

**WRITING ANXIETY AND WRITING PERFORMANCE:
A STUDY OF BARBADIAN STUDENTS**

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**Ann Jacqueline Fergusson
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**Department of Language, Linguistics and Literature
Faculty of Humanities and Education
Cave Hill Campus**

ABSTRACT

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Ann Jacqueline Fergusson

Writing anxiety has a negative influence on writing performance. The ability to write is a major criterion towards educational success. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of Interactive Approaches on the written compositions of 11-12 year old low-achieving secondary school students in Barbados.

An intervention was designed to examine the effects of interactive strategies on the writing anxiety and writing performance of low-achieving secondary school students. The Experiment Group was exposed to a curriculum unit using interactive approaches over a 20 week period while the Control Group attended regular English classes. The experiment was conducted among two intact groups of 11-12 year old students (n=30).

Two dimensions of writing were assessed at pre and post test. The Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Questionnaire (1975) was used to measure writing anxiety among experimental and control groups. Writing performance of both groups was assessed by means of three compositions in narrative, descriptive and expository genres. Three experienced markers using researcher designed criteria assessed the compositions. Measures used in analyzing the compositions included subordinate clause index (Hunt 5) for syntactic complexity, Applebee's framework for narrative compositions (58) and Tree diagram analysis (Donovan 420) for non-narrative compositions.

Correlation analysis indicated inverse relationships between writing anxiety, writing performance and self-perception. Results suggest curriculum effects significantly reduced anxiety and resulted in improved writing performance among the treatment group. Significant improvement was observed on content, organisation and the use of relative clauses at the end of the treatment. Findings showed significant differences between the performance of the experiment group and the control group writing anxiety and performance. Males who received treatment obtained significantly higher post test scores than those in the control group. A larger number of students from the experimental group showed proficiency on all three genres than those in the control group. The use of interactive approaches has implications for classroom practice both in reducing anxiety and improving students' writing performance.

Key words: writing anxiety, writing performance, Interactive Approaches, low-achieving students.