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SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING ANXIETY: A COMPREHENSIVE STRUCTURED REVIEW

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Abstract:

Writing in a second language presents numerous challenges for learners, one of the most significant being Second Language Writing Anxiety (SLWA). Notably, SLWA is characterized by feelings of apprehension, fear, and worry that arise when writing in a non-native language. Anxious learners often experience various negative emotions, including heightened apprehension during the writing process and an overwhelming fear of engaging in writing tasks, which hinders their ability to write effectively. Multiple factors, including emotional responses, personality traits, linguistic limitations, past experiences, and gender differences, contribute to the experience of SLWA among learners. Many learners also struggle with SLWA due to inadequate resources, limited practice opportunities, cultural differences, and ineffective task designs. These challenges often result in severe consequences, such as lower academic achievement, procrastination, and diminished writing quality. However, the experiences of SLWA varied for individual learners due to its situational-specific property. To explore this issue, this paper adopts the PRISMA approach to systematically review 29 scholarly articles published between 2023 and 2024. The review identifies diverse underlying factors leading to SLWA. It also reports practical strategies for mitigating SLWA, including psychological methods, pedagogical techniques and technological tools. The findings suggest that understanding learners' contextual needs is necessary to effectively address SLWA and improve their confidence to become proficient writers.

Keywords:

Second Language Writing Anxiety, Factors, Pedagogical Interventions, SLR

Introduction

Second language (L2) writing is an integral part of language acquisition and academic success for learners around the globe (Abrar & Humaira, 2020; Nurul Najwa Baharum et al., 2021). However, it is also one of the most challenging skills to master (Frolova, Shagivaleeva, Kamal, Spichak, & Salimova, 2021), often accompanied by a significant level of anxiety (Rubina Akhtar, Hanita Hassan, & Saidalvi, 2020; Fang, 2021). Writing anxiety in L2 learners, commonly referred to as second language writing anxiety (SLWA), is a psychological phenomenon that has garnered considerable attention in the field of applied linguistics and language education. It is exemplified by feelings of apprehension, fear, and worry (Cheng, 2002) that arise specifically during writing in a non-native language (Tarkan-Blanco, 2021). Anxious learners often face a range of negative emotions, including increased stress during the writing process and an overwhelming fear of engaging in writing tasks (Kafryawan, Mursyid, Sahib, & Purwati, 2021), impeding their ability to write successfully (Daly & Miller, 1975). Hence, this article seeks to provide a systematic review of the present research trends on SLWA, exploring the causes and potential solutions.

Literature Review

SLWA has emerged as a critical study area, reflecting the intricate relationship between psychological factors and language learning. It is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by various factors. This literature review synthesizes findings from recent studies, highlighting the key trends and implications for L2 writing instruction.

The prevalence of SLWA can be attributed to a multifaceted array of factors, each contributing to the complex nature of this phenomenon. One significant factor is the linguistic challenges that L2 learners face, which include a limited vocabulary (Yu, 2020; Syed Shahid Nawaz, 2021), difficulties with grammar (Nurul Ain Hasni, Norasyikin Abdul Malik, Muhd Syahir Abdul Rani, & Syaza Kamarudin, 2021; Waer, 2021), and challenges in mastering syntactic structures (Farooq, Uzair-Ul-Hassan, & Wahid, 2020). These linguistic limitations often result in frustration and inadequacy, particularly when learners attempt to articulate complex ideas in writing. This struggle is exacerbated by the fear of negative evaluation by peers, instructors, and even themselves (Cheng, 2004), leading to a heightened state of anxiety, causing them to avoid writing tasks entirely as a means of self-protection. Additionally, cultural differences in rhetorical styles further contribute to SLWA. Learners may be unfamiliar with the rhetorical conventions and expectations of academic writing in the target language, which can create additional stress and anxiety as they navigate these unfamiliar norms (Jawas, 2019). Together, these factors create a challenging environment for L2 learners, where anxiety becomes a persistent and significant barrier to effective writing.

Additionally, cultural context and gender differences are critical in understanding the nuances of SLWA. Waked et al. (2024) reported that the traditional dimensions of SLWA, such as somatic anxiety and avoidance behaviour, did not fully apply to Saudi Arabian female university students. Instead, cognitive anxiety manifested in unique ways, influenced by cultural and educational backgrounds. Gender differences also significantly influence cognitive responses during language acquisition, affecting motivation, commitment, and overall achievement. Oga-Baldwin and Fryer (2020) highlight that gender can impact language learning outcomes, with males and females processing language differently. Burman, Bitan, and Booth (2008) noted that female brains engage in more extensive processing and connections during language tasks, while Adams and Simmons (2019) found that boys often

produce shorter, lower-quality compositions than girls. Despite females generally exhibiting more positive attitudes toward language learning, greater use of writing strategies, and higher effort levels (Bai, Shen, & Mei, 2020; Daif-Allah & Aljumah, 2020), they also experience higher levels of SLWA than males (Cheng, 2002) stemming from heightened sensitivity to others' opinions and a tendency to underestimate their abilities (Zulfikri Rasuan & Lindra Wati, 2021). However, research on gender differences in SLWA presents mixed results, with some studies indicating higher anxiety in males (Moralı & Boran, 2021; Reyes, Mercurio, & Ravago, 2024), while others find no significant gender effect (Aytaç-Demirçivi, 2020; Erol, 2021). These findings suggest that SLWA cannot be universally understood; instead, it must be contextualized within specific cultural and demographic parameters.

The effects of SLWA are profound and pervasive, significantly impacting learners' academic performance and overall language development (Kafriyawan et al., 2021; Kirk, Grinstead, & Nibert, 2022). Commonly, it is associated with lower grades, further diminishing learners' confidence and exacerbating anxiety, creating a vicious cycle that hinders their progress in language acquisition (Yanping, 2023). Furthermore, high levels of SLWA often lead to procrastination, where learners delay or avoid writing tasks (Zhang & Zhang, 2022), consequently reducing the quality of their written work. The adverse effects of SLWA are not limited to novice learners; even those at advanced stages of language learning can experience heightened anxiety when confronted with high-stakes writing tasks. This anxiety can lead to cognitive overload, where their mental resources are overly taxed by anxiety, leaving fewer resources available for actual writing, thereby impairing performance (Tobias, 1986). Therefore, the persistent nature of SLWA calls for immediate attention and intervention within educational contexts.

Addressing SLWA requires a nuanced understanding of its complexity, leading to the development of diverse interventions. Psychological approaches help to reshape negative thought patterns and foster a calm, focused mindset (Bailey & Almusharraf, 2022; Jin, 2024) so learners can face challenges positively and resiliently without the overwhelming fear of failure (Yanping, 2023). Besides that, reciprocal scaffolding and collaborative learning (Mojdehi & Zarei, 2023), supporting the emotional and psychological needs of L2 learners (Hu, 2022; Cheong, Yao, & Zhang, 2023), as well as pedagogical techniques like task sequencing (Abdi Tabari et al., 2024) and the use of digital tools (Bailey & Almusharraf, 2022; Jin, 2024), help anxious learners to manage SLWA more effectively. However, the overall efficacy of interventions depends on their alignment with learners' specific needs and contexts.

Research Questions

This study is conducted to address the following research questions:

- i. What are the contributing factors to the experience of SLWA among L2 learners?
- ii. What pedagogical approaches and interventions most effectively reduce SLWA among L2 learners?

Research Method

The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) approach is a widely recognized standard that strongly emphasizes incorporating randomized studies, acknowledging their crucial role in minimizing bias and contributing robust evidence to the review. In this particular analysis, Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus were selected as the primary databases due to their extensive coverage and reliability, further reinforcing the

review's quality and scope. The PRISMA approach is systematically organized into four key sub-sections: identification, screening, eligibility, and data abstraction.

Identification

This study followed the systematic review process to gather a substantial body of relevant literature. The process began with carefully selecting keywords, which were expanded by identifying related terms through dictionaries and previous research. These terms were compiled to create search strings for the WoS and Scopus databases (see Table 1). As a result of this comprehensive search strategy, the initial phase of the systematic review identified 373 publications relevant to the study topic across the two databases.

Table 1: The Search String

Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("second language" OR l2) AND ("writing anxiety" OR apprehension OR nervousness)) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2023) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2024)) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) Date of Access: August 2024
Web of Science	(("second language" OR l2) AND ("writing anxiety" OR apprehension OR nervousness)) (Topic) and 2024 or 2023 (Publication Years) and Article (Document Types) and English (Languages) Date of Access: August 2024

Screening

Each research item was thoroughly evaluated during the screening phase to ensure its relevance to the predefined research questions. Initially, the screening process excluded 286 publications that did not meet the necessary criteria, narrowing the selection to 87 papers for more detailed examination. These papers were then scrutinized based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria, emphasizing literature sources excluding conferences, books, and reviews. The review was purposefully confined to English-language publications from 2023 to 2024 to ensure the currency and accessibility of the findings. The focus on recent literature is crucial for capturing the latest developments and trends in the field. However, despite these careful selections, 19 publications were ultimately excluded due to duplication, further refining the dataset to ensure the integrity and originality of the review process.

Eligibility

During the eligibility phase, 68 articles were thoroughly examined to verify compliance with the established inclusion criteria and alignment with the current research objectives. Following this scrutiny, 39 articles were excluded for being outside the relevant field, having titles that lacked significant relevance, containing abstracts not aligned with the study's objectives, and the unavailability of full-text versions. As a result, 29 articles were deemed suitable and retained for the subsequent review process.

Data Abstraction

An integrative analysis was employed as one of the assessment strategies in this study to identify relevant topics and subtopics. The initial stage involved data collection, the foundation for theme development. Figure 1 illustrates how a detailed analysis of 29 selected publications was conducted. Following this, an in-depth evaluation of significant studies related to L2 writing was undertaken, including an investigation of the methodologies used and their

corresponding research results. Collaboration with three experts was integral in developing themes grounded in the context of the evidence presented in this study. A log was carefully maintained throughout the data analysis process, capturing analyses, viewpoints, challenges, and other thoughts relevant to the interpretation of data. The final step involved comparing the results to identify inconsistencies in the theme design process.

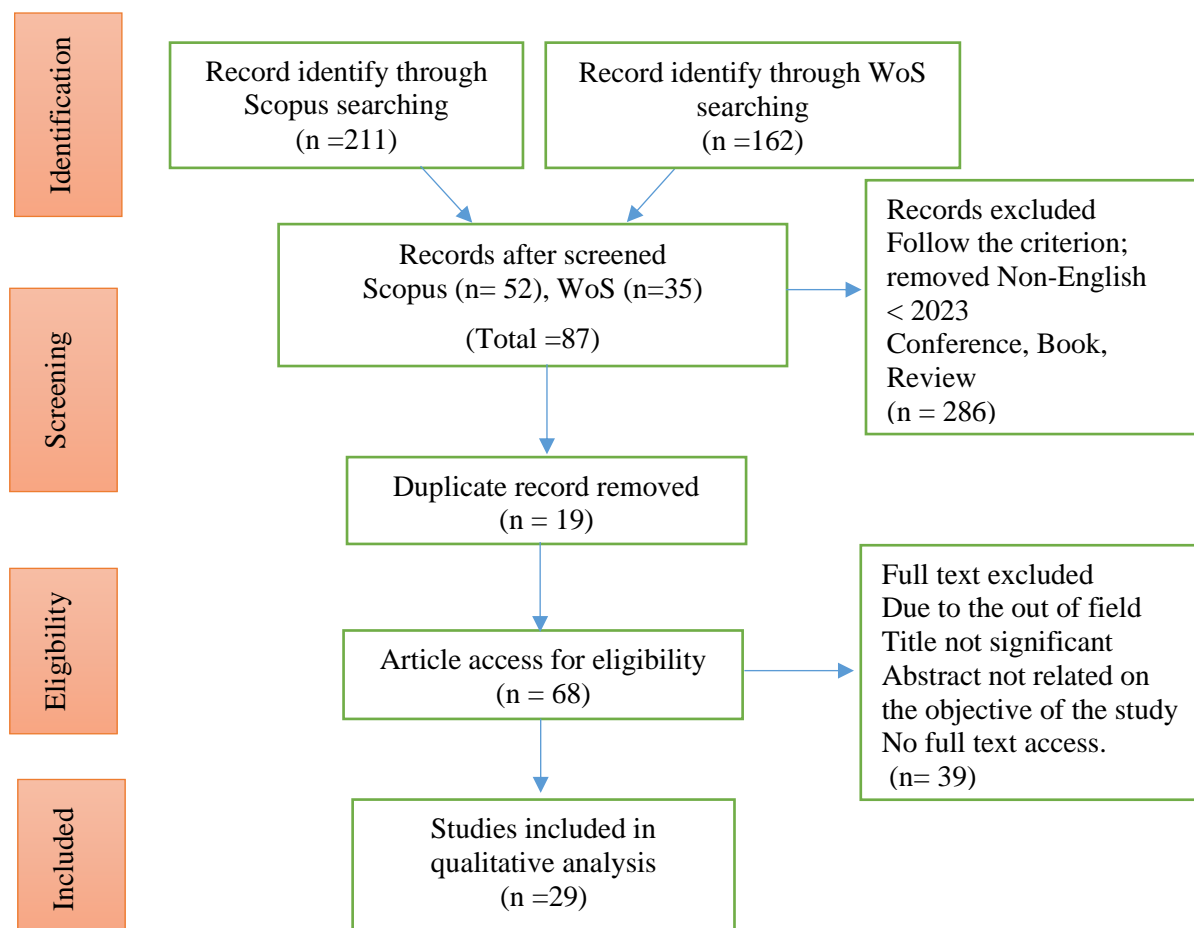


Figure 1: Flow Diagram of the Proposed Searching Study

Table 2 summarizes the background of the selected study, including important details such as the authors, title, journal, and indexing in Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus databases.

Table 2: Background of Selected Study

No	Authors	Title	Journal	WoS	Scopus
1	Abdi Tabari and Goetze (2024)	Exploring the impacts of task complexity, anxiety, and self-efficacy on L2 written production: Unraveling individual differences in TBLT	International Journal of Applied Linguistics (United Kingdom)	/	/
2	Abdi Tabari, Khajavy,	Mapping the interactions between task sequencing, anxiety, and enjoyment in L2 writing development	Journal of Second Language Writing	/	/

	and Goetze (2024)				
3	Al-Khresheh, Mohamed, and Ben Ali (2023)	A Study on the Nature of Writing Apprehension among Saudi Undergraduate EFL Students	Language Teaching Research Quarterly	/	
4	Alrajhi (2024)	Artificial intelligence pedagogical chatbots as L2 conversational agents	Cogent Education	/	/
5	Arnawa and Arafah (2023)	Students' Self-Regulated Strategies in Approaching Second Language Writing	Theory and Practice in Language Studies		/
6	Busse, Graham, Müller, and Utesch (2023)	Understanding the interplay between text quality, writing self-efficacy and writing anxiety in learners with and without migration background	Frontiers in Psychology	/	/
7	Fan and Wang (2024)	Configurational impact of self-regulated writing strategy, writing anxiety, and perceived writing difficulty on EFL writing performance: an fsQCA approach	Scientific Reports	/	/
8	Guan, Zhu, Zhu, Yao, and Jiang (2023)	Performance-based differences in the associations among ideal self, enjoyment, and anxiety: A longitudinal study on L2 integrated writing	Language Teaching Research	/	/
9	Güvendir and Uzun (2023)	L2 writing anxiety, working memory, and task complexity in L2 written performance	Journal of Second Language Writing	/	/
10	Huang, Xu, Li, and Yu (2024)	A Meta-analysis of Effects of Automated Writing Evaluation on Anxiety, Motivation, and Second Language Writing Skills	Asia-Pacific Education Researcher	/	/
11	Jin (2024)	Tapping into social media: transforming EFL learners' writing skills and alleviating anxiety through YouTube	Education and Information Technologies		/
12	Khosravi, Dastgoshadeh, and Jalilzadeh (2023)	Writing metacognitive strategy-based instruction through flipped classroom: an investigation of writing performance, anxiety, and self-efficacy	Smart Learning Environments	/	/

13	Khosravi, Mohammad i, Esmaeili, and Zandi (2023)	Perfectionism and writing anxiety as predictors of Iranian EFL learners' performance in IELTS writing module: a multi-dimensional perspective	Frontiers in Education	/	
14	Leon et al. (2023)	Writing anxiety among prospective nonlanguage teachers: A quantitative study of a nonmetropolitan state university	Forum for Linguistic Studies	/	
15	Li, Wei, and Lu (2023)	Contributions of foreign language writing emotions to writing achievement	System	/	/
16	Mendoza, Lindblom-Ylänne, Lehtonen, and Hyytinen (2023)	Understanding master's thesis writers in a Finnish EMI context: Writing conceptions, apprehension about grammar, self-efficacy for thesis writing and thesis grade	International Journal of Educational Development	/	/
17	Mojdehi and Zarei (2023)	The impact of different scaffolding techniques on IELTS candidates' writing anxiety: From perceptions to facts	Learning, Culture and Social Interaction	/	/
18	Pilotti, Waked, El Alaoui, Kort, and Elmoussa (2023)	The Emotional State of Second-Language Learners in a Research Writing Course: Do Academic Orientation and Major Matter?	Behavioral Sciences	/	/
19	Rasool, Aslam, Mahmood, Barzani, and Qian (2023)	Pre-service EFL teacher's perceptions of foreign language writing anxiety and some associated factors	Heliyon	/	/
20	Rasool, Qian, and Aslam (2023)	An investigation of foreign language writing anxiety and its reasons among pre-service EFL teachers in Pakistan	Frontiers in Psychology	/	/
21	Reyes et al. (2024)	Second Language Writing Anxiety among Faculty Scholars of a State University in the Philippines and Its Sex-Disaggregated Data	Qubahan Academic Journal	/	
22	Song et al. (2023)	English as a foreign language writing anxiety and its	PLoS ONE	/	

		relationship with self-esteem and mobile phone addiction among Chinese medical students—A structural equation model analysis			
23	Talaue and Hendijani (2024)	Holistic Pedagogical Support to Address Postgraduate Students' Challenges in Academic Publishing: The Case of a Business School in Indonesia	Asia-Pacific Education Researcher	/	
24	Tian (2024)	A Study on Second Language Academic Writing Anxiety of Chinese Students Studying in Japan	Applied Mathematics and Nonlinear Sciences	/	
25	Waer (2023)	The effect of integrating automated writing evaluation on EFL writing apprehension and grammatical knowledge	Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching	/	
26	Waked, El Alaoui, and Pilotti (2023)	Second-language writing anxiety and its correlates: A challenge to sustainable education in a post-pandemic world	Cogent Education	/	/
27	Waked et al. (2024)	Cultural considerations for the second language writing anxiety inventory: Saudi Arabian female university students	Frontiers in Education	/	/
28	Zarrinabadi and Rezazadeh (2023)	Why only feedback? Including feed up and feed forward improves non-linguistic aspects of L2 writing	Language Teaching Research	/	
29	Zhou (2023)	Anxiety in L2 Chinese from different angles	Chinese as a Second Language Research	/	

Result and Finding

The analysis began with identifying the main findings from each article, which were coded based on key concepts related to SLWA. The codes were then grouped into categories that reflected broader patterns observed in the findings. These categories were further refined and developed into overarching themes. The generated themes were refined to ensure consistency throughout the analysis process. Three experts evaluated the analysis to assess and validate the identified issues. During the expert review phase, each subtheme's clarity, relevance, and suitability were carefully evaluated to establish domain validity. The authors also compared their findings to resolve discrepancies in the theme development process. Finally, the themes were adjusted for consistency based on the experts' feedback. All articles were categorized based on two main themes: contributing factors to SLWA and interventions to reduce SLWA. Table 3 summarizes the main findings of the selected study, including the relevant themes.

Table 3: Summary of Main Findings

No	Authors	Key findings	Codes	Categories	Themes
1	Abdi Tabari and Goetze (2024)	Self-efficacy causes SLWA.	Self-efficacy	Self-efficacy	Factors to SLWA
2	Abdi Tabari et al. (2024)	Task sequencing positively influenced writing performance, with lower task anxiety.	Task sequencing	Task design	Interventions
3	Al-Khresheh et al. (2023)	Negativity towards writing, cultural and educational context cause SLWA.	Negative attitudes Context	Attitudes Context	Factors to SLWA
4	Alrajhi (2024)	Positive experiences with AI-based chatbots for L2 writing development.	AI tool	Tools	Interventions
5	Arnawa and Arafah (2023)	Self-regulated strategies reduce anxiety.	Self-regulated strategy	Writing strategies	Interventions
6	Busse et al. (2023)	Students with migration backgrounds had lower writing achievements as well as lower SLWA.	Migration background	Context	Factors to SLWA
7	Fan and Wang (2024)	Various self-regulated writing strategies were linked to SLWA.	Writing strategies	Writing strategies	Interventions
8	Guan et al. (2023)	The ideal L2 writing self remained stable but had varying effects on writing enjoyment and anxiety.	Ideal L2	Self-efficacy	Factors to SLWA
9	Güvendir and Uzun (2023)	SLWA reduced syntactic complexity in written texts, particularly under high cognitive load tasks.	Syntactic complexity	Cognitive loads	Factors to SLWA
10	Huang et al. (2024)	AWE technologies reduced SLWA and improved motivation and writing skills.	AWE	Tools	Interventions
11	Jin (2024)	YouTube reduced SLWA and enhanced writing proficiency.	YouTube	Tools	Interventions
12	Khosravi, Dastgoshadeh, et al. (2023)	Flipped classrooms and metacognitive strategies improved writing performance, self-efficacy and reduced writing anxiety.	Flipped classroom	Teaching strategies	Interventions

13	Khosravi, Mohammadi, et al. (2023)	Perfectionism causes SLWA.	Perfectionism	Personality	Factors to SLWA
14	Leon et al. (2023)	Time constraints and perfectionism cause SLWA.	Time Perfectionism	Personality	Factors to SLWA
15	Li et al. (2023)	Boredom negatively affected writing achievement.	Boredom	Attitudes	Factors to SLWA
16	Mendoza et al. (2023)	Adaptive writing conceptions were positively associated with thesis grade and self-efficacy for writing.	Adaptive writing conceptions	Writing strategies	Factors to SLWA
17	Mojdehi and Zarei (2023)	Reciprocal scaffolding reduced SLWA.	Scaffolding	Teaching strategies	Interventions
18	Pilotti et al. (2023)	Students who were grade-oriented had higher SLWA.	Test	Test anxiety	Factors to SLWA
19	Rasool, Aslam, et al. (2023)	Lack of writing practice and expertise cause SLWA.	Lack practice	Experience	Factors to SLWA
20	Rasool, Qian, et al. (2023)	No significant gender differences were found.	Gender	Gender	Factors to SLWA
21	Reyes et al. (2024)	Male participants have higher SLWA.	Gender	Gender	Factors to SLWA
22	Song et al. (2023)	Self-esteem and mobile phone addiction were found to impact SLWA.	Self-esteem	Self-efficacy	Factors to SLWA
23	Talaue and Hendijani (2024)	Holistic pedagogical support, alleviated academic writing challenges.	Holistic pedagogical support	Teaching strategies	Interventions
24	Tian (2024)	Lower L2 proficiency causes SLWA.	L2 proficiency	L2 proficiency	Factors to SLWA
25	Waer (2023)	AWE reduced SLWA and improved grammatical knowledge.	AWE	Tools	Interventions
26	Waked et al. (2024)	The dimensions measured by the SLWAI may not be universal across differing sociocultural populations.	Cultural context	Context	Factors to SLWA
27	Waked et al. (2023)	Increased SLWA linked to later English exposure and attitudes.	Lack of exposure Attitudes	Experience Attitudes	Factors to SLWA
28	Zarrinabadi and	Feedback reduced SLWA and improved motivation and self-efficacy.	Feedback	Teaching strategies	Interventions

Rezazadeh (2023)					
29	Zhou (2023)	L2 proficiency causes SLWA	L2 proficiency	L2 proficiency	Factors to SLWA

Contributing Factors to SLWA

A combination of personal and contextual factors shapes SLWA. These factors interact in complex ways, creating a challenging environment for L2 writers. Understanding these contributing elements is crucial in addressing the influence of SLWA on learners.

Research by Guan et al. (2023) underscores the importance of emotional responses, particularly enjoyment and anxiety, in shaping L2 writing outcomes. This longitudinal study indicates that while the ideal L2 writing self remains stable over time, its impact on enjoyment and anxiety varies across performance levels. High-performing students demonstrated a positive correlation between their ideal L2 writing self and enjoyment. In contrast, low-performing students experienced heightened anxiety, highlighting the critical role of emotional responses in determining writing success. Likewise, Abdi Tabari and Goetze (2024) discovered that self-efficacy emerged as a mitigating factor, reducing the adverse effects of anxiety on writing performance within a task-based language teaching (TBLT) framework research. Further emphasizing the multifaceted nature of emotional influences on writing, Li et al. (2023) explored how various writing-related emotions contribute to writing performance. Their findings challenge the traditional focus on anxiety as the primary emotional factor affecting writing performance. Instead, the study revealed that boredom exerts the most substantial negative impact on writing performance, surpassing anxiety. Meanwhile, Song et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between self-esteem, mobile phone addiction, and SLWA among Chinese medical students found that low self-esteem and high mobile phone addiction were significant predictors of increased SLWA.

Khosravi, Mohammadi, et al. (2023) revealed a strong association between socially prescribed perfectionism and heightened levels of SLWA. Similarly, Leon et al. (2023) investigated SLWA among prospective nonlanguage teachers at a nonmetropolitan state university in the Philippines. The study revealed that cognitive anxiety was the most prominent type of anxiety, with time constraints and perfectionism being the primary causes. The educational environment, characterized by limited resources and high expectations, likely exacerbated these anxieties, suggesting that context-specific educational challenges must be addressed to mitigate SLWA in nonlanguage teachers. Apart from that, Rasool, Aslam, et al. (2023) discovered a lack of writing practice and linguistic expertise as significant contributors to SLWA among the pre-service EFL teachers in Pakistan.

Besides that, studies also reported that lower L2 proficiency was associated with higher anxiety levels. Tian (2024) revealed that the challenges of adapting to a foreign educational system and language barriers significantly contributed to SLWA among Chinese students studying in Japan. Correspondingly, Zhou (2023) confirmed that language proficiency was a key predictor of anxiety levels among L2 Chinese learners, highlighting the critical role of linguistic adaptation in shaping SLWA, particularly for students studying in foreign contexts. Apart from that, Mendoza et al. (2023) focused on the SLWA of master's thesis writers in a Finnish EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction) context. The study found that apprehension about

grammar and low self-efficacy were significant predictors of SLWA. The multilingual and multicultural environment of EMI contexts appears to aggravate SLWA further.

The intricate relationship between self-efficacy, writing anxiety, and text quality was examined by Busse et al. (2023). Their study compared learners with and without migration backgrounds. It found that while self-efficacy positively correlates with text quality, writing anxiety does not consistently predict text quality across the sample. Notably, students with migration backgrounds exhibited lower SLWA but also lower writing achievements, indicating that the connection between anxiety and writing outcomes is more nuanced and may be influenced by learners' backgrounds and experiences. Waked et al. (2023) examined the correlation between SLWA and the post-pandemic educational environment among Arabic-English speakers. The study found that the transition back to on-campus instruction post-pandemic significantly increased overall anxiety levels. The research emphasized that later exposure to English and unfavourable attitudes toward English writing were significant contributors to heightened anxiety. This finding highlights the role of educational transitions and cultural perspectives in influencing psychological well-being and underscores the importance of supportive learning environments during periods of significant change.

Apart from individual differences, Al-Khresheh et al. (2023) revealed that cultural and educational settings significantly impact SLWA among Saudi undergraduate EFL students. The findings indicated that negativity towards writing was prevalent, with male students and those at lower academic levels experiencing higher anxiety levels. This suggests that cultural expectations and the educational environment in Saudi Arabia, where English writing is perceived as particularly challenging, play a critical role in shaping students' anxiety. The study also highlighted that self-efficacy was the least influential in reducing anxiety. Likewise, Reyes et al. (2024) found that male participants reported higher anxiety levels than females. Environmental factors, such as the availability of resources, were also identified as significant contributors to SLWA. Waked et al. (2024) also discovered that traditional dimensions of SLWA, such as somatic and cognitive anxiety, were less applicable to Saudi Arabian female university students. Instead, the study identified proficiency anxiety and appraisal anxiety as more relevant factors, indicating that cultural expectations and gender roles play a significant role in shaping SLWA among Saudi female students. On the contrary, Rasool, Qian, et al. (2023) found no gender significance in the causes of SLWA.

Additionally, Güvendir and Uzun (2023) explored the cognitive aspects of SLWA, focusing on working memory and task complexity. Their study showed that increased writing anxiety levels reduce syntactic complexity in written texts, especially in high cognitive load tasks. Moreover, Abdi Tabari and Goetze (2024) demonstrated that self-efficacy emerged as a mitigating factor, reducing the adverse effects of anxiety on writing performance. These findings underscore the importance of carefully designing tasks to manage cognitive load and support learners' confidence, thereby enhancing writing outcomes despite the challenges posed by complex tasks. Finally, a study by Pilotti et al. (2023) highlighted the role of academic orientation in shaping SLWA among students in a research writing course. The findings showed that students who were grade-oriented experienced higher levels of anxiety compared to those who were learning-oriented.

In essence, the contributing factors to SLWA are multifaceted and deeply rooted in individual differences, cultural, educational, and demographic contexts. Whether influenced by cultural norms, academic settings, or individual learner characteristics, it is evident that a comprehensive understanding of SLWA requires a nuanced approach that considers the diverse environments in which learners operate. Addressing these factors through tailored interventions and supportive educational practices is crucial for mitigating writing anxiety and improving the writing proficiency of L2 learners.

Interventions to Reduce SLWA

The second theme covers various pedagogical approaches and interventions to reduce SLWA and foster a more supportive and effective learning environment. Zarrinabadi and Rezazadeh (2023) explored the impact of combining traditional feedback with feed-up and feed-forward on L2 writing motivation, self-efficacy, and anxiety. Their study demonstrated that incorporating these additional feedback mechanisms improved learners' motivation and self-efficacy while reducing SLWA. The findings suggest that a holistic approach to feedback, including retrospective and prospective elements, is more effective in addressing the non-linguistic aspects of SLWA than feedback alone. This approach helps learners focus on past performance and future improvement, thereby reducing SLWA by providing clear guidance on advancing. Similarly, Mojdehi and Zarei (2023) investigated the effects of various scaffolding techniques—peer, reciprocal, and distributed scaffolding—on IELTS candidates' writing anxiety. They found that reciprocal scaffolding and collaborative learning, where learners support each other, were particularly effective in reducing cognitive anxiety. This interaction helps to alleviate the isolation often felt in language learning and reduces the stress associated with writing tasks.

The integration of technology into language learning has also been shown to have a significant impact on SLWA. Waer (2023) examined the effect of Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) on EFL learners' writing apprehension and grammatical knowledge. The study found that AWE reduced SLWA and improved learners' grammatical proficiency. Likewise, Huang et al. (2024) confirmed the efficacy of AWE technologies in reducing SLWA while improving writing motivation and performance. By providing immediate and consistent feedback, AWE helps learners focus on areas of improvement without the delay of traditional instructor feedback, which can lessen the anxiety of waiting for evaluation and foster a more continuous learning process. Furthermore, a study by Jin (2024) highlighted using social media platforms, particularly YouTube, to reduce SLWA. By integrating social media into writing activities, learners could engage in interactive and less formal writing tasks, which led to significant improvements in writing proficiency and a notable reduction in anxiety. This approach leverages social media's familiar, engaging nature, creating a relaxed environment that can help reduce the formal pressure often associated with academic writing. Moreover, the study by Alrajhi (2024) on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in language learning, mainly through pedagogical chatbots, demonstrated the potential of AI in reducing SLWA. The study revealed that interactions with AI chatbots provided immediate feedback, enhanced motivation, and created a non-judgmental practice environment, which collectively contributed to reducing writing anxiety. The personalized nature of AI chatbots allows for tailored feedback and guidance, making the learning experience more adaptive to individual needs.

Self-regulated learning strategies have also been crucial in mitigating SLWA. Arnawa and Arafah (2023) focused on the role of self-regulated strategies in L2 writing, finding that students who employed these techniques experienced lower anxiety levels and improved writing performance. Encouraging learners to take control of their learning processes and become self-regulated enhances their confidence and reduces anxiety, as they are more prepared and proactive in their learning journey. Khosravi, Dastgoshadeh, et al. (2023) explored the effects of metacognitive strategy-based instruction delivered through flipped classrooms on writing performance, anxiety, and self-efficacy. The study found that this instructional approach significantly enhanced writing performance and self-efficacy while reducing SLWA. The flipped classroom model, which allows learners to engage with content outside of class and apply it during in-class activities, fosters a supportive and interactive environment that reduces the pressures associated with traditional classroom settings. Fan and Wang (2024) examined the configurational impact of self-regulated writing strategies, writing anxiety, and perceived writing difficulty on EFL writing performance. The study identified various configurations of self-regulated strategy that led to different writing performance levels, highlighting the complex relationship between these factors.

Besides that, Abdi Tabari et al. (2024) discovered that sequencing tasks from simple to complex improves writing performance, enhances enjoyment, and reduces anxiety. This research highlights the significance of task sequencing as a pedagogical strategy to foster positive emotional responses and motivation, which are crucial for successful L2 writing development. Finally, Talaue and Hendijani (2024) emphasized the need for integrated language and content instruction and out-of-classroom assistance to help students become more confident writers. Providing a comprehensive support system that addresses both language proficiency and content knowledge reduces SLWA and facilitates the successful completion of academic writing tasks.

Overall, the studies under this theme provide valuable insights into various pedagogical approaches and interventions that can effectively reduce SLWA. Whether through technology integration, collaborative learning environments, self-regulated strategies, or task design, these interventions offer practical solutions for educators seeking to create supportive and anxiety-free language learning experiences.

Discussion

Studies on SLWA present a critical examination of the intricate nature of anxiety in L2 writing as it involves complex cognitive, metacognitive, and affective processes, making the causes of SLWA highly multifaceted. Research has revealed various factors contributing to SLWA, with the intensity of anxiety differing depending on individual and situational circumstances. Ultimately, SLWA is not uniform across learners but is shaped by the specific context in which it arises. This context-dependent nature accentuates the need to consider the unique variables influencing SLWA in each situation.

Primarily, L2 writing is a complex process shaped by individual differences, influenced by emotional responses, personality, language proficiency, prior learning experiences, and gender. These particular characteristics play a significant role in how learners approach writing and can contribute to the development of SLWA. Emotional responses, particularly enjoyment and anxiety, shape writing outcomes. High-performing learners often exhibit a strong alignment between their ideal L2 writing self and feelings of enjoyment. In contrast, low-performing

learners are more prone to heightened anxiety, revealing a crucial link between emotional state and writing success. Moreover, focusing exclusively on anxiety risks oversimplifying the issue. Emotions like boredom and enjoyment also substantially impact writing performance, suggesting that a broader emotional framework is necessary to understand and fully address SLWA's influence on learners. Behavioural and individual factors further complicate the landscape of SLWA, revealing how personal traits and contextual elements influence SLWA. Perfectionism and low self-esteem are substantial predictors of heightened anxiety, impacting performance adversely. Behavioural factors, such as mobile phone addiction, exacerbate emotional challenges, indicating that technological distractions can intensify SLWA.

Furthermore, L2 writing requires a solid foundation of linguistic knowledge. Learners with strong vocabulary knowledge and grammatical competence tend to perform better in writing tasks, as they can effectively organize their ideas and choose appropriate words. However, a lack of proficiency in these areas often leads to SLWA, as learners struggle with vocabulary selection, grammatical accuracy, and sentence structure. As a result, learners may feel frustrated and anxious, leading to poor writing performance. Moreover, prior learning experiences play a pivotal role in shaping learners' current and future learning abilities. These experiences provide a foundational base of knowledge and skills that influence how individuals approach new challenges, particularly in language learning. Particularly, negative prior experiences, such as insufficient writing practice or ineffective instruction, can lead to heightened SLWA and impede progress in L2 writing. Other than that, individual differences in language learning can be observed through the distinct cognitive responses that each gender exhibits during the acquisition process. Research has shown that males and females often process language differently, affecting their motivation, effort, and overall success in language learning. Although studies have shown that male learners experienced higher SLWA than their counterparts, it is crucial to highlight that a complex interaction of factors such as motivation, socialization, and personal circumstances may contribute to this experience.

Alongside individual differences, the environment in which learners operate plays a significant role in the development of SLWA. Predominantly, cultural and educational contexts play a substantial role in shaping SLWA. Insufficient prior experiences in L2 learning, such as limited explicit writing instruction and lack of feedback, significantly contribute to students' struggles with L2 writing and intensify their anxiety. Furthermore, a shortage of writing practice and the absence of established writing habits exacerbate this apprehension among learners. Moreover, limited resources, including a shortage of instructional materials and support systems, can impede learners' progress and increase their SLWA levels. These contextual deficiencies hinder the development of writing skills and foster an environment where anxiety can flourish. Aside from this, task designs and the criteria used for grading can increase anxiety as they shape the learners' expectations and stress levels. The cognitive aspect of writing anxiety reveals a complex interaction with cognitive processes such as working memory and task complexity. High levels of anxiety can diminish cognitive resources, resulting in reduced syntactic complexity and lower overall writing quality. This interplay emphasizes the necessity of addressing cognitive load when designing writing tasks.

Given the complex nature of SLWA, it is essential to adopt a comprehensive understanding that integrates these diverse dimensions. To effectively address this issue, it is crucial to understand that these aspects do not operate in isolation. Instead, they interact intricately, influencing learners' experiences and outcomes. A holistic perspective is necessary to grasp the

interplay between these dimensions, ensuring a more thorough understanding of SLWA and its underlying causes. This approach allows for a more nuanced exploration of the phenomenon, paving the way for more effective strategies and interventions tailored to the complexities of SLWA. Fundamentally, creating supportive educational environments and addressing specific cultural and behavioural influences are crucial for improving writing proficiency. Effective interventions such as feedback mechanisms, scaffolding techniques, and technological integration have been shown to play a critical role in reducing SLWA. Comprehensive feedback methods incorporating both "feed up" and "feed forward" components address past performance while guiding future improvements, reducing anxiety and enhancing learners' motivation and self-efficacy. Similarly, scaffolding techniques, including peer and reciprocal support, create collaborative learning environments that alleviate cognitive anxiety and promote a sense of community among learners. These approaches demonstrate that addressing SLWA requires a multifaceted strategy that combines different pedagogical tools to create a supportive and effective learning atmosphere.

Integrating technology into language learning also plays a crucial role in addressing SLWA. For instance, AWE systems provide immediate and consistent feedback, eliminating the delays inherent in traditional feedback methods. This real-time input allows learners to promptly focus on specific areas for improvement, thereby reducing anxiety and enhancing grammatical skills. Moreover, incorporating social media platforms into writing exercises creates a more engaging and informal setting, which helps further diminish SLWA and improves writing proficiency. Similarly, AI tools, such as pedagogical chatbots, offer personalized, non-judgmental feedback and provide a safe practice environment, instrumental in alleviating writing anxiety. In addition to technological advancements, self-regulated learning strategies have emerged as crucial in managing SLWA. Techniques that enable learners to take charge of their learning processes, such as those used in flipped classrooms, foster a supportive and interactive environment. This approach boosts learners' self-efficacy and prepares them better for in-class activities, thus reducing SLWA. Tailoring self-regulated strategies to align with task difficulty can further mitigate anxiety and enhance writing performance. These developments highlight the need for pedagogical approaches that effectively combine technology and self-regulation to support learners in managing their SLWA and improving their overall performance.

In conclusion, effectively addressing SLWA requires a comprehensive strategy integrating various pedagogical approaches. Central to this effort are mechanisms for providing timely and constructive feedback, collaborative scaffolding practices, and technological tools that offer continuous support. These elements are crucial in reducing anxiety and enhancing writing performance. Moreover, incorporating self-regulated learning strategies is equally important, as they empower learners to manage their learning processes and alleviate anxiety.

Conclusion

The implications of the discussed studies contribute significantly to developing effective writing instructions and strategies, particularly for L2 learners. The study's objectives have been achieved, as various factors contributing to SLWA have been identified. Although some factors, such as emotional responses, language proficiency, and prior learning experiences, consistently contribute to SLWA, others, like gender, may influence SLWA in certain contexts but not in others. This variability highlights the need for further research to explore the specific contexts in which SLWA arises. Additionally, future studies should investigate the influence of SLWA on learners' well-being, particularly in terms of emotions, behaviours, cognitive

processes, and overall writing performance. Understanding these interactions can offer valuable insights into how SLWA affects learners academically and personally. Moreover, highlighting these dimensions requires a comprehensive approach, as the internal and external factors influencing SLWA are diverse and multifaceted. Ultimately, addressing SLWA is more than just surface-level interventions; it calls for a thorough approach that considers the diverse factors influencing learners' experiences. By tailoring writing instruction to accommodate these factors, educators can create more effective strategies to reduce SLWA, enhance performance, and promote a positive and long-term impact on L2 learners' well-being. Such an approach not only addresses the immediate concerns of SLWA but also fosters a resilient and confident learner, paving the way for sustained writing improvement and academic success.

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