

The Relationship between Writing Anxiety and Writing Achievement: A Case of One Islamic University in Palembang

Nur Aprillianti Rehelmi

Bina Ilmi Islamic Elementary School, Palembang

nur.aprillianti@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between writing anxiety and writing achievement, and investigated the influence of writing anxiety on writing achievement of the students of the English department of one Islamic university in Palembang. The research was a quantitative research. The sample of this study was all of the sixth semester students. The total number of the students was 114 students. Since twelve students were absent, the sample of this study was 102 students. The data were collected by using the second language writing anxiety inventory (SLWAI) and writing test. Descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment correlation and regression analysis were used to find out the correlation and the influence between variables. The result of the analysis showed that there was a significant correlation between students' writing anxiety and essay writing achievement with r -obtained (.276) which was higher than the r -table (.194). Besides, there was also a significant influence of writing anxiety on essay writing achievement with 7,6 %. This study could have implications for English language teachers or lecturers, learners, and text book writers.

Keywords: writing, writing achievement, writing anxiety

Introduction

English, one of the widely used languages in the world, serves many functions. Similarly, according to Klimczak (2014), "English is one of those languages which one has got to know in order to be able to use it actively for traveling purposes, for working, for accessing information or entertainment" (p. 15). Subsequently, according to Abrar et al. (2018), Habibi et al. (2019), Lauder (2008), Mukminin et al. (2019), English is being used to support development of education. There could be as many as a billion students learning English around the world at this time and that is reasonable enough to consider moving into teaching English as a foreign language (Maxom, 2009). It can be concluded that mastering English will give a great contribution to one's life.

In order to use English fluently in communication as a foreign language, one should have the mastery of the four language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Lotherington, 2001; Mukminin, Muazza, Hustarna., & Sari, 2015, Mukminin et al., 2015). However, writing is considered the most difficult skills to master as a first language, a second language or a foreign language (Zemach & Islam, 2006). According to Langan (2008), writing is a process of discovery which involves a series of steps, and those steps are very often a zigzag journey. Moreover, it is proven by a research conducted by Aunurrahman, Hamid, and Emilia (2016) who claimed that the academic writing practice is not easy for students. These suggest that mastering writing often becomes challenge in mastering English.

Subsequently, there are many factors contributing to the difficulties in mastering writing, one of them is anxiety. Writing anxiety occurs because of behaviour engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement toward all stages of writing activities (Astrid, Rukmini, Sofwan & Fitriati, 2017). In line with this, Sparks, Ganschow and Javorsky (2000) claim that students' anxiety is likely to be a consequence of their learning difficulties, which is known as a cognitive-linguistic disability. Moreover, the students less enjoy in learning writing which influences their achievement (Andrade & Williams, 2009; Astrid et al., 2019; Erlina et al., 2019).

Several studies have been conducted in relation to this phenomenon. Ningsih, Wisasongko and Kusumaningputri (2015) revealed that there was a significant correlation between students' writing anxiety and their writing achievement. It showed that there was a negative correlation which means that the higher the anxiety level, the worse writing achievement they got. In addition, Tadesse (2013) also showed that there was significant correlation between anxiety and writing. This current study investigated whether there was any significant correlation between writing anxiety and writing achievement of the students of one Islamic university in Palembang. The purposes of the study were formulated in the following research questions; 1) Is there any significant correlation between writing anxiety and writing achievement of the students of one Islamic university in Palembang? and (2) Does writing anxiety significantly influence writing achievement?

Literature Review

The concept of writing

Writing is one of the most important skills that foreign language students need to develop. It is the last stage in learning a language after listening, speaking, and reading. Before the students have to write, they should be able to listen, to speak, and to read. Writing skill differs from other skills like speaking and listening. Brown (2001) states "trends in teaching writing of ESL and other foreign languages are integrated with teaching other skills, particularly listening and speaking" (p. 334). Moreover, writing is the final product after students have followed several stages of writing (Wallace, Stariha, & Walberg, 2004). Those stages are note-taking, identifying a central idea, outlining, drafting, and editing. It means that writing is a complex skill. It covers many sub skills that have to be passed before producing a good piece of writing. Writing seems so complicated with its sub skills, but it actually can be learnt with fun. Yusuf (2016) argued that actually the students felt interesting, helpful, and fun in learning writing by some strategies used in their writing class.

Furthermore, according to Harmer (2004), the four elements of writing are as follows; planning, drafting, editing and revising. In addition, most contexts of life (school, workplace and community) call for some level of writing skill, and each context makes it overlapping, but not identical demands (Astrid et al., 2019; Graham & Perin, 2007; Mukminin et al., 2018). Proficient writers can adapt their writing flexibly to the context in which it takes place. In the school setting, writing plays two distinct but complementary roles. First, it is a skill that draws on the use of strategies (such as planning, evaluating, and revising text) to accomplish a variety of goals, such as writing a report or expressing an opinion with the support of evidence. Second, writing is a means of extending and deepening students' knowledge; it acts as a tool for learning subject matters.

The concept of writing anxiety

According to Daly and Wilson (1983), “Writing anxiety refers to a situation and subject specific individual difference associated with a person’s tendencies to approach or avoid situations perceived to potentially require writing accompanied by some amount of perceived evaluation” (p. 327). The study of writing anxiety has its roots in first language acquisition. As such, first language acquisition research plays an important role in understanding second language writing anxiety. According to Cheng (2004), writing anxiety is common among first, second, and foreign language writers. Besides, a study by Astrid, Rukmini, Sofwan, and Fitriati (2017) concluded that most of students having low writing anxiety and some having high writing anxiety had positive behavior engagement and emotional engagement toward all stages of learning activities.

In fact, L2 writing anxiety is associated with the tendency to avoid the writing situation because it causes the elevation of anxiety levels. Shawish (2009) claimed that writing anxiety makes writing not an easy task, as some people may think it is rather a sophisticated skill, if compared with other language skills, which may need less effort. Since writing is referred to some contexts as transformation of one's thoughts into language, it combines many interrelated components. It involves different mental activities that a writer should think, compose and create ideas, and check their relatedness to each other.

Methods

Research design

In conducting this study, correlation method of research was used in terms of explanatory and prediction research design to find out the correlation between variables and explain and interpret the results that may appear. According to Creswell (2012), “A correlation is a statistical test to determine the tendency or pattern for two (or more) variables or two sets of data to vary consistently” (p. 338). In addition, Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012) state “in associational research, the relationships among two or more variables are studied without any attempt to influence them” (p. 331). The procedures taken in this research were as follows; 1) The students’ writing anxiety was identified by using SLWAI questionnaire; 2) The students’ writing achievement was obtained by using essay writing achievement test; 3) Then, the correlation and the influence between variables were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social and Science (SPSS); and 4) The explanation and interpretation of the results were discussed.

Research site and participants

The population of this study was all the active students of English department at one Islamic university in Palembang. Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012) define the population as the group of interest to the researcher, the group to whom the researcher would like to generalize the results of the study. The population of this current study was the group of individuals. The distribution of the population of the study can be seen below:

Table 1. Distribution of the population

No.	Semester	Number of Students
1	II	122
2	IV	152
3	VI	102
4	VIII	96
	Total	472

A sample is any part of a population of individuals on whom information is obtained (Fraenkel et al., 2012). To get the sample, purposive sampling technique was used in this study. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), purposive sampling consist of individuals who have special qualification of some sort or are deemed representative on the basis of prior evidence. Therefore, in this study, the second and the fourth semester classes were not included as the sample of the study because they have not finished all of the writing classes yet. Moreover, the eighth semester students were not taken as the sample either, since, in this semester, they focused on writing their thesis. Therefore, the sixth semester students were chosen as the sample, since they have taken all of the writing classes.

Moreover, Creswell (2012) states that the larger the sample, the less the potential of the error. So, all of the classes in the sixth semester became the sample of the study. Actually, the total students of the sixth semester were 114, but there were only 102 students that were willing to fill in the questionnaire and had the writing test. The distribution of the students in this study can be seen in Table 2:

Table 2. The distribution of the sample

Class	Semester	Number of Students
PBI A	VI	28
PBI B	VI	22
PBI C	VI	28
PBI D	VI	24
	Total	102

Data analysis

Students' responses toward the questionnaire items were calculated by using descriptive statistics analysis. Firstly, the data from the questionnaire were analyzed and calculated to determine the category of students' writing anxiety. The scoring system used was based on the Likert scale (1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree). The results from the total score each student got from his/her responses toward the questionnaire items were classified into writing anxiety category as proposed by Cheng (2004). After calculating and categorizing writing anxiety domain, all of the scores from each domain were totaled to determine the real scores of students' writing anxiety. The categories of students' writing anxiety were listed in Table 3.

Table 3. The category of writing anxiety scale

No.	Score Interval	Category
1	65 >	High
2	65 – 50	Moderate
3	50 <	Low

The students' writing test scores were analyzed by three raters, who rated the writing test. The raters used the rubric for descriptive writing from Hughes (2013) to score the students' writing in order to have the data of their writing achievement. There are six indicators in the rubrics and the scale of each aspect is one to five. After that, the students' scores were classified into five categories (very good, good, average, poor and very poor). The categories of students' writing achievement were listed in Table 4.

Table 4. The category of students' writing achievement

Score Interval	Category
25 – 30	Very Good
19 – 24	Good
13 – 18	Average
7 – 12	Poor
1 – 6	Very Poor

Findings

The result of students' writing anxiety

Before administering the test, the students were asked to fill in Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) questionnaire. It revealed that, 22 items of SLWAI questionnaire were all perceived by the students with different numbers. Based on descriptive statistics analysis of the students who gave responses to SLWAI questionnaire items, it was found that the total number of participants was 102 students. The maximum score was 88.00, and the lowest score was 39.00. The mean of foreign language anxiety scores for the participants was 59.3529 and the standard deviation was 10.17145. The data were listed in Table 5.

Table 5. The descriptive statistics of writing anxiety

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Writing anxiety	102	39.00	88.00	59.3529	10.17145
Valid N (listwise)	102				

The result above revealed that from students' responses of the questionnaire items, the three levels of writing anxiety were all perceived by the students with different numbers. The details were described in Table 6.

Table 6. The distribution of writing anxiety

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
High	65 >	26 %
Moderate	65 – 50	52 %
Low	50 <	22 %
Total	102	100%

Based on the result of data analysis of the SLWAI Questionnaire, it showed that there were 27 students (26 %) getting the score more than 65, and were in high level of writing anxiety scale; 53 students (52 %) getting the score between 65 – 50, and were in moderate level of writing anxiety scale; and 22 students (22 %) getting the score under 50, and were in low level of writing anxiety scale.

The result of students' writing achievement

The test was administered to find out the students' achievement in writing. The result analysis of descriptive statistics of the students' writing test was described in Table 7.

Table 7. The descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
VAR00001	102	9.00	25.00	18.5294	3.23259
Valid N (listwise)	102				

Based on the result of descriptive statistics analysis of the students' writing achievement, it was found that the total number of participants was 102. The maximum score was 25.00, and the lowest score was 9.00. The mean of the writing score was 18.5294, and the standard deviation was 3.23259. Meanwhile, the distribution of data frequency of the students' writing achievement was described in Table 8.

Table 8. The distribution of students' essay writing achievement

No.	Score Interval	Category	Number of Students	Percentage
1.	25 – 30	Very Good	3	3%
2.	19 – 24	Good	49	48%
3.	13 – 18	Average	49	48%
4.	7 – 12	Poor	1	1%
5.	1 – 6	Very Poor	0	0 %
	Total		124	100%

The result of normality test

The data are interpreted normal if $p > 0.05$. If $p < 0.05$, it means that the data are not normal. *Kolmogorov-Smirnov* was used to see the normality of the data of this research. The result of normality test showed that the data from each variable were all normal and appropriate for further data analysis with coefficients .387 for writing anxiety scale (SLWAI) and .469 for writing achievement.

The result of linearity test

Based on the result of the analysis of linearity test of writing anxiety and writing achievement scores. It was found that the two variables were linear. The results showed that the deviation from linearity between writing anxiety and writing achievement was .222. To sum up, all the data were found linear for each correlation and regression analysis

The correlation between writing anxiety and writing achievement

This section answered the first research problem by analyzing the result of inferential statistics analysis for the writing anxiety and writing achievement. The result of Pearson Product Moment can be seen in Table 9.

Table 9. Correlation between students' writing anxiety and their writing achievement

		Writing Achievement	Writing Anxiety
Writing Achievement	Pearson Correlation	1	-.276**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.005
	N	102	102
Writing Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-.276**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	
	N	102	102

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the result of the analysis of Pearson correlation, the correlation coefficient or the r -obtained (-.276) was higher than r -table (.194). It can be stated that the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted. Thus, there was a correlation between the students' writing anxiety and their writing achievement.

The influence of students' writing anxiety on their essay writing achievement

This section answered the second research problem by analyzing the result of regression inferential statistics analysis for SLWAI questionnaire and writing achievement. Based on the result of the analysis, it was found that students' writing anxiety influenced their writing achievement. The result of the regression analysis was described in Table 10.

Table 10. The regression analysis of students' writing anxiety and writing achievement

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	23.744	1.839		12.912	.000
	writing anxiety	-.088	.031	-.276	-2.877	.005

a. Dependent Variable: writing achievement

Table 11. Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.276 ^a	.076	.067	3.12210

a. Predictors: (Constant), writing anxiety

From the data listed in Table 11, it can be seen that the significant score is .276. In addition, the R-square (R^2) was .076. This means that writing anxiety contributes 7.6% to the students' writing achievement.

Discussion

Some interpretations were made based on the basis of the result of the data that were calculated statistically. First, it was found that there was a correlation between writing anxiety and writing achievement. The correlation coefficient or the r -obtained (-.276) was higher than r -table (.194). Thus, there was a negative correlation between the students' writing anxiety and writing achievement. It means that the higher the students' writing anxiety is, the lower their writing achievement will be. The phenomenon above may happen because some students had what was called as facilitating anxiety. According to Daly and Wilson (1983), "writing anxiety refers to a situation and subject specific individual difference associated with a person's tendencies to approach or avoid situations perceived to potentially require writing accompanied by some amount of perceived evaluation" (p. 327). Supported by Cheng (2004), second and foreign language learners, who experience feelings of anxiousness associated with writing, often fear not being able to express themselves clearly in their writing and worry that readers of their writing will judge them negatively. Writing anxiety manifests itself much as general language anxiety through excessive worry, self-evaluation, fear of others' judgments, and avoidance or excessive time spent on the composition process.

Some research studies also showed that students' writing anxiety correlated with writing achievement. A study which was conducted by Tadesse (2013) indicated that anxiety and writing achievement correlated each other. This study also revealed that most of the subjects of the study were found to be anxious because their anxiety level was above the mean score. It indicated that EFL learners experienced communication apprehension because of participants'

attitude to writing, anxiety from personal problems and knowledge of vocabulary and input stage of learning. As it can be seen from the result of the findings, the students were afraid to write because of fear of evaluation and making mistakes. These students seemed to feel constantly tested and to receive every correction as a failure. Participants' attitudes to writing, lack of concentration and forgetfulness, limited knowledge of vocabulary were found as anxiety provoking situations. Then, from the findings, it was found that students' writing anxiety influenced the students' writing achievement with 7.6% contribution. Finally, this study was successful in identifying significant correlation between students' writing anxiety with writing achievement.

Conclusions

Based on the findings and interpretations of the study, there are some conclusions that can be drawn. First, there was a correlation between students' writing anxiety and writing achievement. It could be seen that based on Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, r -obtain (-0.276) of students' achievement was higher than r -table (0.194). Then, the level of probability (p) was (0.00) which was lower than 0.05. In other words, H_0 was rejected and H_a was accepted. This suggested that writing anxiety correlated to writing achievement. Second, students' writing anxiety had a significant influence to students' writing achievement. It could be seen based on the result of regression analysis which showed that students' achievement was significantly influenced by their writing achievement with 7.6% contribution.

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