

## **The Significance of Language Exposure with Writing Self-Efficacy and Writing Apprehension of Filipino ESL Writers**

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### **Abstract**

The study investigated the relationship of English language exposure, writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy of 64 college students taking up academic writing. Instruments used were the language exposure questionnaire, the writing apprehension test or WAT by Daly-Miller, which was used in the study of Erkan and Saban (2011), and the self-efficacy in writing scale questionnaire (SWS) by YaVuz-Erkan (2004, as cited in Erkan & Saban, 2011). Pearson r was utilized in the analysis of the relationship of the mentioned variables and results of the study show that first, exposure and self-efficacy are moderately correlated, which means that the respondents who have more access or exposure to the target language felt more confident in their writing outputs. Second, the exposure and self-apprehension are not correlated, which means that apprehension is possible despite high exposure to the language. Lastly, writing self-efficacy and writing apprehension are inversely correlated, which means that the higher the self-efficacy, the lower the apprehension and vice versa.

*Keywords:* Language Acquisition, Language Exposure, Writing Skills, Writing Self-efficacy, Writing Apprehension

### **Introduction**

Various studies have been done on how one acquires and comprehends a language simply because contradicting views are involved. "Various aspects of the nature of L1 and L2 acquisition were examined, compared, and contrasted and the results from these comparisons and contrasts have valuable implications for language teachers which can help them to design their syllabuses, teaching processes, and classroom activities" (Ipek, 2009, p. 155). Yet, despite the challenges of each theory (The Behaviorist, The Chomskian, and The Interactionist Theories, to name a few), there is one principle

agreed upon by many researchers, and that is, acquiring a language requires a certain amount of exposure to the target language (Escamilla & Grassi, 2000). In fact, Ipek (2009) even claimed that a *silent period* during one's exposure to the target language is necessary.

Exposure in a language is considered successful when the learner can already produce the language. In fact, Lightbrown and Spada (2006) claimed that language acquisition theories emphasize the importance of interacting with others in broader social context. This production may either be in spoken or in written form. But of the two, writing is the skill considered to be essential to academic success. It requires thinking strategies and is a complex activity that requires a certain level of linguistics knowledge (Erkan & Saban, 2011). According to Mohamed and Darus (2012), writing is an important skill whereby learners are able to progress independently to a higher level of intellectual maturity, especially in the case of language learning. In addition, "learning to write fluently and expressively are the most difficult of the macro skills for all language users regardless of whether the language in question is a first, second or foreign language" (p. 182).

As mentioned, though speaking and writing are both used to communicate, this paper has chosen to test the writing skills. Aside from the reasons stated in the previous paragraph, there is also a growing interest in linguistic accuracy in relation to L2 writing pedagogy. In fact, linguistic accuracy is considered a relevant construct in "L2 writing assessment and L2 writing pedagogy" (Polio, 1997, p. 102). In addition, writing is considered varied "with context and cannot be distilled down to a set of abstract cognitive or technical abilities (Hyland, 2007, p. 150). This even becomes more complex when writing in a second language in the academic context (Myles, 2002).

Language exposure plays a big role in the learner's language production. It has been documented that exposure can immediately develop a target language and that language comprehension can be a result of social interaction with speakers of the target language (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). Yet, a decent amount of exposure may be affected by one's apprehension and self-efficacy, especially in writing. According to Faigley, Daly, and Witte (1981), writing apprehension makes people avoid writing or find writing burdensome, and this

reflects on their written products. Self-efficacy, on the other hand is the individuals' beliefs in their abilities to perform a task and this is believed to be an important variable in predicting learners' performance (Bandura, 1986). It is also claimed to mediate in learners' aptitude, past achievements, and subsequent performances (Bandura, 2006). Thus, writing self-efficacy, is one's self belief in his/her ability to write, which may enhance his/her writing performance.

The relationship between writing and apprehension and self-efficacy has been investigated in numerous studies. To cite a few, Ajileye (1998) studied the effect of English exposure to English activities. In this study, she concluded that language exposure outside the students' classroom has a positive effect on the writing performances of the students. Atkinson (2010), on the other hand, conducted a study on writing apprehension and academic beliefs. He found out that there is no correlation between writing apprehension and stress and coping behaviors, low negative correlation between writing apprehension and beliefs on academic work evaluation for self-responsibility, and low negative correlation between writing apprehension and rational beliefs.

Another study by Shawish and Atea (2010) was conducted to investigate on Palestinian EFL majors' writing apprehension. They found out that high achievers have high writing apprehension compared to low achievers. Another study, by Erkan and Saban (2011), shows that writing performance is directly affected by writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy. Similarly, a local study by Magno, de Carvalho, Lajom, Bunagan, and Regodon (2009) examined Taiwanese college students in Taiwan and in the Philippines. Results of their study confirmed that Taiwanese students in the Philippines get more exposure to the English language, making them acquire a higher English proficiency level. The most recent study on writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy is the study of Singh and Rajalingham (2012). Their study, conducted in Malaysia, investigated writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy as variables affecting writing proficiency level. All of these studies confirm the statement of Harmer (1998, as cited in Guerrero, 2012) that "if students get enough exposure to language and opportunities for its use, then language learning will take care of itself" (p. 13).

Writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy, as discussed previously, are two factors that could affect a students' writing despite the amount of exposure. Thus, this study explored whether language exposure has a relationship with these two factors in an ESL setting, specifically university students studying in the Philippines.

It is acknowledged that a lot of factors could contribute to writing apprehension and self efficacy. Stress, coping behaviors, or a students' sense of control over, and responsibility for his or her academic progress (Atkinson, 2010) are just a few influencing factors. But, as mentioned in the literature, exposure is the strongest variable, and so, this research has chosen to explore the link between exposure and writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy. The research questions are as follows:

RQ 1: Is there a relationship between language exposure and writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy?

RQ 2: Is there a relationship between writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy?

The quantitative method of the study tested the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between language exposure and writing self-efficacy.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between language exposure and writing apprehension.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy.

Or

There is a significant relationship among language exposure, writing self-efficacy, and writing apprehension.

## **Methodology**

This study has 64 respondents who were college freshman students of De La Salle University currently taking up English communication at the time of the study. Among these 64 students, 24 are males and 40 are females. These students were given three sets of Likert scale type of questionnaires. The first one is the language

exposure questionnaire, the writing apprehension test or WAT by Daly and Miller, which was found highly reliable and valid by previous studies. Please refer to Appendix A. This questionnaire “has been used in a previous work dealing with self-esteem and career preference. It has performed admirably as a baseline for work with written communication apprehension (Atkinson, 2010, p.11).”

The writing self-efficacy in writing scale (SWS) was by YaVuz-Erkan (2004, as cited in Erkan & Saban, 2011) is the third instrument used in this study (Appendix A). SWS was used to assess the students’ self-efficacy in writing. SWS is a 21-item writing self-efficacy scale to grade the strength of subjects’ belief in their writing ability. The items of the scale were graded with the four-tier system Likert scale (p. 174).”

To ensure that the students would answer the questionnaires, all of these questionnaires were administered inside a classroom during their English communication class. To know what the students felt about writing, the researchers asked 10 students to write an essay about their experiences and learning in their writing class to further support the results of the study. After gathering the data, Pearson *r* was used in analyzing the relationship of language exposure, writing apprehension, and writing self-efficacy using SPSS.

## Results and Discussion

The data which were analyzed using Pearson *r* were presented in the tables that follow while the qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions by the respondents was also presented to supplement and strengthen the quantitative analysis.

The first relationship examined, as shown in Table 1, was the relationship between language exposure and writing self-efficacy. As seen in the table, the computed *r* between language exposure and writing self-efficacy is .318. The significant value is .010, which is lesser than the significant level of ( $p < 0.05$ ). This implies a moderate relationship between language exposure and writing self-efficacy. With this, the researchers accept Hypothesis 1. Thus, there is a relationship between these two variables. Apparently, the respondents who were exposed more to the target language felt more

confident in their writing outputs. Based on the questionnaire, most of the students answered that (1) *they are exposed to English at school because the medium of instruction here in the Philippines is English and that they are exposed to it through media*. Also, (2) *they usually watch movies and TV shows in English and they usually read information or books in English, too*. With these exposures, they assumed that since English is everywhere within their reach, writing is not as difficult to accomplish.

Table 1  
*Correlation between Language Exposure and Writing Self-Efficacy*

		Language Exposure	Writing Self-efficacy
Language_Exposure	Pearson Correlation	1	.318**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010
	N	64	64
Writing_Self-efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.318**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	
	N	64	64

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

Table 2  
*Correlation between Language Exposure and Writing Apprehension*

		Language Exposure	Writing Apprehension
Language_Exposure	Pearson Correlation	1	-.0212
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.092
	N	64	64
Writing_Apprehension	Pearson Correlation	-.0212	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.092	

Table 2  
*Correlation between Language Exposure and Writing Apprehension*

		Language Exposure	Writing Apprehension
Language_Exposure	Pearson Correlation	1	-.0212
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.092
	N	64	64
Writing_Apprehension	Pearson Correlation	-.0212	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.092	
	N	64	64

The second relationship examined was the relationship between language exposure and writing apprehension. While language exposure and writing self-efficacy have a significant relationship, the two variables in Table 2 do not have significance at all. As can be seen in the table, the coefficient correlation between language exposure and writing apprehension is -0.213, and the p value is 0.092 which is greater than the significant level ( $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, the second hypothesis was rejected. Thus, it appears that, the high exposure to the language does not affect the writing apprehension of the respondents. This is similar with the findings of the study of Pajares and Johnson (1994).

Since Table 1 shows that there is a significant relationship between language exposure and writing self-efficacy, while Table 2 shows no significant relationship between language exposure and writing apprehension, the researchers decided to investigate if there is a relationship between writing apprehension and writing efficacy. The result is shown in Table 3.

Table 3  
*Correlation between Writing Apprehension and Writing Self-efficacy*

		Writing Apprehension	Writing Self-efficacy
Writing_Apprehension	Pearson Correlation	1	-.748**
	Sig. (2- tailed)		.000
	N	64	64
Writing_Self-efficacy	Pearson Correlation	-.748**	1
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	
	N	64	64

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

Results in Table 3 display that writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy are inversely correlated. As shown,  $r=-0.748$  and  $p\text{-value}=0.000$ . These are less than the significant level ( $p<0.01$ ), which signifies a strong significant inverse relationship between writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy. This implies that when one variable goes up, the other goes down. Thus, in the case of the variables in Table 3, the high writing apprehension of the respondents obtained a low writing self-efficacy. Thus, the third hypothesis is accepted because, though the relationship is considered inverse, they still influence each other. According to properties of  $r$ , if the value is close to the lower limit of  $-1$ , a strong negative relationship is present (Peck & DeVore, 2011).

To substantiate the qualitative analysis, selected students were instructed to write about their experiences and learning in their writing classes. They indicated that writing in college was terrifying at first and they were apprehensive when first introduced with the parameters of academic writing. Atkinson (2010) mentioned the same when he claimed that "students expect to do poorly and tend to do so because their inability to cope with the associated stress does not allow them sufficient practice of the craft (p. 1)." But the respondents



of this study changed their opinion when they were exposed to different writing materials and activities. But this generalization was not observed in all the chosen respondents. There were those who stated that (1) *I think I do not know how to properly write* and another who claimed that (2) *I now have difficulties in writing because I am scared that my written product will not be as good as it should be*. Thus, it appears that, there are still students who feel stressed over writing despite a high exposure to the language. This is again similar to the claim of Atkinson that there are students who would still feel anxious at the mere thought of writing.

### Conclusion

This study revealed that language exposure plays an important role in the writing self-efficacy and writing apprehension of students, while self-efficacy and writing apprehension are inversely correlated. Bandura (1986) also addresses the same view, when he stated that an exposure to *mastery experiences* can affect students' self-efficacy. Thus, a thorough exposure to the target language will improve writing skills since it will lower students' self-apprehension and self-efficacy, which are believed to influence students' writing performance (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). Same result was garnered by Singh and Rajalingham (2011) and other studies mentioned by Erkan and Saban (2011) regarding the inverse relationship between self-efficacy and writing apprehension.

Based on the essays of the selected respondents, language exposure to English in the Philippine setting is not a problem because it is mostly used in their everyday affairs. This, however, is the opinion of one university and may differ once conducted in other schools. But it was established that, somehow, schools where English is predominant provide greater opportunities in improving writing skills, an important mode of communication. The last result in this study revealed that writing self-efficacy and writing apprehension are not correlated. The lack of correlation cannot be over generalized, on the other hand, for different respondents may yield different results. Also, writing abilities are sometimes called by temporary situations, which can change the relationship between the said variables.

Over-all, educators have to utilize many different reading materials inside a classroom in order to expose students with the different writing styles and formats. This will enable them to jumpstart their own writing outputs. This will also minimize common errors in essay writing (Masangya & Lozada, 2009). After all, writing must be practiced and learned through experience (Myles, 2002). Future studies can deal with the students' efforts to improve writing and how these can affect apprehension and self-efficacy. Also, correlational studies cannot always determine the causal relationship of variables, in this case between self-efficacy, writing comprehension, and language exposure. "They [correlational studies] simply show the extent of relatedness of the variables" (Green & Salkind, 2005, as cited in Raofi, Tan, & Chan, 2012, p.66). Thus, a bigger sample size may be needed in future studies.

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