

INVESTIGATING THE LEVELS, TYPES, CAUSES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE WRITING ANXIETY

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Abstract

The problem lied on foreign language writing anxiety suffered by the fourth semester students of English Education program of IAIN Batusangkar. They might get this for they were less familiar with argumentative course. Besides, there were some indicators that they had FLWA during teaching and learning process in the classroom like put off completing the assignment, as a result they prefer to be absent on the due date of submitted assignment, a fear of not getting a good idea to start the essay, or not creating a “good enough” essay, and so forth. The research was aimed at analyzing students' level, types, causes and coping strategies to alleviate FLWA. The design of the research was mix method research. In conducting the research, the researchers used three kinds of questionnaires. The first questionnaire is used for analyzing students' level and type of FLWA, the second questionnaires is used for analyzing students' causes of FLWA, the third questionnaires is used for analyzing the strategies to alleviate FLWA suffered by the students. Then the researchers also used interview to clarify unclear information of the third questionnaires. The researchers analyzed the data quantitatively and qualitatively. At the end, the findings showed that the students' level of FLWA was in high level (62%) and moderate level (38%). The students also suffered somatic anxiety (mean score 23, 10), Cognitive anxiety (22,16), and Avoidance behavior (22, 29%). There 53 causes of FLWA had by students. There are several strategies used by students to alleviate FLWA like cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, social strategies, compensation strategies, and so forth.

Keywords: Levels; Types; Causes; Coping Strategies; FLWA

Introduction

The importance of English cannot be denied in this global era. This language commonly taught as foreign language in many countries (EFL), including Indonesia. Language learners are expected to master english well in order to acheive the purpose of learning english; to communicate whether in spoken and written form, that is to exchange ideas, knowledge, and information with other people. Beside, by having good english, language learners could communicate in the daily communication, to get

knowledge, to make interpersonal communication, to share information, and to enjoy language lesson in English Culture.

In Indonesia, English is taught as one of compulsory subjects in high school levels where the students should master English language skills like speaking, writing, reading, and listening. It is relevant with Harmer (1991) who says that English has been attached into school curricula as one of reasons to learn EFL. It means they have to learn English because the school curricula ask them to do so.

Referring to this situation, the English teaching department at IAIN Batusangkar as a legal institution prepares their students to be candidates of English teachers who are able to teach EFL. They are supplied with a series of English courses like writing, speaking, listening, reading, and others taken in different semesters. At the end of the learning process, students are usually expected to become proficient in several areas of the target language, such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, discourse, and language skills.

Indeed, the ultimate goal is only to produce English teachers who have effective communication skills in English. It means the students are proficient in English language. As a candidate of English teacher, they need to be a model for their students as they face a real teaching later on. If they were failed to do so, the ineffective teaching outcomes would be emerged. As (Low, Chong, & Ellis, 2014) argues if there is a mismatching between what is conveyed and what was intended to be conveyed, then even the best teaching decisions can bring out ineffective teaching outcomes. Meanwhile, if the students are able to master English skills, and use effective communication in teaching and learning process can leverage on strong skills to bring about the best possible students learning outcome.

On the other hand, it is obvious that the learning of English as a foreign language is closely and directly related to the awareness about certain individual differences, such as the beliefs, attitudes, aptitudes, motivations and affective states of learners. Among these variables, particularly language anxiety as an individual difference is an affective state seriously impeding achievement in a foreign language (Gardner, 1985).

More than half of foreign language learners experience some kinds of anxiety in their learning (Worde, 1998). It is also argued that language anxiety may pose potential problems for language learners (Kondo & Ling, 2004). Learners who feel anxious in their foreign language learning may find their study less enjoyable (Gregersen, 2005). Some studies have indicated that foreign language anxiety can negatively impact on learners' performance. Learners who feel anxious in their learning, Pappamihiel (2002) argues, tend not to engage in situations which can make them feel anxious.

Among four English language skills, writing is the situation where the students tend to have anxiety. It is strongly relevant with (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) and Woodrow (2006) who say writing is found to be the most anxiety-provoking skill in a language classroom (Zerey, 2013). The reason lies in writing English as a foreign language is the most difficult skill to acquire (Cheng, 2004). The students will not only have to think about the ideas and its development, but also pay attention on grammatical

point, diction, spelling, sentence mechanic and many more. This situation creates bigger opportunity of foreign language writing anxiety. Indeed, most students in english teaching department, IAIN Batusangkar often suffered these anxieties.

Students also experienced anxiety in writing. These anxious writers tend to put off completing the assignment, as a result they prefer to be absent on the due date of submitted assignment. It could be said the students were creating an avoidance behaviour towards writing and writing classes which then results in poor performance. The possible reason is just because by a fear of not getting a good idea to start the essay, or not creating a “good enough” essay. In fact, there was a students whose paper was blank for about one and half hour then she cried becuse can not think any ideas to write. Then, when they start to write the first paragraph of their essay, they really need longer time to finish, as a result there is limited time to write body and concluding paragraph. There were cases where students who just wrote two or three sentences for each body paragraphs. In fact, these parts were a place for showing evidences. These situation possibly happened because the students have a fear over having to read aloud their work by other students, and thinking of how their work with be received by writing lecturer.

Thus, it is obvious that FL anxiety, particularly in writing anxiety is a serious matter that needs study. Much work has been conducted overseas to investigate the issue of FL anxiety (Horwitz, 1991; Worde, 1998; Kondo & Ling, 2004). Therefore, this research investigates this from the perspectives of Indonesian learners studying EFL in the context of islamic higher education.

Research Methodology

The research design was mixed method design. It is a methodology for conducting research that involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating quantitative and qualitative research (Cresswell, 2017). The researcher used convergent parallel mixed methods or triangulation design. It is a form of mixed methods design in which the researcher converges or merges quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. The research participants were the fourth semester students of English Teaching Department of IAIN Batusangkar. There were 69 students as the respondent of the research. In conducting the research, the researchers used three kinds of questionnaires. The first questionnaire is used for analyzing students' level and type of FLWA, the second questionnaires is used for analyzing students' causes of FLWA, the third questionnaires is used for analyzing the strategies to alleviate FLWA suffered by the students. It was done during June – October 2019. Then the researchers also used interview to clarify unclear information of the third questionnaires. The researchers analyzed the data quantitatively and qualitatively.

Result And Discussions

There are four research questions that need to be answered in this research; (1) What are foreign language writing anxiety levels of English Teaching Department

Students of IAIN Batusangkar? (2) What are foreign language writing anxiety types of English Teaching Department Students of IAIN Batusangkar? (3) What are foreign language writing anxiety causes of English Teaching Department Students of IAIN Batusangkar? and (4) What are coping strategies used by English Teaching Department Students of IAIN Batusangkar to alleviate their foreign language writing anxiety?

The findings reveals that most of students suffered a high levels of FLWA with the mean score 67,01; Most students had somatic type of FLWA with the mean score 23,10; there are 53 causes of FLWA had by the students, and finally there couple strategies to cope FLWA that applied by the students. The description of these findings can be elaborated quantitatively and qualitatively, as the following.

1. The Level of FLWA among the Fourth Semester Students of English Education Department of IAIN Batusangkar.

This finding might reinforce the conclusion that there is a high level of FLWA among students of English Education Department of IAIN Batusangkar. To see the data description of the first questions can be seen at the following figures.

Table 1
Levels of Students' Foreign Language Writing Anxiety

	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
High anxiety	43	66	80	71,30
Moderate anxiety	26	52	65	59,92
Total	69	52	80	67,01

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics of FLWA which shows a high level of FLWA (Mean = 67,01, > 66) among students of English education department. The participants' scores in this research ranged from 52 to 69. The mean score was 67,01 which reflected a high level of FLWA. From 69 students, 43 students (62%) had high levels of writing anxiety with the lowest score is 66 and 80 as the highest score of high anxiety. Meanwhile, 26 students (38%) had moderate levels of writing anxiety with the lowest score is 52 and the highest score is 65. There is no one had low anxiety.

2. The Type of FLWA among the Fourth Semester Students of English Education Department of IAIN Batusangkar.

The FLWA offers a three-dimensional conceptualization of anxiety such as somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and avoidance anxiety (cheng, 2004). Cognitive anxiety refers to the cognitive aspect of anxiety experience, including negative expectations, preoccupation with performance and concern about others' perception. Somatic anxiety refers to one's perception of the psychological effects of the anxiety experience, such as nervous and tension. Avoidance anxiety is a type of anxiety where the students avoid writing. By calculating the scores of the items related to each category, the distribution of the three types FLWA were presented in figure 2.

It is obvious that somatic anxiety is the most common type of FLWA experienced by among students of English Education Department of IAIN Batusangkar.

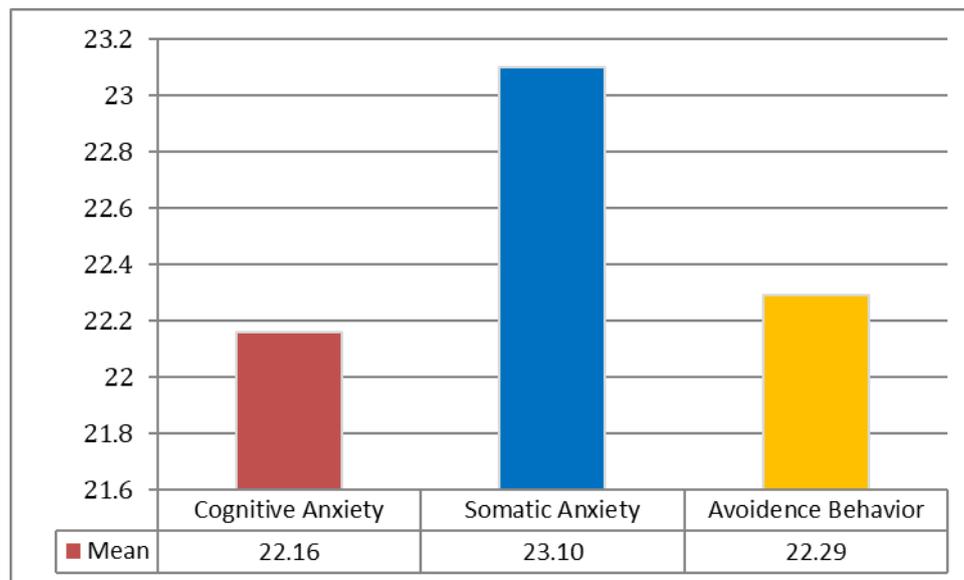


Figure 1
Types of Students' Foreign Language Writing Anxiety

The figure above clearly says that the students mostly have somatic anxiety with the mean score 23,10; then followed by avoidance behavior with the mean score 22, 29; and cognitive anxiety is 22,16 mean score. The findings might reinforce the conclusion that most students had Somatic anxiety. It refers to students' perception of the psychological effects of the anxiety experience, such as nervous and tension during writing in English.

3. The Causes of FLWA among the Fourth Semester Students of English Education Department of IAIN Batusangkar.

The researcher formulated a questionnaire to find out the possible causes of FLWA. Several experts' theories were used as the grand theories for designing the questionnaire like (Cheng, 2004), (Liu & Ni, 2015), (Hassan, 2001), (Zhang, 2011), (Rezaei & Jafari, 2014), and Al_Sawalha, et. All (2012). From the theories, there were 53 possible causes of FLWA might had by the students.

There were top fifteen causes among 53 possible causes of FLWA had by the students like limited time to plan composition (56), Limited time affect the writing quality (55), Limited time to revise the composition (55), Limited time to write the composition (53), Limited time to complete the writing task (51), Low self-confidence in vocabulary (51), Unfamiliarity with topic assigned (50), the difficulty in English writing (48), inadequate mastery of vocabulary (48), Lack of understanding the process of composing English writing (47), Limited English vocabulary (47), Lack of understanding writing instruction and practices (47), Inability to express ideas (47), Lecturer's unsympathetic and strict attitudes (46). Then Figure 3 reflects fifteen causes that mostly suffered by the students.

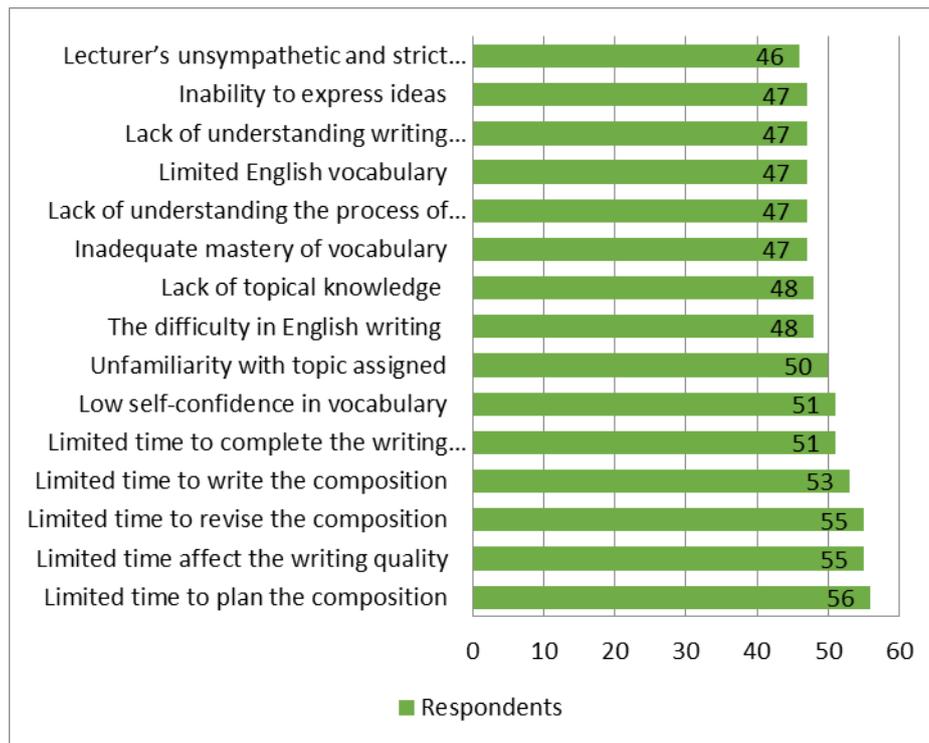


Figure 2
Top Fifteen Causes of FLWA

4. Coping Strategies of FLWA Used by the Fourth Semester Students of English Education Department of IAIN Batusangkar.

There are many strategies used by the Fourth Semester Students of English Education Department of IAIN Batusangkar in overcoming their writing anxiety. The strategies got from questionnaire given to the students. Beside the researcher also used interview to the students for clarifying what they have stated in the questionnaire before. Meanwhile for coping strategies, the students used several strategies like two set learning strategies proposed by Oxford (1999). This two stages are direct and indirect strategies. Cognitive strategies like translating, repeating, sending and receiving messages, note taking, and so on. Compensation strategies also used by students in alleviating their FLWA like asking helps from peers or lecturers, using synonym, selecting topic and many more. While for indirect strategies, the students used metacognitive strategies like seeking practices opportunities, paying attention, self- evaluating, setting goals and objectives, and so forth. Affective strategies are mostly used by the students in overcoming their FLWA like making positive statement, cooperating with peers, rewarding self, and so on. Then social strategies also used by the students such as asking for clarification from lecturer or friends, asking for correction, and so forth. These findings in line with zhang's previous research. She said that Three sets learning

strategies as suggested by Oxford (2001) such as meta-cognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and affective strategies may be useful to reduce FLWA.

Some other findings of this research were also similar with (Cheng, 2004), (Horwitz et al., 1986), Qashoa (2014), (Liu & Ni, 2015) like continuing to write despite the anxiety, reading other students' essay, turning to dictionary, try hard to brainstorm and outline, promoting self-confidence; enhancing background knowledge, creating positive attitudes toward committing mistakes, peer correction, relaxation exercises, writing journal, and many more.

Conclusion

This paper is intended at exposing level, type, cause, and coping strategies had by the fourth semester students of English Education Program of IAIN Batusangkar. Through the research, it reveals that the students' writing anxiety level in high level. The type of the FLWA suffered by them is somatic anxiety which mean their perception of the psychological effects of the anxiety experience, such as nervous and tension. Almost all students had 53 causes of FLWA but there were fifteen top causes of FLWA. Each student also had different strategies to alleviate their FLWA. Seeing the findings, all students need to pay carefully attention on FLWA that might appear before, during, and after writing. They also need to use effective strategies to alleviate FLWA. As result, their writing anxiety level will be reduced. Since the type of FLWA mostly suffered by the students was somatic anxiety, they need to control their personal beliefs about anxiety experiences such as nervous and tension. On lecturer's side, they need to be aware of students' FLWA and create the classroom situation less anxiety.

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