



Universiti Teknologi MARA

**Factors Contributing to Students' Apprehension
Towards Writing English Compositions
(A Case Study at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan
Sultan Mansor, Kuala Terengganu)**

Zakiah Binti Abd Wahab

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Teaching English as a Second Language
Faculty of Education

April 2006

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Above everything, I would like to express my utmost gratefulness to ALLAH for giving me the faith, strength and perseverance to complete this thesis against all odds, the countless blessings showered upon me especially to all of these lovely and supportive people in my life to assist me in pursuing my long sought after dream to venture in the fountain of knowledge through this Masters voyage.

I am extremely indebted to my thesis supervisor, Mr Johari Tawang for his generous and continuous insights, kindness, patience, advice, warm encouragement and humour to ease my writing apprehension all along this turbulent, challenging journey. I highly appreciate his careful reading of my innumerable thesis drafts and his taking each of my ignorant questions seriously without showing any signs of contempt, is far beyond description throughout this period. *“Thank you so much for everything and may Allah bless you, Mr Jo.”*

My utmost sincere appreciation goes to all of my lovely and thoughtful lecturers in M.Ed.TESL programme for their valuable professional expertise and support for my academic career; Associate Professor Dr Abu Bakar Haji Ibrahim, Dr Faizah Mohamad, Associate Professor Dr Fatimah Dinna Tan Sri Mohd Din, Dr Richard Holmes and Associate Professor Tuan Haji Maksom Sakaran.

I would like to convey my sincere appreciation to the Principal of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Sultan Mansor (SMKSM), for giving me the permission to carry out the research. A special thank and gratefulness to the administrative team and my cooperative colleagues in SMKSM who gave their support and assistance in this study. My special appreciation to my lovely and obedient students in form 5GE2 and 5PD1 for giving their undivided attention and cooperation in this research. *“May Allah bless you all.”*

ABSTRACT

This research is designed to investigate the level of writing apprehension (WA) among the selected students in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Sultan Mansor (SMKSM), Kuala Terengganu and to identify the possible critical factors that contribute to the students' writing apprehension. It also attempts to provide some suggestions on how to overcome the students' apprehension towards writing English compositions. A total of 40 form five, identified as low English proficiency level students and 10 English teachers from the same school responded to prepared sets of questionnaires which comprised of a Likert 5 point scale ranging from 'Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree' and the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Test (WAT). All the data collected were analysed using the Daly-Miller WAT formula, frequency count technique and percentages. Then, quantitative and qualitative analyses were made.

The study revealed a surprising finding whereby only a small number of students possessed low or high writing apprehension, while majority of the students experienced average writing apprehension. This finding has contradicted the previous researches that showed generally low English proficiency level students will experience high writing apprehension and vice versa. However, a point to note here is that according to Daly-Miller (1975a), average apprehensive student writers do experience "excessive apprehension" when carrying out certain writing tasks or in writing with different purposes for different types of audience. This study revealed that students' attitude, belief, lack of self-confidence and motivation, low English proficiency level, limited vocabulary, lack of interest in reading English materials and low socio-economic status are some of the major factors that contribute to the students' writing apprehension. The students highlighted that to a certain extent, teacher's factors also play a significant role in leading to their apprehensiveness towards writing. The findings also depict the teachers' teaching strategies and their suggestions on how to handle or at least minimize the students' level of writing apprehension while conducting writing activities in the classroom. Finally, in conclusion, it is hoped that some other pedagogical and psychological strategies in the recommendation section will assist the various stakeholders to help reduce the students' apprehension towards writing English compositions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	x
ABSTRACT	xi
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of the Study	4
1.3 Statement of the Problem	6
1.4 Purpose of the Study	6
1.5 Research Questions	7
1.6 Significance of the Study	7
1.7 Definition of Terms	9
1.8 Limitations	10
1.9 Delimitations	12
CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Introduction	13
2.1.1 Writing	14
2.2 Writing Apprehension	16
2.2.1 Other Definitions of Writing Apprehension	17

2.3	Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Test	21
2.4	The Use of Writing Apprehension Test	22
2.5	Factors that Contribute to Writing Apprehension	22
	2.5.1 Teacher Factors	26
	2.5.2 Attitude / Belief / Self-Confidence	30
	2.5.3 Motivation	34
	2.5.4 Socio-Economic Status	36
	2.5.5 Proficiency	37
2.6	The Effects of Writing Apprehension	39
2.7	Summary	43

CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1	Introduction	44
3.2	Population	44
3.3	Sample and Sample Selection	45
3.4	Instrumentation	46
	3.4.1 Measuring Daly –Miller Writing Apprehension Test	46
	3.4.2 Calculating and Reading the Score in the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Test	47
	3.4.3 The Survey Questionnaires	51
	3.4.3 [a] Description of Survey Questionnaire for the Students	51
	3.4.3 [b] Description of Survey Questionnaire for the Teachers	52
3.5	Research Procedures	53
3.6	Data Analysis	54
3.7	Limitations	55
3.8	Conclusion	55