

A STUDY ON EFL STUDENTS' WRITING ANXIETY (A CASE STUDY OF THE INDONESIAN STUDENTS)

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Abstract

This research aimed at investigating (i) internal factors; (ii) external factors which affect students' writing anxiety in English language learning. Qualitative research method was used to gain the data from participants. The participants were 20 students of English education study program of a State Islamic Institute in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia who have already passed Academic Writing Course. The researchers adopt non probability sampling, namely, purposive sampling in recruiting participants. The data were collected through structured and unstructured interviews and data were analyzed through content analysis. The findings indicate that the internal factors include lack of experiences in writing process; external factors include time pressure, ways of evaluation, and linguistic difficulties. Internal factors and external factors in this research become the reasons why students feel anxious in the writing process especially in English language learning.

Keywords: EFL Students; Writing Process; Anxiety

INTRODUCTION

Writing is an activity where someone pours their mind into a piece of paper about opinion, phenomenon, fact, research findings, and so on. In other context, writing is defined as an action, a process discovering and organizing ideas, putting them on the paper and revising them (Nasution, 2022). Besides, writing is an important skill in language learning and in academic achievement (Aloairdhi, 2019). Writing skills cannot be separated from academic activity, because writing is a basic skill which must be mastered by the students in order able to take proficiency tests such as TOEFL, IELTS and even finish their studies in university.

As Walsh said that writing is important because it is used extensively in higher education and in the workplace (Klimova, 2013). In addition, Walys claim that if students do not know how to express themselves in writing, they will be able to communicate well with professors, employers, peers, or just about anyone else. Furthermore, Rosaen and Zinsser claim that writing can be as useful aid in learning process, because it can help both comprehension and retention of information and concept as well as reflections on ideas and conceptions (Boscolo & Mason, 2001). Writing is not only about pouring an ideas but also it is used as a tool to stimulate writers thinking, intensify to concentrate, cultivates writer ability specifically summarize, analyze and criticize of an idea (Quvanch & Na, 2022).

This study focuses at investigating (i) internal factors; (ii) external factors which affect students' writing anxiety in English language learning. Related to experts' opinions about the importance of writing cannot be separated from English learning process, numerous students feel anxious in writing process because of some factors. Numerous researchers who claimed that synonym of writing anxiety is "writing apprehension". Writing apprehension is a study to measure students' comprehension about writing. Writing anxiety was introduced by Daly and Miller's 1975. Anxiety is a part of psychological factors of students and second language anxiety is a

feeling of tension and apprehension in four English basic skills specifically listening, speaking, reading and writing. Furthermore, writing anxiety is identified as a situation where individual feel stressful with a reactions as excessive perspiration and it can affect students’ exam grades (Rabadi & Rabadi, 2020).

In a research which is conducted by Quvanch & Na (2022), entitles “*Evaluating Afghanistan University Students’ Writing Anxiety in English Class: An Empirical Research*” the researchers try to determine the level, types and factors of writing anxiety that affect students anxiousness in writing process, and as a result the findings in this study, it is claimed that linguistic problems, time pressure, the pressure to be perfect, and the fear to teachers are the factors which affect students’ anxiety in the process of writing. Second, in a research carried out by Rabadi & Rabadi (2022), entitles “*Do Medical Students Experience Writing Anxiety While Learning English as a Foreign Language?*” the researchers try to examine English Foreign Language (EFL) writing anxiety among medical students in terms of level, types and causes of writing anxiety. In short, the findings in this study revealed that linguistic difficulties, insufficient writing practice, low self confidence in writing process, and fear of writing test as main factors which affect students as a result students’ anxiousness in writing process. Third, in a research conducted Wern & Rahmat, (2021) entitles “*An Investigation Study on The Types and Causes of ESL Writing Anxiety: A Case Study of Learners From A Chinese Independent Middle School*” the researchers try to investigate the causes of anxiety in writing activity that occurs in students who use English as Second Language (ESL). It was revealed the factors that affect students’ anxiousness in the writing process are fear of negative comments and evaluation, time pressure when writing, and linguistic difficulty.

Writing, according to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, is defined as the sense of being extremely concerned about particular situation (Afdalia, et al, 2023). Cheng proposed that writing anxiety is divided into three categories, as described in the figure below:

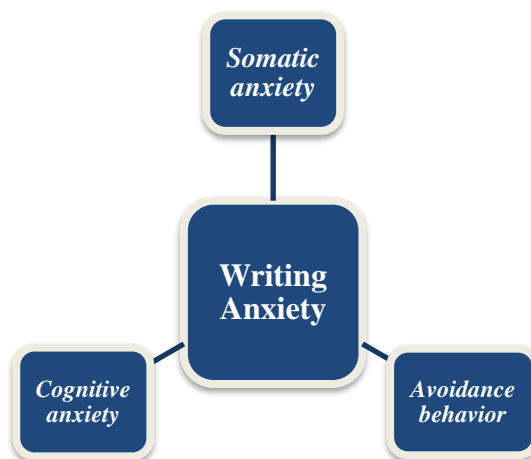


Figure 1. Categories of Writing Anxiety

1. Somatic anxiety refers to individual physical symptoms, related to nervousness, and tensions ;
2. Cognitive anxiety refers to anxiety of mental aspects specifically negative expectations, the sense of worrying about others negative evaluation, difficult to concentrate;
3. Avoidance behavior refers to individual character to avoid writing process.

Writing process basically consists of some aspects, they are organization, content, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary. Contents refers to process stated or supported clearly, concisely,

well organized, sequence and cohesive. Grammar refers to students understanding to tenses, articles, pronoun, to preposition. Mechanics refer to the mastery of terms, correct spelling, punctuation, use of capital letters to idioms. Vocabulary refers to students ability to vocabulary choice and idioms effectively.

METHOD

This research adopted case study at English education study program of a State Islamic Institute in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. Case study is defined as depth analysis study which is intended to explore about case, problem, or phenomenon that happens. Case study is used to investigate, analyze, deeply phenomenon that happens in a community why a phenomenon can happen and affect each other.

Data source in this study were used as primary data. The data were taken from interviews to the participants in order to get information related problems that were faced by the students. Sample techniques obtained in this research were taken through non-probability sampling, namely, purposive sampling. The criteria were used by the researchers are students who have scored below the standard in their academic writing course. The students who have taken academic writing course, and students who have had anxiety in writing skill. Participants in this research were the students of English education study program from the 6th semester and the 8th semester. The participants consisted of 20 students of the English education study program that representing each semester in the 2019-2020 academic years. 20 students English education study program in this research were divided into two category, 10 students in 2019 academic years and 10 students in 2020 academic years. The researcher communicated to lecturer who has taught Academic Writing courses in the 2019-2020 academic years to check the data of students who have felt anxious in the writing process.

Research instrument that was used by the researchers in this study is interview through open-ended questions by adapting questions. The reason why the researcher used interview as research instrument in this study, because the researchers wanted to analyze deeply some factors affecting students feel anxious in writing process. The types of interviews to be used were written interview SNS (*Social Network Site*) such as WhatsApp, Instagram Direct Message (DM) & Telegram using *voice note* feature of these application) and interviewing by face to face. The Guidelines of interviews in this study were described in the table below:

Table 1. Research Instrument

Internal questions	factors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does lack of experiences make you feel trouble when the writing process goes on? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What reasons make you feel inexperience in the writing process? - Are there some factors that make you feel inexperience in writing process? - How often do you do the academic writing process such as (make a paper, research article, article review, argumentative writing) on your academic journeys? 2. Are negative perceptions of the ability to write becomes one of the reasons that makes you feel trouble in the writing process?
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- Could you explain what are the reasons that makes you view writing process as negative thing in your academic process?
 - Could you describe writing process according to your opinion?
- External questions**
- factors**
3. Does feedback carried out between lecturers and students in the writing process makes you feel trouble when writing?
 - Could you describe what kind of evaluation that is usually done by lecturers and students in writing process so that you feels trouble?
 - Are excessive evaluations done by the lecturers and students make you feel trouble during the writing process?
 - Is evaluation important to develop your writing skills?
 4. Is the emphasis of time one of factors affecting your anxiety in writing process?
 - How long is the duration needed by lecturers in writing process?
 - Do you think, duration is important in the writing process?
 - How much times in writing process did you expect so that you feels confidence when writing process?
 5. Is the linguistic issues one of the few factors that makes you feels trouble when writing process?
 - Why linguistic issues are considered to be one of several factors that makes you feels anxious in writing process?
 - What linguistic issues did you usually find in writing process?
- Students mental health question**
1. Does the writing anxiety who occurs to yourself have an impact on your self-esteem?
 - What are the reasons in order you feel writing anxiety affecting your self-esteem?
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Narrative data analysis used in this study with inductive content analysis (ICA). Inductive content analysis is one of type qualitative analysis and commonly used with text based data, either written transcripts of verbal interactions or documents created in written forms. Data were validated through member checking. Member checking was undertaken to build trust with participants or informants, to measure when the topic or content is sensitive to discuss, when communicator or researcher are unfamiliar with the context, and validity need enhancement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Anxiety derives from the Roman word, “*angere*” that is mean choke. Anxiety is combination of affective, cognitive and behavioral of individuals that affect directly in particular context. Basically individual can feel anxious in particular situation and unpredictable condition. The characteristics of anxiety are sweaty, limbs, restlessness, difficulty breathing, difficulty speaking, heart palpitations, dizzy, numb, feeling sensitive, dependence on other peoples, overthinking, lost control, to afraid something will be happen in future (Handayuni & Ifdil,2020).

Some causes why the English learners feel anxious in writing process in this study:

1. Internal factor

Internal factor is factor or problem that comes from within of students. Internal factors in this study were constituted by deficient of experience in writing process. Na & Quvanch (2022), claim that lack of confidence is being a factor which affects students’ anxious in writing process. Confidence plays an important role in writing process to generate students ideas. Low confidence could make the students feel anxious in the writing process. Moreover in a research conducted by Aloairdhi (2019) lack of confidence becomes one factor affect the students’ anxious in writing process, and the researchers categorized lack of confidence as psychological sources of writing anxiety. Confidence is defined as the ability to measure individual capability when undertaking something. In other words, confidence could be defined as a way for individuals to look inside themselves. In fact, many of students who have enough confidence. There are many factors that affect students’ confidence in the learning process, some of factors are lack of experience in the writing process, so in some cases they feel anxious that their writing product will be paired with other students who have good writing skills. This problem was stated by student MA:

“Lack of experience in writing process makes me a bit of sense of difficulty in the writing process. The main reason why I feel anxious when writing is a lack of knowledge in the writing process.” (Interview)

Moreover, this problem happens to the student MS:

“Writing is very difficult, and even if I want to write, I am confused about what is the topic to write. So I write depends on my mood” (Interview)

Furthermore not only student MA, but student AF finds similar case. Student AF said:

“When I was in middle school, writing activities are not as complex as when I was in college. My writing activities are limited on book reviews and also writing articles for fulfilling the needs of school magazine only. In the end, in the first semester, I had difficulties in the writing process because at that time I rarely did this activity”. (Interview)

Lastly the same problem occurs to student TS. Student TS said:

“One thing that makes me feel anxious in writing process is lack of experiences.” (Interview)

2. External Factors

External factors are factors or problems that come from outside of students. External factors in this study were divided into:

a. Time pressure

Wern & Rahmat (2021), reveal that time pressure becomes a factor that affects students anxiety in writing process, besides research belongings. Aloairdhi (2019) time pressure becomea one of the factors tat affect students' anxiety in the writing process. Short duration which was applied by lecturer or instructor makes students feel stressed, especially for students who have low writing skills. In this session, they are needed to brainstorm what are ideas that will be pour in writing, in order to fulfill the standards of writing process. This problem happened to student RK who said:

“Sometimes with the emphasis of time often makes me difficult to complete the writing in the writing process.” (Interview)

Beside student RK, student FI said:

“I rarely do the writing process. So the pressure of time in the writing process could make me nervous and make me less focused when writing process, especially for certain topics...” (Interview)

Similarly, student MA said:

“The writing process is not easy, especially with the emphasis on duration in the writing process.” (Interview)

b. Ways of evaluation

Quvanch & Na (2022) claim that ways of evaluation is being one of the factors which affect students' anxiety in the writing process. It causes EFL (English foreign learners) feel apprehensive due to the evaluations given on their writing. Furthermore, in research belongings Turkben (2021) who claims that writing process tends make students feels anxious in the writing process because their fear will become negative evaluation on their writing. In writing activities, generally there are evaluation session who were undertaken by the students and the lecturers in a forum. Evaluation is basically important to develop students' skills but in fact, numerous lecturers who evaluate overly on the students' writing. Additionally, sometimes there are students who mocked their writing when evaluation is in progress.

This problem happened to English learner as stated by student HS:

“I often find criticism to my writing about the placement of word order. It will have an effect if my lecturer uses words that are quite hurtful, criticizing but not constructive.” (Interview)

The same problem happens to student RK who said:

“Sometimes feedback that was already given by the lecturers to the students often makes students not confident with the result of their writing.” (Interview)

Similar problem occured to student WAL who said:

“My fears unsettle me in the process of writing. I am afraid that my writing was not beyond expectations of my lecturer” (Interview)

c. Linguistic difficulty

Liu (2020) states that grammar is one of the factors which affects students' anxious in the writing process. Na & Quvanch (2022) claims that linguistic difficulty being a factor who make students feel anxious in writing process. Many of them have some problems such as lack of vocabulary, they do not know sentence structure, grammar rules, and the coherence of ideas. Linguistic has to do with grammatical structure, diction, and tenses.

This problem occurs to student AF:

“Linguistic difficulty that was often found in the writing process is grammatical issue. Grammar is important element. Sometimes I am confused with coordinate clause – subordinate clause and relative clause.” (Interview)

Beside linguistic difficulty, the same problem happens to student AL:

“Grammar errors and word choices make me anxious in the writing process.” (Interview)

Discussion

The existence of internal factors and external factors should be noticed by the lecturers and the students to overcome and minimize writing anxiety in academic writing process, because writing is an important skill that is supposedly mastered by all students.

Writing anxiety that happens to students in this study affecting to students' self-esteem. Self-esteem is individual views to their capability. Anxiety that occurs makes students' self-esteem low. Coopersmith define self-esteem refers to an individual's assessment of their worthiness and shows the individual believes to be capable, significant, successful and valuable. In other words self-esteem claim as individual evaluations, the feelings acceptance to capability of themselves. The characteristic of low self-esteem were described as following:

1. Insufficient self confidence
2. Often talk negatively to oneself
3. Worry or doubt oneself
4. Fear of failure

Additionally, the novelty values in this research has to do with exploring internal factors and external factors which affect the students' anxiety in the writing process. The participants in this study were taken from Z generation (individuals born in 1996-2009). This study offers solutions to minimize students' writing anxiety and this study reveal that anxiety occurs to students could impacting to students' self-esteem.

From the problems who experienced by the English learners in this study, some strategies that could be applied by the instructors and the students as follows:

a. Integrating the utilization of technology in the writing process

2023 categorizing as era of digitalization where individual activities could not be separated from the appliances of digitalization media, specifically the utilization of social media or application that could make individual activities easier. In this case the instructors could integrate writing process with the utilization of technology such as *grammarly* to help

students know grammar mistake on their writing product (Kurniasih & Saukah, 2021). This one point as a way to minimize students' writing anxiety in linguistic issues because in *grammaly* students acquire the explanation if their writing product detected related linguistic issues.

b. Intensifying ideas through group discussion

This is a strategy to minimize students' writing anxiety through intensifying the students' ideas through group discussion. This strategy is useful to topic developing on writing process. Students could brainstorm their ideas to a topic to get more knowledge each other. This step is useful in minimizing writing issues in topic choice, and students' lack of information in particular topic. As a result, small group comparisons become the writing process that can help reducing the students' writing anxiety (Tomlinson, 2016). Clearly, intensifying ideas through group discussion will alleviate students' writing anxiety (Qashoa, 2014).

In addition participated in a writing workshop can be as a way to alleviate writing anxiety. Workshop is an event to discuss about particular topics or skills, for instance, about academic writing. Through following writing workshop, it could be constructive way for the students 'writing skills in academic process and as a way to minimize writing anxiety. To be sure, participating in writing workshop could intensify writing knowledge outside of learning and teaching process.

c. The implementation instructional media in the writing process

The implementation instruction media such as watching movies or English video in writing process can be as a way to minimize the students' anxiety in writing process. This media are useful in vocabulary improvement, and memorizing English vocabulary (Kurniasih, et al, 2022). Furthermore, the implementation various instructional media in learning process is useful to stimulate students' comprehension.

d. Giving constructive feedback and motivation to students' writing product

Feedback is comments which is obtained by the students after finishing and presenting their writing product in classroom. Giving positive feedback from the lecturers to the students or feedback from peers could be constructive input for the students writing' skills as long as feedback is not exaggerated. Teacher positive behavior can influence the students' perception toward writing process (Kurniasih & Saukah, 2021).

Motivation that is given by the lecturers to the students or peers in evaluation session can motivate the students to always write in any situation (not only in academic process only) because indirectly the appreciation given can motivate individuals to complete the tasks assigned properly. Kurniasih, et, al (2022) claim that being positive illustrated by calm, taking a deep breath and keeping motivated can be as strategies to reduce highly students anxious in writing process.

CONCLUSION

Writing anxiety is a combination of students affective, cognitive and behavioral components that affect students, in writing process. Writing process basically consists of some aspects, they are organization, content, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary.

Factors that affect students' anxieties in the writing process in this study were divided into internal factors and external factors. Internal factors refer to problems that come from inside of the students. Internal factors in this study are due to lack of experiences in the writing process. On the other hand, external factors are problems that come from outside of the students. External factors in this study are time pressure, ways of evaluation & linguistic difficulties. In the final analysis some strategies that could applied to alleviate the students' writing anxiety are integrating the utilization of technology in writing process, intensifying ideas through group discussion, the implementation of instructional media in the writing process, to giving constructive feedback and motivation to the students 'writing product.

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