STUDENTS' WRITING ANXIETY IN ACADEMIC WRITING PRACTICE

Desfi Yenti[1*], Roza Susanti[2]

[1]STKIP Yayasan Abdi Pendidikan
[*]Email: desfiyenti.yen@gmail.com
[2]STKIP Yayasan Abdi Pendidikan
Email: susantiroza.buja@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Writing in academic English can be challenging, often leading to feelings of nervousness and hesitation among students. This study aims to identify the types of writing anxiety experienced by English Department students during academic writing. Twenty undergraduate students from STKIP Yayasan Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh participated in the research. Data were collected using the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) developed by Chang, which consists of closed-ended questions and is classified as a standardized questionnaire. The findings indicate that cognitive anxiety is the most prevalent form of writing anxiety among students. This reinforces the notion that writing anxiety is a significant barrier to developing writing skills, consistent with similar research conducted at other universities. To enhance their writing success, students must consider several important factors, including personality traits, teaching methods, awareness, and emotional influences. Future research should further explore these variables, as understanding their impact can lead to improved teaching practices and better support for students facing writing anxiety. By addressing these factors, educators can create a more conducive learning environment that fosters confidence and skill development in academic writing. Ultimately, recognizing and mitigating writing anxiety is essential for helping students succeed in their academic endeavors.

Keyword: W*riting practice, writing anxiety, academic writing*

INTRODUCTION

Among four English skills, writing is considered as a difficult and complex skill. Whether in native language (L1) or foreign language (L2) , writing is always considered a cognitively complex and demands as a skill since being proficient in the skill area requires conscious effort and a great deal of practice in composing, developing,and analyzing the ideas (Miles, 2002). It is quite possible that today more communication takes place in the written than the oral mode (Coulmas, 2014). Writing is also one of the important skill in language learning and it is also one of the skill should be mastered by English Department students. At university level, writing is the most required skill. The requirement of having high command

of English writing skill emerges as one of the most importan criteria for qualified EFL graduates (Rohmah & Muslim, 2020). As Shang (2013) points out that a high command of English writing skill is critical to enhance students writing performance. Writing at university level is formal, and it is different from personal and creatif writing. Academic writing or scientific writing contains a precise, impersonal, structured, and objective manner, and it uses reference system and thir personal ponit of view (Oshima & Hoque, 2007; Hartley 2008).

The phenomenon in EFL writing class at English department of STKIP Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh showed that the students' writing skill is still low. It can be seen from their attitude when teaching learning process and their performance in handling the task. Students are proven to feel apprehensive about writing. This phenomenon has known as students writing anxiety. Writing anxiety is a term for one or a combination of feeling, attitudes, or behaviour that interfere with a person's capacity to begin, to work on, or to complete a particular writing job that he or she is cognitively capable of completing (Bloom,1985). These unpleasant emotions and anxiety have a cripping effect on the ability of learners to write, resulting in avoidance of writing and writing class, which subsequently leads to poor performance (Pajares & Johnson,1995). Cheng (2004) separated writing anxiety into three-dimension as Cognitive, Somatic anxiety, and avoidance behaviour. Cognitive anxiety refers to pessimistic perceptions about writing and feeling of negative evaluation. In contras, somatic anxiety refers to physical actions such as trembling, sweating, and uncomfortable breathing. Avoidance behaviour displays activities relatedto avoiding situations when someone has to write.

Studies about students' writing anxiety have grown in a great numbers and have been applied in various contexts. Those number of studies are valuable evidence that the issue of students writing anxiety is still seen as a crucial concern to solve because as English major undergradute students , anxiety can affect their skill in academic writing. One area that has received considerable attention in social psychological research with regard to the application of writing anxiety theory is its application in explaining the type of writing anxiety in academic context, with SLWAI (Second Languge Writing Anxiety Inventory) as the main instrument. Several researches had been conducted in relation to students' writing anxiety. Al- Sawalha & Chow (2012) had found that students who suffer high level of anxiety may suffer in language learning process. This is supported by Khelalfa's (2018) statement that many studies in the area of English writing instruction have highlighted that writing anxiety is an important factors that affect the quality as well as perception of writing among students. The result highlight the importance of language teachers' awareness of their students' writing

anxiety. Then, the research conducted by Jennifer and Poniyah (2017) to college students in EFL writing class showed that students wth negative experiences of writing tended to be highly apprehensive. For instance, when they receive negative comments from their teachers or peers, students might feel demotivated which in turn will be negatively affecting the composition process. Moreover, Xu et al. (2020) discovered cognitive anxiety to be the most severe, while Atay and Kurt (2006) found that somatic anxiety-associated with physiological arousal as the dominating form.

In addition, the existing literature on writing anxiety among English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners reveals significant gaps that warrant further investigation, particularly in the context of academic writing practices. For instance, the study by Che Nor & Md Yunus (2022) did a research about the impact of ESL writing anxiety within the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) setting, yet it does not delve deeply into the specific factors that contribute to this anxiety among students. Similarly, Sa'adah et al. (2022) their research provides valuable insights into EFL students' perspectives on writing anxiety but lacks a comprehensive analysis of how these perceptions influence their writing performance. Sun et al. (2024) explore writing anxiety during the writing process, yet their focus on Chinese EFL learners limits the generalizability of their findings to other cultural contexts. Lastly, (Rohmah & Muslim, 2021) their research offers insights from EFL learners but does not address the intersection of writing anxiety with various demographic factors such as age, gender, and educational background. Therefore, the proposed research titled Students' Writing Anxiety in Academic Writing Practice aims to fill these gaps by examining the multifaceted nature of writing anxiety across diverse student populations, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of how writing anxiety affects academic performance in various educational settings.

METHOD

This study employed qualitative study which concerned with meaning rather than generalization. This study described and provided detailed analysis based on data collection (Creswell, 2012). Qualitative study allows study to be conducted in small and single case and had been considered relevant with the purpose of study to investigate the anxiety faced by college students in academic writing in EFL classroom. The study dealt with small amount of respondents and single case. The research participants were 20 students at English Department of STKIP Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh who had taken scientific writing subjact. The students were chosen considering their experiences and adaptation to the language had

been enough to share their anxiety on academic writing. Close ended questionnaires suggested by Cheng (2004) was used to collect the data. Cheng's Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) has been employed to find the type of students' writing anxiety. The questionaires was divided into three indicators.

Table 1: The Indicators of Types of Students' Anxiety in Academic Writing

No	Indicator	Item
1.	Cognitive anxiety	8
2.	Somatic anxiety	8
3	Avoidance behaviour	8

There are three indicators , they are cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety and avoidance behaviour.. Eight item for cognitive anxiety, eight items for somatic anxiety and eight items for avoidance behaviour. Cognitive anxiety means a learner's anxious behaviour because of fear of negative assessment or being tested, whereas somatic anxiety refers to fearful and worrying feelings which cause physical symptoms or trembling, avoidance behaviour is when students avoid writing task and activities involving writing. Students were asked to choose Likert -scale items expressed in terms of degree of agreement: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The students' choice was given the score, 5 for Strongly Agree (SA), 4 for Agree (A), 3 for Undecided (U), 2 for Disagree (D), and 1 for Strongly Disagree (SD). Students' responses from the questionnaire were counted quantitatively to find out the students'anxiety in academic writing practice.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After conducting the research, the data then were analyzed to find out the students' anxiety in academic writing practice. There are eight items for Cognitive Anxiety (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8) , eight items for Somatic Anxiety (9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16), and eight items for Avoidance Behaviour (17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24). The scores were calculated to find the mean of students' answer of each type of writing anxiety. From the highest mean the types of writing anxiety experienced by students could be found. The mean from each types is presented in the table below.

Table 2: The Mean of Each Type of Writing Anxiety

Types of writing anxiety	Number of students	Mean
Cognitives	20	22.8
Somatic	20	20,6
Avoidance behaviour	20	19,7

The result from SLWAI showed that cognitice anxiety is the most experienced anxiety type. Somatic anxiety become the second highest type and Avoidance behaviour has the lowest mean. The data   collected by SLWAI responses indicated that most students experiences cognitive anxiety while writing task. . Cognitive anxiety is a state of mind psychologically when they feel fear, worry and, and have negative concerns of result or other's viewpoint. They students face cognitive anxiety when they concern about other's perception or other expectation (teacher or friends) when do writing. They feel worried and uneasy when they know that their composition will be evaluated and discussed in front of the class. The students are afraid if their scores in writing are bad. Some students teacher said , " I am afraid that my English composition will be discussed in front of the class". While other students said, " I am afraid that my English composition would be rated as very poor". Other students'response appeared such as , " I always worry about what other people would think of my English composition". The students' cognitive anxiety face while writing academic task tend to focus on the feeling of fear of negative assessment or being tested.

Then, the second highest types is somatic anxiety. Somatic anxiety refers to fearful and worrying feeling which cause physical symptoms or trembling. It refers to one's perception of psychological effects of the anxiety experience, such as nervous and tension. Students are feeling nervous in high tension when they are under time constrain and they have not found any idea. They also feel nervous when they have not finished while some other friends have finished their writing. Based on the students answer, some students said, " I feel my heart pounding when I write English composition under time pressure ". Some students also shared, " I freeze up when unexpectedly asked to write ". Or students also said, " I tremble or perspire when I write English composition under time constraint". Somatic anxiety faced by students includes feeling tense and nervous, blank, confused thinking, trembling, feeling panic, cold, and heartbeat.

Futhermore, this study also found that Avoidance behaviour is third writing anxiety type which was experienced by students. Avoidance behaviour is a type of anxiety where the

students avoid writing. For instance, the students do not come to writing class and do not do their writing task. In fact, this is the most dangerous type of anxiety because the students will avoid writing. The students' answer vary in this type, suh as *" Unless I have no choice, I would not use English to write composition".* Some students said, *" I will do my best to avoid situation in which I have to write in English".* Students also said *" I usually do my best to avoid writing English* composition*".*This type of writing anxiety could be harmful because the students will not do anything and will get nothing in writing class.

The study aimed to explore the types of writing anxiety faced by students in academic writing practice. The result of this study found that the participants experienced cognitive anciety more than somatic and avoidance. These findings are also consistent with the study done by Wahyuni and Umam (2017), Kusumaningputri, Ningsih, & Wisasongko (2018), Salikin (2019), Hartono & Maharani (2020) and Syarifudin (2020) who reported that cognitive anxiety is the most experienced anxiety type. The students were mostly anxious about external factors, such as fear of negative judgement from their peers or getting poor assessment from the lecturer. In contrast, Arindra and Ardi (2020) reported that somatic anxiety is the dominant type faced by students. They described in their study that students mostly found their heart pounding faster, they start to tremble, go blank and feel panic, freeze up and feel tense. This somatic anxiety is even worse when they cannot double check their work.

Then, a research done by Rahim et al (2016) reported that being anxious about comparing to other peers are due to learners' competitive attitude affecting their anxiety level. Interestingly, the findings are also consistent with those obtained in Rezaei and Jafari's study (2014). They reported that cognitive anxiety becomes the dominant type of writing anxiety faced by Iranian EFL students. How the students make their writing can be highly influenced by expectation by other students or teacher. For instance, the teacher give high expectation, and the students have to achieve the high standard from the teacher. It can affect the students' writing because they will focus more on other's expectation rather than their own writing (Cheng, 2004).

Different studies conducted in English Department have more or less come to the same conclusion. Noteworthy also is the fact that the findings are also theoretically supported, though only partially so. Like what Tuppang's study (2014) and Ningsih's study (2015) found that cognitive anxiety is the dominant type of writing anxiety face by EFL students. It is assumed that students faced cognitive anxiety when they concern about other's perception or other's expectetion (teacher or friends). The students do not concern about their own

expectation. They feel worried and uneasy when they know that their composition will be evaluated and discussed in front of the class. They were afraid if their classmates will have negative judge towards their composition.

From the discussion above, it can be summed up that the EFL students in STKIP Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh had writing anxiety whether it is cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety or avoidance behaviour. The majority learners shared that they felt anxious in writing class and writing-related activities.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The findings reveal that cognitive anxiety dominates writing anxiety among EFL learners, primarily stemming from their negative perceptions of academic writing as a challenging task. This perception often arises from a lack of writing practice and unfamiliarity with language rules, leading to fear of negative evaluation. Addressing these beliefs is crucial, as they significantly impact students' confidence and writing performance. By understanding students' attitudes, beliefs, and perceived causes of anxiety, educators can develop strategies to make writing less daunting and more effective. To mitigate writing anxiety, students should focus on consistent practice and view effort as the key to success rather than dwelling on negative emotions. Lecturers are encouraged to adopt supportive feedback methods that recognize each student's potential for improvement. Additionally, universities should emphasize effort and provide resources or programs that promote writing practice and skill development. Future research could explore diverse learner groups and employ various data collection methods to gain deeper insights into writing anxiety, guiding more targeted interventions to improve EFL learners' writing skills.

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