Writing Anxiety as a Predictor of Young Learners' EFL Writing Performance

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ABSTRACT: The study explores the correlation between EFL writing anxiety and the writing proficiency of Year 6 students, who represent an older group of young learners. EFL writing anxiety is assessed using Cheng's Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory. Writing proficiency is evaluated through two standardized, timed, electronic writing tasks in a 5% representative sample. With an R2 value of 28.7, a statistically significant but weak linear relationship between writing anxiety and EFL writing performance is anticipated. The findings indicate that EFL writing anxiety is significantly present among young learners, highlighting the need for educational interventions. Additionally, the study introduces a new, preliminary SLWAI scale consisting of seven factors.

KEYWORDS: writing anxiety, writing performance, young learners, EFL

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing anxiety (WA) is an emotional factor that is more researched with adults than with young learners (Nilsson, 2019). Due to its proven negative impact on writing performance, it needs to be identified and reduced in the classroom (Cheng, 2004; Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021). This is especially important with young learners as they are particularly vulnerable due to their age-related characteristics (McKay, 2011). The way from anxiety to excitement is possible (Anttila et al., 2017). Moreover, well-being in education for both learners and teachers is becoming increasingly important (McCabe & Flannery, 2022).

In the country of research, EFL WA with young language learners shows rather low results, requiring additional research. For example, the 2013 EFL national assessment test results at the end of Year 6 show the need to improve students' spelling (RIC, 2013b). The 2019 EFL test (RIC, 2019) revealed low results in terms of the contents of the given writing task, which was an unexpected outcome as the topic was part of the corresponding curriculum. Similar results were found in the previous two EFL national assessment tests. These results show that EFL writing should be developed already in Year 4 by gradual and structured instruction of the writing process and recapitulation over the whole school year. A number of more authentic writing tasks followed by appropriate feedback should be introduced (RIC, 2019). Similarly, Skela, Sešek and Dagarin Fojkar (2009) find that the literacy development of young EFL learners should be approached more systematically, especially with regard to the transition from listening and speaking to reading and writing. In research on young learners' EFL perception in

the first triad, young EFL learners are found to be less motivated in EFL reading and writing activities than in listening and speaking (Jurišević, 2009). The students of the research country also reached a relatively low result in EFL writing in Surveylang as a broad research of language competences with students aged 15 (European Commission & ESLC, 2012). Besides, like in 2009 and 2012, the 2022 ranking of Slovenian 15-year-old students in reading is slightly below the OECD average (OECD, 2024). Reading is mentioned here as a skill strongly related to writing (Hayes, 1996).

Foreign language anxiety is general anxiety that occurs in the context of formal education, and WA is specific anxiety (Cheng, 2004). Young learners are mostly those until the end of primary school years, i.e. until the age of 15 (Mihaljević Djigunović & Nikolov, 2019). Young learners can also be defined as students in the first six or seven years of schooling (McKay, 2011, p. 1) or children between 5 and 12 (Alderson & Banerjee, 2001). Foreign language anxiety is still researched but often with older students (Smyth, Manzanares & Fernandez-Munoz, 2021). Hence some illustrative studies related to foreign language anxiety and young learners have been selected as follows.

In a case study, Nilsson (2019) identifies levels and causes of language anxiety in classes of English as a first foreign language with 225 young learners aged 8 to 12. She notes that there is a lot of research on anxiety related to a foreign language but little on young learners' anxiety in the foreign language classroom. A number of reasons are mentioned why the field of young learners' early learning of English as a foreign language may be under-researched in terms of emotional factors. For example, the construct of anxiety in foreign language learning used to be more useful for adult beginners. Similarly, some researchers have

suggested that anxiety in foreign language learning is more detrimental for adults than for children (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). According to Nilsson (2019), research on anxiety in learning a foreign language with young learners is less extensive also because instruction for young learners differs significantly from that for adolescents or adults. The explanation implied is that instruction is compulsory for young learners, and therefore, they cannot manage their anxiety by simply taking time out or changing groups or subjects. In addition, young learners do not have (much) experience with foreign language instruction. According to Mihaljević Djigunović (2015) systematic research of emotions seemed less important as young learners were considered a quite homogeneous group with a positive self-image. Nilsson (2019), however, finds that young learners' anxiety in foreign language classes is due to negative experiences in foreign language classes. Therefore, the EFL class in the study took place under favourable learning conditions, i.e., with a lot of encouragement from the students, without competition and formal requirements or assessments. Each student completed a questionnaire to determine student reactions to oral classroom participation, which was adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz et al., 1986). Nilsson (2019) revealed a continuum of anxiety values. According to the anxiety level identified, students were divided into low, medium, and high (18.2%) levels to examine individual similarities and differences. The high level occurred in (certain) speaking situations (situation-specific anxiety). These speaking situations also triggered anxiety in other students. The study revealed a statistically significant and negative relationship between anxiety and all variables. Students with a low (25%) and medium (50%) level of positive attitudes did not differ significantly in anxiety

levels. However, students with a high level of positive attitude (25%) had significantly lower language anxiety levels than others. As for teaching recommendations, teachers should reconsider classroom situations that usually trigger anxiety in students. In addition, anxiety should not be attributed to individual students as their weakness. The classroom contexts in which language anxiety arises need to be examined more closely. The research also provides new views on methodological approaches appropriate for studying young learners' anxiety in the foreign language classroom (Nilsson, 2019).

Yim (2014) discusses the relationship between background factors and anxiety in English as a foreign language among 10- to 12-year-old students. Based on three combinations of five variables (gender, experience of studying abroad, participation in private English classes, hours of English language learning, and self-assessment of English proficiency), three models of anxiety are proposed. Model 3 proves to be the best because it predicts the direct and indirect effects of all variables on anxiety. The factor with the strongest influence on the occurrence of anxiety is self-assessment of English proficiency. Students' anxiety about English as a foreign language has to be reduced. Teachers are advised to encourage students to have a positive self-assessment of English as much as possible (Yim, 2014).

Liu & Chen (2019) explore the relationship between language anxiety in young EFL students and two other major learner variables, that is, different types of intelligence, according to Gardner (1983), and learner attitudes toward learning English tested with an instrument according to Chen (2005). The sample consisted of 215 students of Years 5 and 6 from two elementary schools in Taiwan. The results showed a rather high level of students’

EFL anxiety. The students' five main concerns were identified: English subjects would not be completed successfully, other students would speak English better than them, they would also be better at English, they would be asked for a grade, and would not be prepared for those teachers' questions not intended for evaluation. It appears that anxiety in English class consists of general concerns about language performance and students' low confidence in their speaking ability.

Žefran (2015) studied the relationship between attitudes, motivation and anxiety in learning a foreign language. The study involved students who reported their foreign language anxiety in their elementary schooling retrospectively. A high level of anxiety was identified as reflected in students' extremely negative attitudes toward their EFL classes and teachers. This means that one of the most important goals of foreign language learning, that is, a positive attitude towards learning a foreign language at school, was not achieved.

Hu (2019) focused on the anxiety of young EFL learners in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The aim of the study was to investigate and understand the scale of foreign language anxiety among students of English as a foreign language in elementary school between the ages of 9 and 12 (N = 631). The relationship between foreign language anxiety, students' achievements, and students' motivation was examined. The results showed that even young learners experienced moderate to high levels of foreign language anxiety, which increased as they advanced to higher classes. There was also a negative correlation between foreign language anxiety and lower EFL achievements, as well as lower motivation to learn a foreign language. Differences between students in their experience of foreign language anxiety in relation to reading, writing,

listening, and speaking were identified, too. The interviews revealed ten reasons for anxiety and reduction recommendations. Hu believed that WA needs further research and notes that this view was widely accepted. Further on, he finds that most research in this area is on adults in the Western world, whereas little research can be found on WA in young learners (Hu, 2019).

Due to the evident gap in the research of EFL WA with young learners, the following research question has been set: What is the relationship between WA as an emotional factor and students' writing performance in EFL at the end of Year 6 of the elementary school in the country of research?

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This is quantitative research. It uses a descriptive and causal, non-experimental method of educational research. The research is conducted ethically. That is, the students' participation was voluntary, anonymous, and allowed only with the written consent of their parents or caretakers.

2.1. DESCRIPTION OF VARIABLES

The variables on writing well-being in English as a foreign language are based on the questionnaire on WA by Cheng (2004, pp. 324-325). The values of the variables are of ordinal type, ranging from strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

The dependent variable is WA in EFL with Year 6 students as a compound variable. The data for WA were obtained by applying two electronic writing tasks - Monster (RIC, 2006) and Winter (RIC, 2008). Both had already been used earlier as standardised tasks of the National English as

a Foreign Language Knowledge Test for Year 6 students. USP stands for WA, M and MON for the writing task Monster, W and WIN for the writing task Winter, and RAT1 and RAT2 for the first and second ratings, respectively. The abbreviations are based on the corresponding Slovenian expressions.

Table 1. *Writing performance as a compound dependent variable*

NAME	LABEL	DESCRIPTION	TYPE	VALUES
M8	USP_MON_RAT1	Total	ordinal	0 to 10
M12	USP_MON_RAT2	Total	ordinal	0 to 10
W8	USP_WIN_RAT1	Total	ordinal	0 to 10

Note: Table 1 shows writing performance USP as a compound dependent variable and is based on our research results. According to the equivalent Slovenian expressions, M and MON = Writing task Monster, W and WIN = Writing task Winter, USP = writing performance.

As presented in Table 1, writing performance USP consists of the writing performance for the first and second assessments of the Monster writing task and the first assessment of the Winter writing task. Writing performance is (USP_MON_RAT1 + USP_MON_RAT2) / 2 + USP_WIN_RAT1) / 2. Content, grammar, vocabulary and spelling are considered. USP_MON_RAT1 stands for the first and USP_MON_RAT2 for the second rating of the writing task Monster, and USP_WIN_RAT1 for the first rating of the writing task Winter.

2.2. SAMPLE

Year 6 students were selected as young learners as their upper age limit is 12 years. Year 6 is also the last year of the second triad of the Slovenian primary school education system with an external examination in the first foreign language, which is predominantly English. Additionally, EFL writing was an under-researched field among primary school students in Slovenia. On the other hand, a doctoral study had already been in progress on EFL reading in the 7th elementary school classes in Slovenia before our research (Erbeli, 2015). We also believed that our research could help the Year 6 students who took part in the study to achieve better results in the national EFL exam at the end of Year 6, as they would have additional practise in EFL writing as a productive and often difficult skill.

A systematic random sample of 5% was planned from the statistical population of all Year 6 elementary school students with regular curriculum in 2017/18 (N = 18932). Students of German as their first foreign language were subtracted. The 5% corresponded to roughly 23 schools. We concluded that the research should be conducted at 24 schools, that is, 12 schools in regional capitals and 12 in smaller towns and villages. From the point of view of statistical regions, we planned an equable, systematic geographical distribution of the sample. However, we did not pay attention to school size and the number of students in the classes nor to the distance of the schools from the central research location. Similarly, no selection was made in advance in terms of students' gender, ethnicity, years of previous learning EFL, SES and special needs. We finally planned to include 700 students. Eventually, a total of 825 students participated in the main study.

In the 1ka online surveys, all students were asked to complete the SLWAI questionnaire and the two writing tasks. First, we linked individual students or units to the corresponding four tasks using a short code written anew for this research in the R software environment. Of 825 students, we retained the data of those 790 students who at least partially completed all four tasks. To identify the missing data, we used Analyse > Missing Value Analysis as a standard function in SPSS. However, we used a filtering procedure instead because we wanted to detect the errors and exclude all units or students with at least a part of the data missing. In the questionnaire My Well-Being in English Writing lessons, filter NMISS (P0, P3 TO W14) < 1 was used. After filtering, 768 valid units remained in the students' well-being (labelled POC) questionnaire. In all of the following analyses, only units without missing data are used. These are units with students' responses to all questions of the questionnaire and both writing tasks. Despite the missing data, the final number of students or units entering statistical analysis is still higher than planned.

First, the school principals received an e-letter from the researcher with the most important information on the research. Another letter with detailed practical instructions and all four e-assignments was sent to the schools that agreed to participate. Direct contact with the students was established by their English teachers. The student's parents or caretakers received written information on the research, including a statement that the student's participation would be voluntary and anonymous. Anonymity would be ensured by coding. The teachers motivated the students additionally by explaining that their participation would be an excellent additional practice of EFL writing for the national test in English at the end of Year 6. All research lessons were

carried out by the researcher. The data are kept with the researcher for research purposes only.

The survey ran from the beginning of February to the end of April 2018 at 21 schools. Schools granted two successive English lessons for the research. Student participation per school ranged from 70 or 9.2% to 12 or 1.6%. Out of twelve statistical regions, eleven took part. The participation of students by statistical region ranged from 166 to 14. An approximately equal number of students reported to live in towns (350) and villages (310), representing 86.3% together. 105 students, or 13.7%, reported to live in cities. According to gender, the sample was quite balanced. 360 or 47.1% of boys and 405 or 52.9% of girls were included in the statistical analysis.

2.3. MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENT

To test writing anxiety, we chose the SLWAI (Cheng, 2004). SLWAI is a three-dimensional measurement tool for self-examination of WA in L2. It contains three groups or compound variables, which are essentially consistent with three commonly recognised dimensions of anxiety: cognitive, somatic or physiological, and behavioural. See Table 2 below. SLWAI was developed as an extension of the Writing Apprehension Test (Daly & Miller, 1975).

Variables POC1 (POC standing for well-being according to the Slovenian language), POC4, POC7, POC17, POC18, POC21, and POC22 are worded negatively in English and therefore preceded by a minus in the formula for POC below. The rest of the variables are positive. The negatively formulated variables require an inverse evaluation before all values of the variables are summed. A higher sum means stronger WA and vice versa. The Cheng questionnaire is scored on a five-point Likert

scale from 1 as "strongly disagree" to 5 as "strongly agree." The formula for calculating WA POC is POC = - POC1 + POC2 + POC3 - POC4 + POC5 + POC6 - POC7 + POC8 + POC9 + POC10 + POC11 + POC12 + POC13 + POC14 + POC15 + POC16 - POC17 - POC18 + POC19 + POC20 - POC21 - POC22

Table 2. *Grouping of variables in the Second Language WA Inventory*

LABELS	VARIABLES OF WRITING ANXIETY
POC1, POC3, POC7, POC9, POC14, POC17, POC20 and POC21	Cognitive anxiety
POC4, POC5, POC10, POC12, POC16, POC18 and POC22	Avoidance as behavioural anxiety
POC2, POC6, POC8, POC11, POC13, POC15 and POC19	Somatic anxiety

Note: Table 2 shows the grouping of the participants' variables of second language WA into three types as presented in the original Cheng's Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory. The abbreviation POC stands for the equivalent Slovenian word for well-being. Adapted from Cheng, Y.-S. (2004). A Measure of Second-Language Writing Anxiety: Scale Development and Preliminary Validation. Journal of Second Language Writing, 13(4), 313–335. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2004.07.001.

The reliability of the original Cheng's instrument with 22 variables is 0.91 after two calculations with Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The internal reliability of the original Cheng instrument by groups was also calculated twice with Cronbach's alpha coefficient. For somatic anxiety, it was 0.87 the first time and 0.88 the second time. For avoidance

as behavioural anxiety, it was 0.85 the first time and 0.88 the second time. For cognitive anxiety, it was 0.82 the first time and 0.83 the second time. Thus, the internal consistency of each part of the questionnaire is high. The reliability of each part was also satisfactory according to the test-retest method. It was 0.82 for somatic anxiety, 0.83 for avoidance anxiety as behavioural anxiety, and 0.81 for cognitive anxiety.

However, the Second Language WA Inventory, as used in our survey, had some specifics. According to the original English version of the Cheng questionnaire, question POC7 (i.e., well-being question 7), as stated in Slovenian, should have to be evaluated inversely. However, in this study it is not considered inversely. According to the English version, we expected a descending graphical representation of the answers (SPSS. Graphs Regression Variable Plots) but obtained a rising one. This is most probably due to the translation, as the English wording is negative at the beginning of the sentence, and the translated wording is negative at the end. We assume that the students understood the whole statement as positive. To clarify, the original English version reads as follows: I don't worry that my English compositions are a lot worse than others'. (R) If we re-translate POC7 to English, it could read as follows: I do writing assignments in English worse than other students, but I am not worried about it.

In the Cheng questionnaire, the evaluation is based on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (I strongly disagree) to 5 (I strongly agree). In our study, it is used in reverse order, i.e., from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Prior to reliability analysis with Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the negatively worded variables POC1, POC4, POC17, POC18, POC21, and POC22 were recoded as follows: 1 into 5, 2 into 4, 4 into 2, and 5 into 1. Thus, the graphical

representation of the responses for all 22 variables is ascending. A new independent variable named P and labelled POC was introduced, which is the sum of all variables from POC1 to POC22. We conclude that POC = 22 represents the highest and POC = 110 the lowest level of anxiety. The reliability of the recoded questionnaire was calculated using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. It was 0.906, which is very similar to the reliability of Cheng's instrument at 0.91. The instrument was administered in groups electronically in the form of the 1ka survey program with an approximate time limit of 15 minutes because students had to complete other tasks, too, in the time allotted by schools. The 1ka program was designed in such a way that it was not possible to skip questions. To motivate the students, we added some statements and pictures to the questionnaire. No student dropped out of the research.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' well-being in English lessons, called P and labelled POC, is an independent compound variable including 22 variables. Before the reliability analysis with Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the negatively formulated variables POC1, POC4, POC17, POC18, POC21, and POC22 were recoded according to the system 1 in 5, 2 in 4, 4 in 2, and 5 in 1, respectively, and thus treated inversely. The POC value is the sum of the values of all subvariants. The values of negatively formulated variables were considered in reverse order. The range of values is from POC = 22, representing the highest level of anxiety, to POC = 110, representing the lowest level of anxiety. The variable POC was normalised to a value from 0 to 1 according to the formula POCN = (POC - 22) / 88 and renamed PN standing for normalised well-being.

Students' writing performance USP obtained by the two writing tasks is a dependent compound variable. It includes three variables. The variable USP_MON_RAT1 represents students' performance in the writing task Monster after the first marking. According to the second marking, the variable USP_MON_RAT2 represents the student's performance in the writing task Monster. The variable USP_WIN_RAT1, on the other hand, represents students' performance in the writing task Winter according to the first marking. The value of the USP variable is ((USP_MON_RAT1 + USP_MON_RAT2) / 2 + USP_WIN_RAT1) / 2. It includes content, grammar and vocabulary, and spelling. The value ranges from 0 to 10. We continue with the description of the results of the relationship between POC and USP. Now we can move on to explaining the results of the correlation between WA and ESL WA with Year 6 students.

The correlation of the POC and USP variables for 768 students in writing ability in English as a foreign language was verified and confirmed by Pearson's correlation. However, Pearson's correlation is unsuitable for predicting variables' correlation. Therefore, to calculate the prediction of the relationship between well-being of students at EFL lessons and writing performance and to obtain a linear regression equation from bivariate statistical procedures, according to the types of variables, we chose linear regression as a more complex version of Pearson correlation (Abu - Bader 2021, p. 363; Abu - Bader, p. 381). All regression models available in SPSS were tested. However, the linear regression model proved to be the best fit, as the other models did not achieve convincingly higher R2 values than the linear model.

Prior to linear regression analysis, we checked the following assumptions of linear regression using various

descriptive statistical procedures and graphs: asymmetry, kurtosis, homoscedasticity and normality of residual distribution. The asymmetry of the variables was measured by Pearson's and Fisher's coefficients of asymmetry. Both appear to be normally distributed. The Pearson asymmetry coefficients, with values of 0.002 for USP and 0.093 for POC, fall within the interval [-0.20, 0.20], and the Fisher asymmetry coefficients, with 1.420 for USP and 1.261 for POC, fall within the interval [-1.96, 1.96] at alpha = 0.05. Kurtosis was measured by the Fisher kurtosis coefficient, which indicates that the variables are not normally distributed. Its value is -3.636 for USP and -3.011 for POC, which is not within the desired interval [-1.96, 1.96], at alpha = 0.05. In this case of inconsistency, we consider the histogram of the distribution of USP and POC variables and the distribution of raw USP and POC variables relative to the normal distribution. Based on these two graphical representations and asymmetry tests, we conclude that the USP variables and POC are distributed normally. The standardised residuals present a homoscedastic relationship between the dependent variable USP and the independent variable POCN. Homoscedasticity is also evidenced by the Breusch-Pagan test (Breusch & Pagan, 1979) for heteroscedasticity. The normality of the residual distribution was checked using the standardised residuals and Cook's distance. The standardised residuals for the USP variable take values from -2.367 to 2.581. No value falls outside the interval [-3, 3]. This also means that no highly influential extraneous points would strongly change the result. Furthermore, using Cook's distance, we find that no point influences the regression equation since no value is greater than 1.

The results of the one-way ANOVA show that the correlation between POCN as the independent variable and

USP as the dependent variable is statistically significant, as p = 0.000 (lower than 0,05). According to the accepted criteria, the link between POCN and USP is weak.

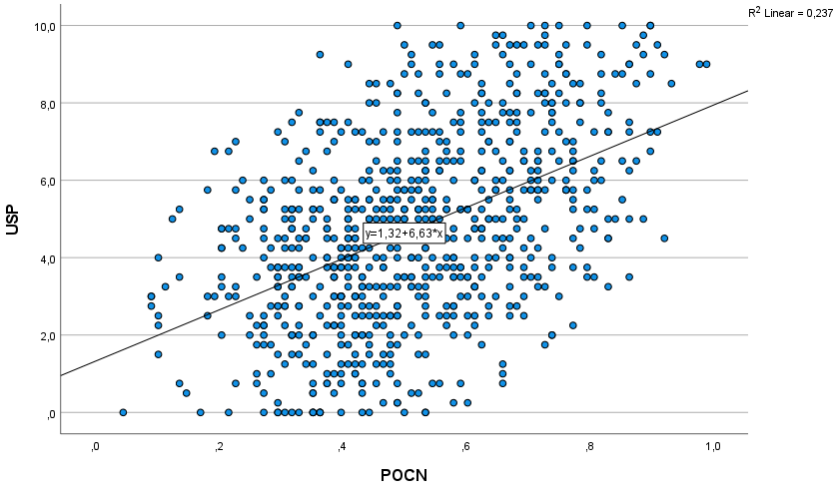

Figure 1. *Scatter plot of the independent variable USP in relation to POCN as the dependent variable*

Note: Figure 1 shows the scatter of data obtained in our research, presenting the relationship between USP as the dependent variable and POCN as the independent variable resulting from linear regression. POCN stands for the normalised well-being of our participants during EFL writing, and USP stands for their EFL writing performance.

As shown in Figure 1, the line of best fit or trend line equals the equation Y '= a + b X = 1.32 + 6.63 X. With this equation, we can predict Year 6 students' writing result USP in English as a foreign language.

After answering the questions of how WA is related to EFL writing performance USP, we found it interesting to look at the relationship between cognitive, behavioural, and somatic anxiety separately, and writing performance. For

independent statistical data processing, it was necessary to introduce new independent complex variables: cognitive anxiety POCKOG labelled PKOG, behavioural anxiety POCVED labelled PVED, and somatic anxiety POCSOM labelled PSOM. We calculated that cognitive anxiety can take values between 8 and 40 and POCKOG = POC1 + POC3 + POC7 + POC9 + POC14 + POC17 + POC20 + POC21. Behavioural anxiety can take values between 7 and 35 and is POCVED = POC4 + POC5 + POC10 + POC12 + POC16 + POC18 + POC22. Somatic anxiety can take values between 7 and 35 and is POCSOM = POC2 + POC6 + POC8 + POC11 + POC13 + POC15 + POC19. For scoring, we used a three-point scale of 1 as "strong anxiety," 2 as "moderate anxiety," and 3 as "weak anxiety," and thus converted these three complex continuous variables into ordinal POCKOGO labelled PKOGO, POCVEDO labelled PVEDO, and POCSOMO labelled PSOMO. For POCKOGO, it represents 1 value from 8 to 19, 2 values from 20 to 29, and 3 values from 30 to 40. POCSOMO and POCVEDO represent 1 value from 7 to 16, 2 values from 17 to 26, and 3 values from 27 to 35.

Frequency statistics show that 203 students, or 26.4%, suffer from severe cognitive writing anxiety. Moderate cognitive WA is perceived by 422 students, or 54.9%, and weak cognitive anxiety by 143 students, or 18.6%. Thus, most students feel moderate cognitive writing anxiety. Frequencies also show that 156 students, or 20.3%, perceive severe somatic writing anxiety. 414 students, or 53.9%, feel moderate somatic writing anxiety. Weak somatic WA is perceived by 198 students, or 25.8%. Most students perceive moderate writing anxiety. From the data on the frequency of somatic writing anxiety, we learn that it is severe in 177 students or 23%, moderate in 408 students

or 53.1%, and weak in 183 students or 23.8%. Thus, most students experience moderate somatic writing anxiety.

Homoscedasticity was tested by the Breusch-Pagan test of heteroscedasticity. The results (χ^2 = 2.1, df = 1, and p = 0.147) confirm homoscedasticity, as the test is not statistically significant. This result and the following findings are based on the factorial ANOVA. We used factorial ANOVA because we have three nominal variables and one continuous variable.

Since the statistical significance for all three types of WA is less than 0.05, we conclude that each type is statistically significant. F indicates that behavioural anxiety (F = 25.699) strongly affects USP performance. Cognitive WA (F = 10.349) has about half the influence, and somatic anxiety (F = 8.151) is slightly lower than cognitive anxiety.

The strength of the influence, and thus the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variable, is evident from the partial eta square (effect size). POCKOGO explains 2.6% of the variance in USP, POCVEDO 6.3%, and POCSOMO 2.1%. Again, behavioural WA emerges as the most influential factor. Based on the partial coefficient 2, it is also possible to calculate Cohen's criteria for the power of influence (Abu-Bader, 2021, p. 431). For POCKOGO, it is 0.163 (medium); for POCVEDO, 0.26 (medium); and POCSOMO, 0.146 (medium). We assumed a discriminatory power of 0.8 but obtained a higher one, 0.988 for POCKOGO, 1 for POCVEDO, and 0.959 for POCSOMO. Since the previous factorial ANOVA showed that all interactions between the three independent variables considered were statistically insignificant, only the main influences are discussed.

Finally, to tried to optimise Cheng's SLWAI by searching for a combination of the variables with the

highest R2. Compared to the SLWAI, our sample is larger, more gender-balanced, and conducted at a lower educational level. The development of the scale can be clearly supported by Cheng's comment that

> … further validation research with a different sample or in a different learning context is desirable in order to help improve on this measurement instrument. First and foremost, because the SLWAI was developed based on a sample of college EFL majors, studies are needed to assess the psychometric properties of the SLWAI with non-majors or with students at a lower or higher educational level. The fact that the sample was composed of predominantly female students also points to the importance of verifying results of this study in samples of a more balanced male–female ratio. Also, further evaluation of the factor structure of the SLWAI through confirmatory factor analysis with a larger sample is recommended. Such research will contribute to further modification and refinement of the SLWAI subscales (Cheng, 2004, p. 332).

If we calculate R2 for all 4194282 combinations of 22 well-being variables, it reaches the value of 0.287. If we examine all combinations, we find that only the following seven variables, P3, P9, P10, P13, P15, P16, and P21, reach considerably better R2 of 0.287. To calculate R2, a linear regression model was used as the most suitable one, according to the available data. P3, P9 and P21 represent cognitive, P13 and P15 somatic, and P10 and P16 avoidance as behavioural anxiety. In other words, a seven-factor SLWAI preliminary new scale has been developed

for our case. However, for generalisation purposes additional procedures of validation and reliability should be conducted.

4. CONCLUSION

This study's main merit lies in predicting EFL WA's role in writing performance with students of Year 6 as young learners. A new preliminary SLWAI scale with only seven factors has also been developed, too. However, for generalisation purposes, validation and reliability procedures should be conducted.

The results demonstrate a weak linear correlation of 28.7% between WA and EFL. Behavioural anxiety turned out to be the most influential, as compared to cognitive and somatic anxiety. To reduce EFL writing anxiety, didactic recommendations are suggested based on other studies dealt with in this paper, too. For example, EFL teachers should encourage positive self-assessment of students' EFL writing. Instead of a priori attributing EFL WA to young learners as their personal characteristic, they should rather be aware of potential other reasons behind it, such as young learners' intensive worrying about the teacher's or peers' response or getting a bad mark. Teachers should identify various contexts of EFL anxiety in class, including speaking as seemingly its most important origin. All in all, supportive feedback should be given.

In similar future research, caution should be taken with regard to young learners' proper understanding of the SLWAI statements, especially if translation is needed. Special attention should also be paid to the effects of translation in statistical analysis, too, as the meaning of items can alter as a result. Translation methods should be reconsidered.

We hope that our findings will help reduce EFL WA with Year 6 students as young learners, improving their EFL writing results. The authors report no competing interests to declare.

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