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Students' Writing Anxiety and Its Implication to Local Context

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Abstract— Writing anxiety has been considered a significant hindrance for most Indonesian EFL students. With a growing number of available literatures on this issue, this paper aims to grasp the trends and deliver some implications to the national and local context. The available researches are the ones that have been published from 2017 to 2021. The subjects in those researches are university students majoring in English department. This review is one of the steps in pre-research on students' anxiety in research courses and it has been done by using scoping study method. Therefore, taken from the thirteen collected literature, the trends have been summed up into 1. Types and levels of writing anxiety; 2. Factors or causes of writing anxiety; 3. Strategies to reduce writing anxiety; 4. Implications. The findings show that cognitive anxiety, linguistic difficulties the dominant in the trends of types and factors of students writing anxiety. In respect to the level, the findings indicate that students have moderate to high anxiety levels while metacognitive and affective as the dominant strategies used by students. Thus, in general, the findings have strengthened the concept of writing anxiety as an obstacle in students' writing skills. Overall, some other significant variables such as personality traits, teaching techniques, awareness, and affective factors should be taken in future studies, and practices in teaching writing.

Keywords— academic writing; college students; English department; foreign language anxiety; writing anxiety.

I. INTRODUCTION

The topic of this paper emerges from what the writers have had an experience when teaching research courses to undergraduate students in an Islamic private university in Mempawah Hilir district of Kabupaten Mempawah. The writers recognize that as the first batch of English Education Program or Tadris Bahasa Inggris students, their exploration of academic writing or even their English writing skills, in general, is still low. It is seen on how their attitude during the learning process, and their performance in handling the task given. Hence, this found phenomenon is assumed as we have known as anxiety specifically students' writing anxiety. In the level of undergraduate students, the topic of students' writing anxiety has a growing number of studies which have been documented in past decades.

Globally, some studies on writing anxiety such as Lin, et.al (2018) have been researched in the Taiwanese context. They claim one newfound writing anxiety factor among those reported by researchers in previous years. Uninformed writing formats appear as one of the main writing anxiety factors. They conclude that "this research found groundbreaking evidence that diverse formats of English writing different from united Chinese style can cause anxiety to Taiwanese learners" (p. 43). In 2019, Sabti et al. (2019) inform us that the Iraqi students' writing quality is determined by the level of their anxiety in writing. In shorts,

the performance gets poorer when their writing anxiety level gets higher. In Indonesian context, focuses on factors and strategies, Jawas (2019) have revealed that in-class assignment and time limitation has the biggest impact to cause anxiety for the students in Malang University. Thus, Jawas suggests lecturers consider those two issues. In 2020, Rehelmi claims that there is a correlational relationship between writing anxiety and writing achievement for Islamic University students in Palembang.

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 undergraduate students, anxiety can affect their skills in academic writing. Having good academic writing skills can support them to report their research in form of what we call a thesis. Therefore, it is an essential weapon for them to master (Pratama, Laksmi, & Irawati, 2018; Anggitaningrum, Wibowo, Alimatun, Nakhriyah, & Albiansyah, 2021). In defining academic writing, Hartley (2008) describes academic writing or scientific text contains a precise, impersonal, structured, and objective manner, and it uses referencing system and a third-person point of view. In addition, Oshima & Hogue (2007) add that academic writing is formal, and it is different from personal and creative writing in which they use slang, contractions, and incomplete sentences. Cargill & O'Connor (2009) state that writing an academic research paper has different rhetorical

styles, norms, conventions, and standards than any other writing purpose.

Regarding the concept of academic writing, it has been said that in the context of University level which the writing requirement is higher than other education levels, makes the EFL students be more anxious and insecure in taking writing courses (Ekmekçi, 2018; Holmes, Waterbury, Baltrinic, & Davis, 2018; Martinez, Kock, & Cass, 2011). Furthermore, Sabti, et al. 2019) elaborate that this issue happens because "its intricate nature coupled with the lack of vocabulary in the writers' repertoire and the handicap in their grammatical knowledge of the English language (p. 1). Thus, writing anxiety becomes one of the main concerns at the university level (Martinez et al., 2011). Anxiety in general deals with the mental condition of an individual toward something which can affect them in a positive or negative impact; and this issue is significant in the language learning process (Miri & Joia, 2018). In the same vein, Kara (2013) claims, "Anxiety is one of the factors that affect the process of learning" (p. 104). In the context of writing anxiety, Güneyli (2016) notes that writing anxiety is a response to the writing process; it can be "appears as motivating and sometimes preventing (p. 165). Wynne, Guo, & Wang (2014) describe writing anxiety as a state that can make individuals stressed during the writing process. As a response to this issue, some research has been done.

Due to a grown number of available literatures on writing anxiety and the issue which have been explained above, the writers are interested in doing a review on this issue that the writers believe is still limited in numbers. There have been similar reviews in the prior year such as Shehzadi & Krishnasamy (2018). Yet, this review focuses on a global context which is a mixture of ESL and EFL learners' perceptions taken from mixed education levels. Another prior study is conducted by Wang & Zeng (2020), who have deciphered some literature on writing anxiety researches in the China context. However, the relevant literatures have been taken in various years including the ones published in the ten years back such as in 2005 and 2010. To date, there have been no documented reviews that focus on reviewing this issue specifically in Indonesian context. Furthermore, despite quite numbers of available researches in Indonesian context, this review distinctively focuses on the setting of English department students in university level.

Finally, this review aims to: firstly, obtain a keen understanding from the results of available literatures in the sense of the latest five years. It is significant for other scholars or even policymakers in Indonesia to take this review's results into account consideration or to cover unrevealed crucial points of view to add or to complement this issue. Secondly, to imply some further points to the context nationally and locally. Thirdly, to offer some beneficial suggestions for future teaching writing practices and future studies.

II. METHOD

The research has been done qualitatively in nature by using the scoping method. It is compatible with this research purpose as Arksey & O'Malley (2005) describe that a scoping method aims to "collecting, evaluating and presenting research evidence". Daudt, Van Mossel, & Scott (2013), in addition, define that scoping studies intent to draw literatures on a particular topic which provides a broad opportunity to identify the key concepts, research gaps, and types, sources of evidence to inform practice and policymaking development. To meet this research purpose, some guidelines in selecting the research are formulated as follow: 1) the researches article publication must be in the range of 2017 to 2021; 2) it is an empirical-research based article; 3) the topic is writing anxiety and its sub-related topic; 4) the subject of research is English college students in Indonesia; 5) it is taken in reliable portals such as ERIC, Research gate, Science Direct, and Indonesia accredited journals (SINTA). After collecting the available researches which is suitable to those criteria above, a keen reading is done to gain points and infer it to the local context, particularly to Tadris Bahasa Inggris students in Kabupaten Mempawah. It was further presented and elaborated descriptively in the sections below.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Among many available studies on the topic of "writing anxiety" of English major college students, there are thirteen pieces of research in the range of the year 2017 until 2020 which is appropriate to the guidelines. Yet, as far as the writers have explored, there is no research found on writing anxiety in the current year (2021) which is situated in Indonesian university students. This finding is presented in the table below.

TABLE I
RESEARCHES ON ENGLISH COLLEGE STUDENTS'
WRITING ANXIETY

No	Research found	Year
1	2	2017
3	2	2018
5	4	2019
8	5	2020

Referring to the table above, there is only one research found located in West Kalimantan. Moreover, the diversity of the research designs used can be seen as follow: 1) Quantitative descriptive is the most used research design (Wahyuni & Umam, 2017; Arindra & Ardi, 2020; Aunurrahman, 2019; Hartono & Maharani, 2020; Jawas, 2019; Masriani, Mukhaiyar, & Wahyuni, 2018; Rehelmi, 2020; Salikin, 2019; Sundari & Febriyanti, 2017; Aglina et al., 2020), 2) Survey design comes as second most used (Delvi Wahyuni, Witri Oktavia, & Leni Marlina, 2019; Syarifudin, 2020), and 3) Mixed method is used in one reviewed literature Apart from these researches, there is one research in 2019 (Toba, Noor, & Sanu, 2019) and two researches in 2020 (Liestyana, et. al, 2020; Mulyono, et. al. 2020) which have been eliminated. It is because the setting is not following the above criteria which those two eliminated pieces of research focus is the students from all education levels. Then, the writers believe the discussion,

implication, and conclusion of those three pieces of research are not suitable to the essence of this current review's purposes.

Therefore, from these thirteen pieces of research listed in the table above, elaborated description is presented into these sub-points: 1. types and level of writing anxiety, 2. factor or causes of writing anxiety, 3. strategies to cope with the writing anxiety, 4. Implications.

A. Types and Level of Writing Anxiety

The phenomenon of writing anxiety has been vigorously investigated by many scholars for ten years back until recently. This includes the investigation of types and levels of writing anxiety. Several reports in the table above, ten out of twelve researches have investigated these two issues. Most of these nine reports have recorded that cognitive anxiety is the most experienced anxiety type (Wahyuni & Umam, 2017; Kusumaningputri, Ningsih, & Wisasongko, 2018; Salikin, 2019; Hartono & Maharani, 2020; Syarifudin, 2020) and two of the studies have revealed that writing anxiety level of students are moderate (Wahyuni et al., 2019; Salikin, 2019; Arindra & Ardi, 2020;) and low (Aunurrahman, 2019). Cognitive anxiety is a state of mind psychologically when they feel fear, worry, and have negative concerns of results or others' viewpoint (Y. S. Cheng, 2004). Thus, Kusumaningputri et al., (2018, p. 360) note that cognitive anxiety has a great influence on the interference of students' English composition writing. When students are overloaded to write without language and content errors, they become more anxious.

Furthermore, another important finding from Arindra & Ardi (2020) has revealed a contrary result which is somatic anxiety as the dominant type faced by the students. Cheng (2004a) believes that somatic anxiety includes feeling tense and nervous, blank, confused thinking, trembling, feeling panic, cold, and heartbeat. It is in line with what Arindra & Ardi (2020) have described in their study that the students mostly found their hearts pounding faster. They start to tremble, go blank, feel panic, freeze up and feel tense. This somatic anxiety is even worse when they cannot double-check their work. They only focus on finishing their writing during the provided time (p. 83).

Interestingly, a major writing anxiety scale used by those researchers (Wahyuni & Umam, 2017; Kusumaningputri et al., 2018; Hartono & Maharani, 2020; Syarifudin, 2020) is a questionnaire scale developed by Cheng (2004), while a minor scale used (Aunurrahman, 2019) is Daly and Miller (1975). A possible explanation for this might be that the most scale used is favourable by a number of scholars and it has been said to be a proven reliable and valid instrument (Wahyuni & Umam, 2017; Kusumaningputri et al., 2018; Hartono & Maharani, 2020). On the other hand, the minor scale used is chosen might be because the participants benefitted more from the scale. Moreover, the research also claims that anxiety is not an obstacle for the students to have a good performance in writing; in fact, it motivates them to learn (Aunurrahman, 2019, p. 116). It is in line with Jawas (2019, p. 743), he claims that having moderate or high writing anxiety is not a sign of having a poor writing ability; it is a condition that arises in the course of the writing process for it possibly can be cured when it has treated properly.

B. Factors or Causes of Writing Anxiety

Another theme that has been obtained is about factors or causes of writing anxiety. It is found that six of them focus on this issue. Wahyuni & Umam (2017) in their study, reveal that linguistic difficulty is the most dominant factor in writing anxiety. It reflects that the students depend on translating Bahasa Indonesia to English when they write; in sum "they do not think in English directly" (p. 122). This result supports a finding from Wahyuni et al., (2019), who report that the topic choice and linguistic difficulties hold a high percentage as the causal factors in writing anxiety (p, 129). Additionally, Syarifudin (2020) also reports the same factor which is linguistic difficulties as the dominant one; it has more than 80 percent or it is more than half of participants experience these factors. Further causes are insufficient vocabulary mastery and sentence structure.

On the other hand, Kusumaningputri, Ningsih, & Wisasongko (2018) have suggested that insufficient writing practice is the first rank to cause writing anxiety for the students while linguistic difficulties come as the second. This fact occurs because the students who have higher anxiety do not know how to put their thought well in written form while those who are identified to have lower anxiety describe that they practice writing in English outside the class in any form include social media. Making it as a good effort and habit gradually, they feel more confident to write.

Unlike four studies which have been described in the previous paragraph, Jawas (2019), by using a variance questionnaire, have categorized the factors into 1) Prompt leading questions; 2) Essay writing process; 3) Type of essay assignment; 4) Classroom atmosphere (p. 736). The researcher further indicates that in-class writing assignments and on-time submission in the in-class assignment which belong to category number three have been indicated as the most potential anxiety factors. In the fourth category, the lecturer's teaching style also contributes to increasing the students' anxiety.

C. Strategies to reduce writing anxiety

There are variations of the way researchers decode the writing strategy which further elaborate as follows. Kusumaningputri et al., (2018) have suggested some strategies for teacher to help reduce students' anxiety in writing. They are: modelling a good writing product to familiarize them about writing techniques; giving feedback during the writing process which focuses on coherence manner, not looking at the students' mistakes in grammar; training them to write on time by giving sufficient instruction and prompt vocabulary or topics.

Using a questionnaire originally from Raoofi, et.al, (2017), Masriani et al., (2018) have unravelled that the majority of the students use affective strategy and metacognitive strategy to reduce their writing anxiety. Respectively, it covers how they motivate themselves, control their emotion and attitude toward the given task; and their awareness of the writing process in setting the goal, scheduling, and planning their writing. However, it is said that the students with lower anxiety are more capable of

using metacognitive strategy because they have enough knowledge of English writing concepts.

In the following year, adapting the writing strategy inventory by Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004), Delvi Wahyuni, Witri Oktavia, & Leni Marlina, in 2019, have reported that among the strategies namely preparation, positive-thinking, relaxation, peer-seeking, and avoidance, preparation and positive-thinking have been identified as the dominant strategy used by the students. In the same year, Jawas (2019) has used an open-ended questionnaire to identify the students' strategies in dealing with anxiety when they have an essay assignment. The research has deciphered that when the students are assigned to write an essay that is time-limited and demanding, the strategies they use to reduce their anxiety are: outlining the essay, shaping the background of the topic given, brainstorming the topic in groups inside or outside the class, exploring more supporting references, taking a break and pause, discussing the obstacles they have with peers or lecturers, and always trying to stay on-track and serene.

D. Implications

This review of the thirteen pieces of research highlights some important implications that can be considered as a helpful direction for the future practices of teaching writing at the college level, future studies, and policymakers. Firstly, it concerns the affective factors and cognitive factors in writing. Affective factors in foreign language learning deal with emotional or internal determinants such as personality, anxiety, self-efficacy, attitudes, motivation, self-esteem, etc (Khaleghi, 2016; Zabihi, 2017; Zayed & Al-Ghamdi, 2019). Cognitive factors, as Lu (2010) has described, it covers the knowledge of the target language, the way individuals use writing strategies, and working memory capacity. These two factors correlate to the phenomenon of cognitive anxiety which has appeared as the majority of anxiety types from the reviewed literature above. Moreover, it has been claimed that both factors are the two crucial determinants that can affect learners' writing process, avoidance and writing product (Pratama et al., 2018; Zabihi, 2017). In support of this claim, Kormos (2012) has further described that working memory is responsible in the writing process such as allocation of attention on accuracy; organization on content, coherence, and cohesion. Therefore, refer to these considerations; these variables account in both national and local context should be undertaken in the future. Deeper attention also can be concentrated on the majority of cognitive anxiety.

Secondly, it is all about teachers' side covering the influence of teacher or lecturer's comments, feedback, or evaluation toward students' writing anxiety. Miri & Joia (2018) have pointed out that positive comment was given by teachers also gives positive attitude for students in doing their writing process. In terms of teaching style, Jawas (2019) has noted that this variable can affect students' anxiety as well. Jawas further describes that this issue also relates to how the teacher or lecturer should create a light-tension atmosphere during the class which can be beneficial for students. Although this issue mostly has been demonstrated as the least causal factor in increasing students writing anxiety (Subekti, 2018; Delvi Wahyuni, Witri

Oktavia, & Leni Marlina, 2019; Jawas, 2019; Kusumaningputri, Ningsih, & Wisasongko, 2018; Syarifudin, 2020), the geographical and characteristics differences should not be neglected. As it has been noted that this issue has been considered as the least because the condition and time-constraint of when the research takes place are not demanding (Delvi Wahyuni et al., 2019). To sum up, refer to geographical and characteristics variety explained before, teaching styles, the relationship between teacher and students, giving feedback or evaluation toward students' writing is particularly encouraging variables which can be better examined specifically in the local context.

Thirdly, it regards linguistic competence and cultural competence. It is unsurprising fact that most Indonesian students including at the college level have difficulty in English acquisition and refer to this English skill as a difficult skill to master (Anggitaningrum et al., 2021; Wahyuni & Umam, 2017). These topics have been raised based on the findings of the thirteen reviewed literature above which has indicated that linguistic competence (grammar, sentence structure, syntax, etc.) is the most responsible factor in leading students writing anxiety (Delvi Wahyuni et al., 2019; Hartono & Maharani, 2020; Kusumaningputri et al., 2018; Salikin, 2019; Syarifudin, 2020; Wahyuni & Umam, 2017). Taking this finding as consideration, another variable such as cultural competence is believed to have a strong relation to the linguistic competence of students, in this case, Indonesian English major college students. Research has been conducted by Hermanto (2008), which he has asserted that there is a potential positive influence between linguistic competence and cultural competence. He further describes that linguistic competence refers to communicative competence; while cultural competence refers to "the ability relating to the knowledge about language and its use"; thus, he also claims this competence represents what we call communicative competence. Cultural competence, he claims that the writers must be aware of the target language norms, comprehends well the values and the outlook of the target language to compose a writing piece that meets the discourse regulation to both his home language and target language. In sum, it would be significant to assess the effect, the perception, or even the practice of linguistic competence and cultural competence in English academic writing since such investigation is still rare.

Fourthly, the researchers have been pointed out a variety of strategies to reduce students writing anxiety. Unlike the types of writing anxiety, the researchers have used distinct inventory in obtaining the strategies used by students. The findings indicate that students writing anxiety is mostly affected by the unfamiliarity of the topic given; thus, metacognitive strategy, metacognitive awareness, affective strategy have been found as the most used strategies by the students (Delvi Wahyuni et al., 2019; Jawas, 2019; Kusumaningputri et al., 2018; Masriani et al., 2018). Furthermore, the findings have important implications for teachers to bridge those strategies during the writing process. The findings are also a suggestive link between writing achievement and techniques of teaching writing (Wang & Zeng, 2020) or other language learning-related variables such as the use of rubrics and metacognitive awareness

(Aglina et al., 2020; Arindra & Ardi, 2020) which can be further investigated in the future. Another interesting link also emerges from writing anxiety strategy and personality traits such as one that has been done by Capellan (2017) and Nehiley & Sutherland (1995).

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This paper set out to review the available information on the issue of Indonesian students' writing anxiety at higher education level; thus, this paper is one of the rare reports on writing anxiety from national college students majoring in English department. Therefore, the results of this review conclude: 1) Because of the wide usage of the writing anxiety scale (SLWAI) by those pieces of literature, the results appear to be repetitive. However, this similarity finding can lead future works to explore this issue by correlating it to other significant variables. Furthermore, the level of students writing anxiety is found to be at a moderate to a high level. It indicates that students' English proficiency is one of the causes of this result. In respect to this, teachers are suggested to employ teaching techniques in reducing this anxiety type and to help students in their writing process; 2) the findings also indicate that there is a prominent role of teachers in students' writing anxiety. Moreover, it is suggested for teachers to avoid giving a negative comment, changing comments directly to the writing process, not the mistakes of the product, and stirring less-tension learning atmosphere; 3) another point to emerge from the findings is that it is necessary to confirm the inter-relation between writing anxiety, writing achievement, linguistics competence, and cultural competence in the next future studies; 4) Affective and metacognitive strategy have appeared as the most dominant strategies used by students. These findings correlate to students' awareness of academic writing knowledge and their proficiency in English. Thus, the information of the framework of the concept of academic writing or even essay types needs to be delivered beforehand.

Additionally, the reader should bear in mind that this review is limited by some factors such as the time constraints which affect the selection and collection of pieces of literature. However, the findings and conclusion which have been delivered before hopefully can attract or draw more attention in investigating this topic for helping students to comprehend the academic writing knowledge and to produce good writing as well. Those further works can focus on correlating the issue to other significant variables such as personality traits, teaching techniques, awareness, and affective factors that should be taken in future studies, and practices in teaching writing. Another work can offer to investigate or to describe some prominent media or techniques to lessen students' writing anxiety. Finally, policy-makers are expected to provide an appropriate curriculum to boost students writing skills, and to reduce writing anxiety.

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