ESL WRITING ANXIETY

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Writing in English is not an easy process especially to students without a strong foundation of language. The composing process of a written text is one challenging activity encountered by second language learners. As it forces people’s mind to put into a cognitive stream their thoughts, feelings, emotions and ideas, they might find writing a tedious task and great deal of refining and process. Among the four interconnected communication skills of writing, reading, listening and speaking, the former is the most inimical to teach and to learn.

Instructing students to write a composition in English is a task they have never appreciated not because they do not like writing but because they think that it is difficult to perform such activity. They feel anxious in doing the process of writing and feel troubled because they do not know how to start.

Anxiety, defined as the state of uneasiness and apprehension because of uncertainties, is one of the factors that affect the process of learning, and some researches done by language researchers and writing enthusiasts assert that language courses are very anxiety-provoking. Studies have also shown that students, making use of writing and speaking as productive skills, are found to have experienced a substantial and significant amount of reasons to feel anxious and apprehended during the process of learning.

The fear of writing might offset the predictable and anticipated gain from the ability to put ideas into writing especially when one is writing using English as Second Language. Meihua and Ni (2015) posited that foreign language writing anxiety
significantly negatively affected students’ performance in English writing test and a number of factors contributed to the students’ foreign language writing anxiety.

Writing using a second language may pose more difficulties to students than writing with their native language or mother tongue. This is because of the challenges and hindrances that the students encounter when expressing their thoughts and ideas if they are using their native language.

In the study of Aslim Yetis (2017) entitled “Sources of Writing Anxiety: A Study on French Language Teaching Students”, his data obtained via semi-structured interviews revealed the finding that time pressure on writing activities and teacher’s attitudes toward students resulted to the writing anxiety of the students. This means that teachers have a huge role in addressing the problem of anxiety in writing of learners.

Moreover, there is a very significant correlation between writing and language development. As learners develop their language skills, they also begin to develop their communication skills. Language learners often develop first their listening skills. Then, they try to formulate their ideas through speaking. After that, they understand sounds and symbols through reading. Finally, they have enough language to express their own through writing. Writing seems to be the last skill to emerge though this is not 100% true to all language learners. Because of this, language teachers have an enormous task of improving the writing skills of their learners.

References: