

An Analysis of Students' Writing Anxiety and Strategies Used in Writing English Journal Article

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Abstract

Writing is one of the productive skills that English learners must possess in a foreign language. Writing anxiety in compiling and arranging words can occur to students, especially writing journal articles. This study examined (i) the most dominant types of students' writing anxiety, and (ii) the strategies used to overcome their anxiety in writing English journal articles. The participants in this study were 40 students of the English Education study program at IAIN Palangka Raya who had written English journal articles. This study used mixed-methods sequential explanatory approach. The findings of this study indicated cognitive anxiety was the most dominant type of writing anxiety, followed by somatic anxiety, and the last type of writing anxiety was avoidance behavior in writing English journal articles. Furthermore, the strategies used to overcome anxiety in writing were (i) making a self-suggestion to be calm and think positively, (ii) looking for other articles with good credibility as references, and (iii) building simple English writing habits in daily activity. According to this research, the strategy used by students in the cognitive aspect by discussing with the lecturer or some experts about the tips for writing a journal article may be a novel to overcome the anxiety, especially in writing English journal articles.

Keywords

journal article, writing anxiety, writing strategies

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, writing skill is essential for learners in the university. Writing is one productive skill used for expressing something in writing as representing a language with the written symbol. Nunan (2015) stated writing is a mental activity that involves developing ideas and considering how to effectively communicate them in a written text. It means that writing is the ability to express thoughts or ideas in written form and make it a readable format into a text. It uses symbols and signs to represent languages and emotions.

Students of English as Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) generally agree that writing is a difficult task. They must be exposed to certain conditions to write effectively. Thus, writing expresses thoughts using words or contact in which the meaning of the sign or symbol may be deduced from its appearance. Students at university require and employ writing for several purposes, including interacting and sharing knowledge, and facilitating learning process comprehension.

Writing is a comprehensive activity that allows authors to investigate and realize their ideas and thoughts. Writing enhances thought and learning because it encourages communication and allows for reflection. Writing well is also seen as essential to success in various careers. Raoofi, Binandeh, and Rahmani (2017) stated that writing is one of the most important skills for students to improve their writing performance and get a better career.

Writing a journal article is a complex task, especially in English because there are specific rules to follow when writing an academic journal article. According to Whitaker (2009) there are ten components in writing an academic paper: clear objective, audience interference, clear viewpoint, focused on one aspect, rational organization, significant support, clear and concise explanations, efficient use of research, appropriate APA, and writing style. These elements are likely to cause anxiety in journal writers, particularly those new to producing an English journal article. Therefore, Quvanch and Kew (2022) stated that it has to be structured, logical, integrated and well-structured as an important components in writing. Phuket and Othman (2015) addressed that writing is a difficult task for mastering, especially for individuals coming from an EFL/ESL background. However, students' difficulties in writing may be overcome if they are interested in writing and willing to put in the effort to enhance their writing (Sabti, Md Rashid, Nimehchisalem, & Darmi, 2019). In the context of writing journal article, most students who are learning EFL, experience significant challenges (Salma, 2015).

Anxiety can positively or negatively impact someone's performance (Sabti et al., 2019). Anxiety is an issue that can affect a writer's performance (Kurniasih, 2017). It has a significant impact on EFL students' writing skills. According to Rudiyanto (2017) for many language learners, anxiety contributes to the difficulty of learning a foreign language. While most of it is thought to be one of the primary hurdles in the language process, a little anxiety is occasionally necessary for learners' focus and correctness during the writing process.

Writing in English is an essential language skill to master to communicate effectively in the globalization era. Anxiety when writing an English journal article is a case that possibly happens. According to Kotzé (2007), in writing an academic article, the author must adjust a certain provision, academic department, or a certain study leader based on the framework, principles, and examples presented in an article that has been published in a leading academic journal. Long before the first word or letter is written or typed, the success or failure of academic work is already established.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Anxiety is a normal psychological state characterized by feelings of worry and behaviors such as nervousness, dread, and lack of confidence (Abrar & Humaira, 2020; Fareed, Khan, & Akhtar, 2021; Gibriel, 2019). Anxiety is defined by the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online as the sense of being extremely concerned about something. Anxiety in learning a foreign language refers to a person's great concern about their new language. Anxiety is a momentary concern brought on by a particular situation, whereas typical anxiety is a person's or student's lifetime propensity to feel anxious.

Anxiety can interfere in some situations, such as language classroom exams. In this case, the relationship between anxiety and language learning has piqued the curiosity of various scholars interested in anxiety-related research. Anxiety can heighten students' awareness and alertness, helping them avoid repeating the same mistakes while studying the second language (L2) or a foreign language. According to Nugroho and Ena (2021), writing anxiety has a significant impact in students' negative effects on writing development and writing acquisition.

Three types of anxiety are associated with writing: somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and avoidance anxiety. Somatic refers initially to body language, behavior, and physical capabilities. The researchers utilized some concerns for somatic anxiety based on Zhang (2011) and Rezaei and Jafari (2014), such as the students feeling empty, panicked, or sweating when they start work on English writing composition. Students start to feel tremble or sweating when they should write English under time constraints. The students feeling freeze up, rigid, and nervous when the teacher assigns them to write English compositions. The second definition of cognitive is a psychological action or process through which the brain acquires information. According to Cheng (2004), cognitive anxiety is a mental disease characterized by negative assumptions, performance preoccupation, and apprehension over the beliefs of others.

Based on the prior explanation, this study adopts some issues for cognitive anxiety, such as students feeling worried when they have to write an English assignment. When the teacher checks students' assignment, they feel fearful when their work is chosen as a sample to be taught. Rezaei and Jafari (2014) found that students are often worry while writing in English, and feel anxious and nervous while writing in Iranian. Students who have attempted to study a foreign language usually exhibit avoidance behaviors.

Students should avoid writing in a language other than their mother tongue or a foreign language when writing. Students look for every opportunity to write English compositions outside class (Rezaei & Jafari, 2014). They frequently do not use English when writing English or compositions in English (Pratiwi, 2021). In addition, students often choose to write in English on their initiative. Fear, a lack of information, and self-confidence are all prominent causes of writing anxiety in students (Wahyuni & Umam, 2017).

According to Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004), three kinds of anxiety coping strategies are affective, cognitive, and behavioral. The affective strategy primarily concerns the unfavorable instinctive link between the classroom and anxiety and physiological responsiveness. The affective strategy primarily concerns the unfavorable instinctive link between the classroom and anxiety and physiological responsiveness.

Anxiety can be reduced by regulating physical responses to stress (Russell, 2020; Torres, Arrastia-Chisholm, & Tackett, 2020; Toyama & Yamazaki, 2021). In addition, employing Systematic Desensitization Treatment (SDT) is also suggested to treat the anxiety (Pile, Williamson, Saunders, Holmes, & Lau, 2021; Skolnick & Paul, 182). This is because students are taught how to relax so that they may use this method to lessen their anxiety in class. Wytykowska, Fajkowska, and Domaradzka (2021) also reported that cognitive strategy is associated with thought disruptions, the leading cause of anxiety. Moreover, a behavioral technique that alters their perspective on language learning is essential to address this issue. Practicing and receiving substantial instruction in composition writing outside of class is one of the most crucial measures for lowering anxiety. To coping their anxiety, students should commit to substantial training and practice. For instance, students who regularly practice their writing will perform better than those who never do so.

Anxiety is a typical symptom that humans can experience when a person starts to feel worried, anxious, or uncomfortable about something that might occur. Anxiety in writing has correlated to perform well on English writing examinations and in careers that require writing (Bradley, Quigley, & Bailey, 2021; Reynolds & Kao, 2021). Writing is a complex phenomenon and a challenge for students writing in a language other than their first language (Dobrić et al., 2021; Vu & Le, 2022). Therefore, the researchers were interested to find out dominant types of writing anxiety students experience when writing English academic articles and to analyse the strategies used to overcome the writing anxiety.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a mixed-method approach to determine the phenomena that occur in terms of writing anxiety. According to Creswell (2002), mixed-method research is a study in which the researcher processes data-relevant information using qualitative and quantitative methods, integrates findings, and draws conclusions. The explanatory sequential mixed method is applied in this study. The explanatory sequential mixed method is an approach that refers to a quantitative foundation followed by qualitative

data. This approach did not compare quantitative and qualitative data, but the qualitative data supported the quantitative data.

Data was collected over a period of time in two phases based on the objectives of this study. The quantitative data was first collected and analyzed by the researchers. The qualitative data was then collected in the study's second phase and compared to the results of the first quantitative phase. The quantitative data included the results of the first research question, which were obtained through a questionnaire. Meanwhile, the qualitative data was used to answer the second research question through the interviews. This method was created to help the researcher gain a deeper understanding of writing anxiety in research participants.

There were 40 students of the English education study program of IAIN Palangka Raya who had written English journal articles, chosen by purposive sampling technique as the subjects of this study. The researchers used a questionnaire based on Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) developed by Cheng (2004). SLWAI is an instrument that assesses how anxious a student is when writing in a second language. This questionnaire has three subscales: somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and avoidance behavior anxiety. The questionnaire follows 5 Five-point Likert response scales ranging as 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neither agree), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree). SLWAI has a maximum score of 110 and a minimum score of 22. The questionnaire was adapted to comprehend the items and provide accurate responses for the participants. The questionnaire was first pilot-tested on 20 English education study program students at IAIN Palangka Raya and then analyzed using exploratory factor analysis, revealing optimal interpretability. The result showed just 21 valid items on the questionnaire, and an item was invalid. Therefore, the researchers just adapted 21 items from the SLWAI questionnaire. The Cronbach's Alpha of the Inventory was 0.922, within an acceptable range of reliability. Cronbach's Alpha is higher than 0.60 and is acceptable in social sciences.

The interview aimed to explore students' strategies to overcome their writing anxiety in writing English journal articles. This study conducted an interview to examine about students' strategies for overcoming the writing anxiety when writing English academic article. The interview could be a communication process for researchers and information sources to explore data in a word view to reveal the meaning contained in the research topic. The researchers used a semi-structured interview to collect data from this study's research subjects, including open-ended questions and a discussion with the interviewee. The interview questions in this study were created based on each type of SLWAI questionnaire results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers collected the first data using a questionnaire to answer the first research question. The researchers adapted 21 items of the SLWAI questionnaire for collecting the data. The results revealed that three types of writing anxiety in writing English journal articles are due to students in the English education study program of

IAIN Palangka Raya. Cognitive anxiety was the most dominant type of writing anxiety that the students experienced, then followed by somatic and avoidance behavior anxiety types. It can be seen in the following table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive SLWAI result of somatic anxiety type

No.	Items	Mean
1	I feel my heart pounding when I write an English journal article under time constraint.	3.10
2	My mind often goes blank when I start to work on an English journal article.	2.70
3	I tremble or perspire when I write English journal article under time pressure.	2.83
4	My thoughts become jumbled when I write English journal article under time constraint.	2.93
5	I often feel panic when I write English journal article under time constraint.	2.95
6	I freeze up when unexpectedly asked to write English journal article.	2.55
7	I usually feel my whole body rigid and tense when I write English journal article.	2.38
		2.77

According to the mean score in each item in the aspect of somatic anxiety, it can be concluded that the students mostly felt heart pounding when they wrote English journal articles under time constraint. Only a few students usually felt my whole body rigid and tense when writing English journal articles. It also showed that the level of somatic anxiety type is low to moderate, with an average score of 2.77.

When you start to write your academic article and your mind goes blank, how do you overcome it?

“To overcome my mind when I got blank, I discusses with my friends about the problem that I face also discusses with the lecturer.”

What will you do to overcome your anxiety when you feel your body tense while writing your academic article under time constrain?

“To overcome when I’m getting body tense while writing, I tried to be calm and think positive. I also summarized the contents of the article discussion into a solid and precise.”

From the interview as the qualitative phase of somatic anxiety, the research subject said that he tried to be calm and thought positively, and overcame the anxiety when writing an English journal article under time constraints. Then, discussion with some friends and lecturer couldn also help overcome the writing anxiety. Feeling heart pounding mostly happens when writing English journal articles. Thus, giving self-suggestion to be calm and think positive may be a strategy of somatic anxiety type. It can be seen in the following table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive SLWAI result of cognitive anxiety type

No.	Items	Mean
1	While writing in English, I'm nervous at all.	2.73
2	While writing English journal article, I feel worried and uneasy if I know they will be evaluated.	3.03
3	I am worry that my English journal article are a lot worse than others.	3.03
4	If my English journal article is to be evaluated, I would worry about getting a very poor grade.	3.15
5	I'm afraid that other students would deride my English journal article if they read it.	2.40
6	I am worry at all about what other people would think of my English journal article.	2.86
7	I'm afraid of my English journal article being chosen as a sample to be discussed in class.	2.40
8	I'm afraid at all that my English journal article would be rated as very poor.	3.08
		2.83

According to the mean score in each item in the aspect of cognitive anxiety, it can be concluded that the students mostly felt worried about getting a very poor grade if their English journal article is to be evaluated. Only a few students felt afraid that other students would deride their English journal article if they read it and being chosen as a sample to be discussed in class. It also showed that the level of cognitive anxiety type is low to moderate, with an average score of 2.83.

When you feel worried that your academic article is a lot worse than others, what will you do to overcome it?

“To overcome when I felt worried if my journal article will be a lot worse than others, I read some the other articles that has a good credibility as a reference.”

When you are afraid that your academic article would be rated as very poor, how is your strategy to overcome it?

“The strategy that I used when I felt afraid if my journal article will be rated as very poor, I would ask a lecturer or the other expert that can give me a solution for making my journal article is going to be better than before.”

From the interview as the qualitative phase of cognitive anxiety, the research subject said that asking the lecturer or some experts for tips on writing a journal article will probably be a solution when she felt afraid that if her journal article will be rated as very poor. Looking forward to the other articles that has a good credibility as a reference also be able to overcome writing anxiety. Feeling worry mostly happened if students' English journal article would be evaluated and they got low grades. Thus, asking the lecturer or the other experts may be a strategy of cognitive anxiety type.

Looking for a good reference can also be a solution in overcoming writing anxiety. It is shown in the following table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive SLWAI result of avoidance behavior anxiety type

No.	Items	Mean
1	I rarely choose to write down my thoughts in English.	2.55
2	I usually do my best to avoid writing English journal article.	2.43
3	Unless I have no choice, I would not use English to write composition.	2.35
4	I would do my best to excuse myself if asked to write English journal article.	2.08
5	I unusually seek every possible chance to write English journal article outside of class.	2.58
6	Whenever possible, I would not use English to write journal article.	2.15
		2.35

According to the mean score in each items in the aspect of avoidance behavior anxiety, it can be concluded that the students mostly felt unusually seek every possible chance to write English journal article outside of class. Only a few students felt they did their best to excuse themselves if asked to write an English journal article. It also showed that the level of avoidance behavior anxiety type is low to moderate, with an average score of 2.35.

When you try to avoid writing your academic article by doing other activity you like, what do you do to overcome with it?

“I made a timeline target to finish my journal article, it’s a good choice for me to do not avoid writing journal article and using time as well as possible.”

When you often to mix your writing with Bahasa, what is your strategy to overcome it?

“The strategy to overcome mixing Bahasa in writing journal article, it can start with built a habit such as getting used to writing simple things using English for the daily activity.”

From the interview as the qualitative phase of somatic anxiety, the research subject said that making a timeline target can overcome to do not avoid writing journal articles. Then built a habit such as getting used to writing simple things using English for the daily activity is a strategy to overcome the mixing language in writing English journal article. Every possible chance, the students felt unusually seek of chance writing English journal article outside of the class that mostly happened on students. Thus, built a habit such as getting used to writing simple things using English for the daily activity be able to overcome avoidance behavior anxiety type. Total average score of students’ anxiety in writing English journal articles is shown in the following table 4.

Table 4. Total score of writing anxiety types

Number of Participants (N)	Total	Types of Writing Anxiety		
		Somatic	Cognitive	Avoidance Behavior
40	Score	777	899	565
	Mean	19.43	12.48	14.13

According to the total average score of students' anxiety in writing English journal articles based on each type of somatic, cognitive, and avoidance behavior anxiety. The researcher collected the data by using the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) as a questionnaire. The questionnaire results showed that cognitive anxiety type was the most common in writing English journal articles, with an average score of 22.48. Then followed by the type of somatic anxiety with an average score of 19.43 and the least common type of anxiety was avoidance behavior with an average score of 14.13 experienced by the English education study program students at IAIN Palangka Raya.

The results revealed that the three types of writing anxiety in writing English academic articles are due to students at English education study program of IAIN Palangka Raya. Cognitive anxiety was the most dominant type of writing anxiety that was experienced by the students, then followed by somatic and avoidance behavior anxiety types. The result of this study supports the statement of Quvanch and Kew (2022), Pratiwi (2021), Wahyuni and Umam (2017), and Rezaei and Jafari (2014), who argued that the most common type of writing anxiety is cognitive anxiety types. It shows that these EFL students were mainly influenced by external factors such as high pressure from negative evaluation and concerns about weak performance and tests. Also, students experienced cognitive anxiety due to the pressure of writing tests and assessments.

On the other hand, Ekmekçi (2018) with similar study showed that somatic anxiety is the dominant type of writing anxiety. Cognitive anxiety is related to being worried about others' perceptions, negative expectations, and having prejudices against writing in a foreign language. However, Prasetyaningrum, Nazri, and Asrobi (2021) revealed that avoidance behavior was the dominant type of writing anxiety. Avoidance anxiety is a type of anxiety that the students keep away from writing.

Based on the interview result, which is classified based on writing anxiety types, in the somatic anxiety aspect, giving a suggestion to be calm and think positive, and overcome the anxiety when writing an English journal article under time constraints. It showed that the strategy used to overcome writing anxiety in writing an English journal article of somatic aspect was in line with the affective approach to coping with language anxiety in the classroom.

While in the aspect of cognitive anxiety, discussing with the lecturer or some experts the tips for writing an English journal article will probably be a solution when she felt afraid that her journal article would be rated as very poor. Looking for other

articles with good credibility as a reference can also be able to overcome writing anxiety. It showed that the strategy used in the cognitive aspect is not following cognitive approach in dealing with anxiety in the classroom. Thus, the strategy used by students in the cognitive aspect may be novel in coping with anxiety, especially in writing English journal articles.

Furthermore, in the avoidance behavior anxiety aspect, making a timeline target can overcome to do not avoid writing journal articles. Then, building a habit such as getting used to writing simple things using English for the daily activity can be a strategy to overcome when often mixing language in writing English journal articles. It showed that the strategy used in the avoidance behavior aspect was in line with the behavioral approach in coping with language anxiety in the classroom. To conclude, the findings from different studies showed that learners with various social, cultural, geographical, and knowledge backgrounds experienced writing anxiety differently.

CONCLUSION

The current research results revealed that cognitive anxiety is the most dominant type that usually occurs in writing English journal articles then followed somatic and avoidance behavior anxiety type. There are yield variations that differ from the dominant type of anxiety from previous studies. This can happen because it is influenced by various aspects such as the environment, differences in the geographical location of the research, and others.

This study also reveal several strategies to overcome students' anxiety in writing English journal articles, namely (1) making a self-suggestion to be calm and think positive about themselves, (2) looking for other articles that have good credibility as a reference, (3) building a habit of getting used to writing simple things using English for daily activity, (4) discussing with friends or lecturers. The researchers expect that the strategies revealed in this study can be used as a way to reduce writing anxiety.

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