English Writing Anxiety in Debate Writing among Japanese Senior High School EFL Learners: Sources, Effects and Implication

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Abstract : The debate is an effective tool in cultivating critical thinking skills in English classes. It involves writing evidence-based arguments about a resolution in a form of constructive speech and oral discussion using constructive speech, which will then be attacked and defended. In the process of writing, EFL learners may experience anxiety, an emotional problem that affects writing achievement and cognitive processing. Thus, this study explored the sources and effect of English writing anxiety in the context of debate writing with a view to providing EFL teachers pedagogical suggestions in alleviating English writing anxiety in debate writing. The participants of this study are 95 Japanese senior high school EFL learners and 3 Japanese senior high school English teachers. In selecting the participants, opportunity sampling was employed and consent from Japanese English teachers was sought. Data were collected thru (1) observation (2) open-ended questionnaire and (3) semi-structured interview. This study revealed that not all teachers of English in the context of this study recognize the existence of English writing anxiety among their students and that the very nature of the debate, in general, may also be a source of English writing anxiety in the context of debate writing. The interview revealed that English writing anxiety affects students' ability to retrieve L2 vocabulary. Further, this study revealed different sources of writing anxiety in debate writing, which can be categorized into four main categories: (1) L2 linguistic ability-related factors (2) instructional –related factors, (3) interpersonal-related factors, and (4) debate- related factors. Based on the findings, recommendations for EFL teachers and EFL learners in managing writing anxiety in debate writing are provided.

Keywords : debate, EFL learners, English writing anxiety, sources
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