

Chapter One

Introduction

This chapter discusses the research background, the identification of the problem, and the delimitation of the problem. It also discusses the research question, the research's objective, and the significance of the research study. At the end of this chapter, the researcher describes the organization of the study.

Background of the Research

Basic skills that need to be mastered when someone learns another language as a foreign language are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In learning English, those four skills are divided into two-part, namely receptive and productive skills. The receptive skills are listening and reading, while productive skills are speaking and writing. Several supporting aspects could encourage students to master those four skills; pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, that is all three language characteristics that play a significant role in developing these four skills (Megawati, 2016)

Writing has become crucial in the academic field. According to Fajarinaya (2018), one of the essential skills in writing for EFL students. In writing, students can pour their ideas into words that help them develop their critical thinking. Widyastuti (2018) stated that writing would significantly assist students in developing critical thinking skills and language ability. Besides, it is one of the goals of education to build students' thinking and motor skills, which is a basic goal of contemporary educational techniques (Karakoç, 2016). Nowadays, critical thinking is included in the 21st-century skills that need to be mastered by students.

The influential conceptions of persistence and curiosity have been identified as 21st-century abilities (e.g., critical thinking, problem-solving behaviour) (Woods-Groves, 2015). Furthermore, critical thinking is essential in the academic field. Critical thinking will be beneficial for the students in the educational area because it will help them do their assignments. Critical thinking will be needed for the students since it helps them construct their academic writing. It is supported by Rahmat et al. (2020) that academic writing mirrors the writing process and critical thinking since writers concentrate on the content rather than the technical writing skills. Many factors influence critical thinking, including culture, education, teaching methods, and the environment (Azar, 2010).

Writing seems to be the most challenging skill to be learned besides the other skills because it requires preparation. As Alico (2016) said, students, need to brainstorm ideas, organize text structure, and construct paragraphs in writing. Achieving good writing skills take a lot of practice. Thus, good writing skills are necessary for the academic field. As Durga and Rao (2018) said, writing is used to communicate more than any other form of media; learners need good writing skills to fulfill their academic and workplace needs. To produce excellent writing, the writer also needs to master the grammar.

Students face obstacles in mastering the four language skills when learning a second language. Students might have difficulties learning English, especially mastering vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, speaking and listening (Suryanto & Sari, 2021). Ma and Wang (2014) found that problems faced by university students when learning academic English are grammar and sentence structure.

Besides those problems, anxiety can also be an obstacle for students when learning English. Anxiety has been identified as a significant obstacle for language learners (Oteir & Al-Otaibi, 2019). Rezaei and Jafari (2014) stated that anxiety has long been recognized as a significant factor of difficulty in learning a second language. The previous statement supported Riasati's (2011) argument that most language learners experience anxiety while learning a new language.

Anxiety is defined as a feeling of irrational fear, worry, discomfort, and apprehension unrelated to a specific cause or circumstance (Alrabai, 2014). Anxiety is associated with someone's feelings. Ansari (2015) explained that anxiety is a negative expression of human feelings, and when people are anxious, people will feel apprehensive, frightened, and afraid. It can be said that the effects of anxiety make people sweat and be frightened of something. Ansari also stated that people tend to tense up, quiver, sweat, and have rapid heartbeats when anxious.

Anxiety can also occur when writing. Jawas (2019) stated that a recurring feeling of not being ready to write or not being good enough is known as writing anxiety. The students fear starting writing and are afraid to have bad writing. The concept of writing anxiety in the context of foreign language learning has primarily been used in academic settings and has focused on individual perspectives (Mulyono et al., 2020). Writing anxiety can be harmful to students' mental health and academics since it makes them nervous and afraid to write. Their anxiety can obstruct students' writing development. According to Miri and Joia (2018), anxiety might affect how students feel about their academic achievements and writing abilities. That is in line with Anggraini (2016), who stated a significant difference

in students' writing achievement based on writing anxiety. Anxiety can also be inference when students learn. Wahyuni and Umam (2017) explained that anxiety could block and obstruct learning.

College students may have higher writing anxiety levels than high school students since college students are required to write more papers in English than high school students should do. According to Martinez et al. (2011), the obligation of writing essays is commonly used in universities, which may cause anxiety among university students. A study conducted by Ariyanti (2017) reported that anxiety itself could measure the level of anxiety in students' writing. The anxiety levels are divided into three parts: high anxiety, moderate anxiety, and low anxiety (Rezaei & Jafari, 2014; Ariyanti, 2017). Some studies indicate that EFL students in university tend to have a high level of anxiety (Ariyanti, 2017; Wahyuni & Umam, 2017; Syarifudin, 2020). However, some studies found that EFL university students have moderate anxiety levels (Dar & Khan, 2015; Masriani et al., 2018; Salikin, 2019). From the study above, there are different results of the writing anxiety among EFL students. Thus, it can be a reason why this study needs to be conducted.

The level of writing anxiety between males and females is different. Salikin (2019) stated that gender had become one-factor affecting writing anxiety levels. Many studies have researched the level of writing of anxiety and gender for a few years ago. Some research found that females' writing anxiety is higher than male students (Rudiyanto, 2017; Salikin, 2019). Furthermore, other studies reported that male students have higher writing anxiety levels than female students (Shang, 2013; Jebreil, Azizifar, & Gowhary, 2015). However, some studies found no differences

in writing anxiety levels based on gender (Anggraini, 2016; Aytac-Demirçivi, 2020). It shows that the different results of the others researchers are fascinating to be explored.

Moreover, from the researcher's view, EFL students in university tend to have writing anxiety because they have many academic writing assignments. Having anxiety can have an effect that is disabling and damaging students' performance grades. Besides, the number of studies about writing level anxiety and gender of EFL learners in university at one of the private universities in Yogyakarta is quite rare. Based on the explanation above, this study needs to be conducted to help EFL learners in the university become more aware of their level of anxiety and overcome it. Besides, writing anxiety has a fascinating contrast result that makes it become an intriguing issue to investigate. This present study focuses on exploring the level of writing anxiety based on the gender of EFL learners in university and finding the level differences in male and female EFL students.

Identification of the Problem

Students have many difficulties in writing, especially when the students are in the context of learning a foreign language. Writing an academic essay looks difficult to EFL learners since it commonly becomes the semester's final project. In semester one, the students first learn to write a good sentence and paragraph to become an essay in Academic Reading and Writing course. In addition, the following semester, the students write various types of essays in the Interpretive Reading and Argumentative Writing course. In semester four, Issues in Language Teaching and Learning, the final assignment is also writing academic text. The

difficulty in writing that the students feel is a burden when writing in limited time. Limited time here means the students sometimes cannot split time to write amid other assignments. Moreover, they said they feel exhausted and run out of ideas to start writing early. Writing indeed takes time, especially in writing academic essays. Academic essays usually become students' final projects of the semester. It has also usually been done in a limited time. That pressure can make students experience writing anxiety. Furthermore, writing complex essays can be the students' other difficulty when writing. To write a complex essay, they need to research to support their statement. The students often feel panicked if they are commanded to write complex essays. From the researcher's experience, she felt terrified because she did not know what she would write. It becomes worse when they write complex essays in a restricted time. Those problems can aggravate their writing anxiety.

Arranging the words in good order is an additional challenge when writing. In writing, the writer needs to be aware of the sentence structure. Learning the sentence structure can be challenging since people must put it in the correct order. Moreover, since it is writing academic essays, the essays must be included academic words with correct grammar. The grammar and sentence structure are usually involved in the rubric score. Those conditions make students anxious when writing since they stated that they are afraid to use the wrong grammar in academic texts. Those problems can also lead them to be too scared to get a bad score in writing. The students said they are mostly scared of having poor grades in their assignments. This problem usually occurs in female students when writing English academic essays. They are also fearful of being judged by their teacher and friends

about their writing. In writing academic essays, the students must pay attention to the use of grammar. However, not all students have good grammar knowledge, and then it makes several of them feel nervous when writing. Grammar may be challenging when writing since they must put it in the correct structure. Those kinds of problems can lead the students to have writing anxiety.

The researcher asked some male students about their difficulties when writing academic texts. From their perspectives, the problem when writing an academic text is the lack of vocabulary mastery. In writing essays, the students need to use sophisticated or formal words. Moreover, the students should struggle to write academic text in their second language. Limited vocabulary knowledge can become one of the challenges for them when writing. They said to the researcher that the unfamiliar vocabulary makes them struggle when writing. Writing has a complex component that can cause anxiety when writing, especially in English academic texts. Furthermore, when writing essays, the students are required to find support sentences from research experts. It also takes the students to find the correct support sentence for their academic texts.

The researcher found out that the female students mostly fear the negative evaluation when writing after talking to them. The female students usually really think about their grades. The female students do the task wholeheartedly, so they are afraid to get a bad score. It takes time to find the support sentence from an expert to produce academic writing. Meanwhile, the male students seem to not care about the negative evaluation of their writing. They do the academic writing assignment

with ease and peace. If the male students get a negative evaluation, they do not take it personally. Those problems show the gender discrepancy in writing.

The most obvious challenge is to get the same score for writing projects throughout the whole semester. The students do not show improvement in writing because they have writing issues. It also shows that the students have difficulties in writing and do not improve their scores because they like procrastinating. Sometimes, students postpone their writing essay tasks since writing has many components to do. The other reason the students like to procrastinate is that they are not familiar with the topic they write. Students are struggling to start writing and expressing their ideas or opinion. They can be confused about the first things they should write in their paper. Besides, because the students write in the second language, they still grasp and learn the target language.

Delimitation of the Problem

This research investigates the level of writing anxiety and significant difference in writing anxiety based on gender by looking at the learners' psychological, cognitive, and behaviour. The researcher used a survey design through the participants. The participants were limited from the sixth semester in a university majoring in English language education.

Research Questions

Based on the background, the research questions for this research are:

1. What is the level of writing anxiety of female EFL students in university?
2. What is the level of writing anxiety of male EFL students in university?
3. Is there any difference in students' writing anxiety based on gender?

Objectives of the Research

The first objective of this research is to investigate the level of writing anxiety of EFL students in the university. Furthermore, this study explores the difference in writing anxiety based on gender.

Significance of the Research

This research has three significances for the students, the English teacher, and other researchers.

The students. The findings of this study are hoped to be helpful for the students. Later, this finding can be valuable knowledge for students that want to be more aware of their anxiety level in writing. Moreover, it also outlines the anxiety of writing academic text among students as second language learners. This research also examines students' writing anxiety levels, whether in the high, moderate, or low levels of writing anxiety.

The English teachers. The findings of this study are hoped to be beneficial for the English teacher. The teachers can be aware of the students' anxiety level when learning, especially in writing classes or activities. The teacher can help the students to reduce their writing anxiety and find a solution to overcome it.

Other researchers. The findings of this study are hopefully helpful for other researchers. This study examines the level of writing anxiety of EFL students in university. This study also explores the difference in writing anxiety based on gender, which can be an additional source for other researchers who study the same field. Moreover, these researchers may obtain additional data to serve as a source

of support for their study. Besides, this study can be an idea for them to conduct a study about writing skills.

Organization of the Research

Chapter one discusses the research background, the identification of the problem, the delimitation of the problem, the research question, the objective of the study's research, and its significance. All aspects related to the research background are discussed in this chapter. Then, in chapter two, the researcher discusses the anxiety in language learning and the factors that cause writing anxiety. The important section is about the previous study related to this topic. Following chapter three, the researcher discusses the research method, including research design, nature and sources of the data, research setting and participant, data collection method, and data analysis. Chapter four will discuss the findings and the discussion. In this chapter, the researcher talks about the study's findings, which were based on an interview that was classified and linked to theories. The conclusion and suggestion are discussed in chapter five of this recent study.