

**THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC ANXIETY ON UZBEK EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS  
ESSAY WRITING ABILITIES****Axmedova Malikaxon**

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[mdahmedova@kokanduni.uz](mailto:mdahmedova@kokanduni.uz)**Abstract**

Writing academic essays in English presents both linguistic and psychological challenges for a large number of Uzbek university students. Even though students may possess adequate knowledge of grammar and vocabulary they frequently suffer from severe academic anxiety when they have to write for assessment. Their capacity to arrange concepts, formulate arguments and employ language correctly may be hampered by this anxiety. However there has not been much research done in the Uzbek EFL context on how academic anxiety affects English essay writing.

This study investigates the connection between academic anxiety and academic essay writing proficiency among Uzbek EFL university students. At a public university in Uzbekistan data were gathered from undergraduate students using a quantitative correlational design. Students completed a timed argumentative essay and an academic anxiety questionnaire. An analytical writing rubric measuring content development coherence lexical resource and grammatical accuracy was used to evaluate the essays.

The findings indicate a strong inverse relationship between writing performance and academic anxiety. While students with lower anxiety levels showed better control over academic language and structure those with higher anxiety levels produced essays that were less developed coherent and linguistically incorrect. These results imply that emotional and cognitive pressure during writing assignments in addition to limited language proficiency is a contributing factor in academic writing difficulties among Uzbek EFL learners.

The study suggests that lowering academic anxiety can be a major factor in raising students academic writing quality and emphasizes the necessity of psychologically supportive writing instruction in Uzbek universities.

**Keywords**

Academic anxiety; Academic writing; EFL university students; Uzbek learners; Affective factors; Second language writing

**Introduction.** For students enrolled in international and English-medium programs at Uzbek universities academic writing in English is a significant prerequisite. It is expected of students to write well-structured essays, articulate critical ideas and accurately use academic language. Even though they are familiar with the subject and have a basic command of the language, many Uzbek EFL students find writing essays to be difficult and stressful. This implies that their writing performance may be significantly impacted by psychological factors, especially academic anxiety.



According to Horwitz Horwitz and Cope (1986) academic anxiety is the tension, fear and concern that students feel when they are assessed on academic assignments. This anxiety can hinder the generation of ideas, impair concentration and result in avoidance or hurried writing. Anxiety has a detrimental impact on second language performance according to earlier research (MacIntyre & Gardner 1994) but its precise impact on academic essay writing has not been thoroughly investigated in the context of Uzbek EFL.

Uzbek students may develop a severe fear of making mistakes due to their frequent exposure to exam-oriented and accuracy-focused environments which makes them more anxious when completing writing assignments. In order to better understand how emotional factors affect the development of academic literacy this study will investigate the relationship between academic anxiety and academic essay writing performance among EFL university students in Uzbekistan.

**Methodology.** This study examined the relationship between academic anxiety and academic essay writing performance among Uzbek EFL university students using a quantitative correlational design.

Fifty undergraduate English majors from a public university in Uzbekistan participated. Every participant had taken at least one course on academic writing.

There were two instruments utilized. Students first answered a questionnaire on academic anxiety that was modified from Horwitz et al. (1986) which assessed how anxious they were while completing academic assignments. Second in a timed classroom setting students composed a 250–300 word argumentative essay in English. An analytical writing rubric that measured vocabulary content coherence and grammatical accuracy was used to evaluate the essays.

To ascertain whether there was a significant correlation between students' anxiety levels and their writing performance the data were examined using Pearsons correlation coefficient.

**Results.** According to descriptive statistics, students' academic writing performance was moderate and their levels of academic anxiety ranged from moderate to high. Anxiety scores varied from low to high suggesting that students differed noticeably.

Academic anxiety and academic writing performance are significantly correlated negatively ( $r = -0.62$ ,  $p < .01$ ) according to Pearsons correlation analysis. This indicates that academic essay scores were generally lower for students who reported higher levels of anxiety.

Anxiety was most closely linked to content development and coherence according to additional analysis. Students who were extremely nervous produced essays that were less organized shorter and contained fewer supporting ideas. There was less of a correlation between anxiety and grammatical accuracy indicating that anxiety had a greater impact on students capacity for idea expression than their command of the language.

Overall the findings show that academic anxiety has a significant impact on how well Uzbek EFL students write academically.

**Discussion.** The study's findings demonstrated a strong inverse relationship between academic anxiety and Uzbek EFL university students' ability to write academic essays. This indicates that students who were more anxious had a tendency to produce less effective academic essays. This



result corroborates earlier studies (MacIntyre and Gardner 1994 Cheng 2004) that demonstrated anxiety impairs performance in second languages.

The idea that anxiety primarily interferes with higher-level cognitive functions like idea generation and organization is supported by the significant impact anxiety has on content development and coherence. Anxiety causes students' focus to be split between coming up with ideas and worrying about making mistakes which results in less polished and organized writing. This bolsters Cheng's (2002) claim that writing anxiety impairs students capacity for efficient idea expression and organization.

This effect might be even more pronounced in the Uzbek EFL context because students are frequently taught in settings that emphasize accuracy and exams. Anxiety can be exacerbated by a fear of making mistakes and receiving a poor grade which restricts students' willingness to take chances and formulate arguments in writing. This clarifies why some students who possess sufficient language skills nevertheless struggle to write academic essays.

Overall, the results point to both linguistic and psychological issues with academic writing among Uzbek EFL learners. For students to perform better when writing, academic anxiety must be addressed.

**Recommendations.** The results of this study allow for the formulation of a number of recommendations regarding EFL instruction in Uzbek universities.

First, by permitting drafts, providing, encouraging feedback and minimizing undue attention to errors educators can foster a low-anxiety writing environment. Students are more inclined to freely express their opinions when they feel comfortable making mistakes.

Second, writing instruction that is process-based ought to be employed. By dividing writing into manageable phases, techniques like brainstorming, outlining and peer review can help lower anxiety.

Third, educators ought to have frank conversations with students about writing anxiety. Students feel less pressure and more confident when they recognize that anxiety is common.

Lastly, in order to encourage students to take chances with their writing assessments should place more emphasis on concepts and organization than just grammatical correctness.

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