), 2098-2106.

22. Cheng, Y. (2002). Factors associated with foreign language wiring anxiety. *Foreign Language Annals*, 35, 647-656.

23. Sadighi, F, Sahragard. R., & Jafari, M. (2009). Listening comprehension and foreign language classroom anxiety among Iranian EFL learners. *The Iranian EFL Journal*, 3, 137-152.

24. Na, Z. (2007). A study of high school students' English learning anxiety. Asian EFL Journal, 9(3),22-34.

25. Younas, et al. (2014). Exploring the causes of writing anxiety: A case of B.S. English students. *Language in India*, 14(8), 197-208.

26. Wei, J. H. (2013). A study via interviews of the Chinese Bouyei college learners' EFL classroom anxiety coping strategies. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 3(4), 660-668.

APPENDICE

Appendix 1 Questionnaire

Here are some statements for self-evaluation of graduation thesis writing anxiety, with "1" for not anxious, "2" for not very anxious, "3" for a little anxious, "4" for quite a lot anxious, "5" for very anxious. Please select the rating best match your real level on each item dimension described by the statement.

Statement	Self-rating (√)
The whole writing process	
1. When I'm required to write thesis in accordance with the prescribed format, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. When I'm required to write thesis in English no less than 4000 words, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
3. When I'm required to defend the graduation thesis, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
4. When I get to know thesis writing has a relationship with my graduation certificate, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

5. Generally speaking, when writing graduation thesis, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Pre-writing stage	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
6. When choosing the range, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
7. When setting the title, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
8. When setting the outline, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
9. When writing the proposal, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
10. When proposal meeting is near, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
11. When I face sharp questions in proposal meeting, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
12. When I get critical advices from the supervisor, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
While-writing stage	
13. When I search for the materials related to the topic, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
14. When I collect data, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
15. When I sort out data, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
16. When I analyze data, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
17. When I begin to write the first draft, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
18. When I organize the language, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
19. When I draw a conclusion, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Post-writing stage	
20. When I get feedback from the supervisor, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
21. When I begin to revise the draft, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
22. When I finish revising the draft and ready to hand it to the supervisor, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
23. When I'm asked to check the thesis with a required testing system, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
24. When I'm discussing my thesis with supervisor before the thesis oral defense, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
25. When the thesis oral defense is drawing near, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
26. When I answer sharp questions in thesis oral defense, I feel…	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Appendix 2   Interview Transcription Excerpt

Q1: In what ways does your writing anxiety affect you at pre-writing stage? Can you give me an example?

Q2: In what ways does your writing anxiety affect you at while-writing stage? Can you give me an example?

Q3: In what ways does your writing anxiety affect you at post-writing stage? Can you give me an example?

Q4: What are the main problems in your graduation thesis writing?

Q5: Which stage is the most anxious one among the three different stages? And why?

Q6: What do you think of the relationship between writing anxiety and proficiency levels in graduation thesis writing? And why?

Q7: What do you think of the relationship between writing anxiety and gender in graduation thesis writing?

And why ?

Q8: What are the main factors to cause your anxiety in thesis writing? How do they affect you?

Q9: How do you alleviate your writing anxiety in graduation thesis writing? Does they workable?

Q10: Do you think your writing teacher, thesis writing supervisor help you a lot in graduation thesis writing?

Personal Profile:

Peng Yanping, female, professor, Master of Arts, University of Leeds in UK, and PhD candidate in EL, the Lyceum of the Philippines University. Published more than 30 papers, 2 monographs, presided and participated more than 10 research projects, her main research direction is English teaching in higher education. She is an expert in philosophy and social sciences from Qianxinan, Guizhou, China, and the director of the International Exchange and Cooperation Office of Minzu Normal University of Xingyi. She has visited the United States, Canada, Australia, Spain, Malaysia, South Korea and other countries, and has rich experiences in teaching and administrative work. She has won honorable titles of "Excellent Teacher" "Backbone Teacher" and "Advanced Individual" many times.