

# Novice English Foreign Language (EFL) Writers' Interferences in Multicultural Class: Feelings of Anxious to the Writing Performance

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## ABSTRACT

In writing academically, EFL students experience different levels of anxiety for each EFL student. This study aims to measure the general level of writing anxiety experienced by EFL students. In addition, it will specifically measure whether there is an influence on the level of writing anxiety of EFL students with several factors, such as gender, length of study, and region. There are other things to look for, which are related to the type of writing anxiety experienced by EFL students, as well as what factors have a major contribution to this writing anxiety. This study used a quantitative approach by conducting a survey of 58 EFL students divided into 3 academic years, where they took basic writing, intermediate writing, and advanced writing courses. The results show that the level of student anxiety is average, with cognitive anxiety (M=18.93) being the highest among somatic anxiety (M=18.30) and avoidance behavior anxiety (M=17.96). Then, the factor that most influenced EFL students' writing anxiety was the problem of linguistic factors (9.3%), which was then followed by the writing process under constraint (8.5%). However, EFL students did not feel anxious about the writing test and writing assessment which percentage of each issue was 7.3%.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Producing academic writing is essential for EFL learners, while the process requires specific principles and persistent practices (Pritchard, 2008; Quvanch & Na, 2022). They are responsible for having good language structure, the ability to think critically and logically, and a cohesive structure, which is very challenging. Talking about writing ability, someone has a different level of writing ability from someone else. The grammar used by adults in writing, for instance, is not viewed as failures as children used (Troike, 2012; Hu, 2016). However, limited ability comes writing awareness, which results in the emergence of negative emotions and perceptions in the writing process. EFL learners' feelings of anxiety when using the target language in writing will indirectly affect their feelings and learning performance (Sadiq, 2017). Then, the impact is the poor writing performance of EFL learners, which is not expected in this case.

This anxiety about writing is spread across almost all proficiency levels, both EFL learners who are beginners or those who have experience with a moderate level of apprehension (Baez, 2005; Horwitz, 2001; Liu, 2018). The low EFL learners' anxiety levels are related to essay writing, while their high anxiety levels are related to their passion for writing (Cheng, 2004; Horwitz 2001). Apart from this, other anxiety factors come from self-motivation and knowledge of writing, which in this case includes the topic of knowledge and linguistic knowledge (Badrasawi et. al., 2016; Erdogan, 2018; Zhang, 2019).

Another classification of anxiety about writing is teachers' or peer evaluation (Alfiansyah et. al., 2017). Some EFL learners may feel overwhelmed or uncomfortable when they are compared to others. Next, they may also feel afraid of failing in the writing test, where at the time of the exam, their writing results will be evaluated using a certain rubric. The accuracy of grammar in the language learning process, for instance, aims so that learners can use it for better communication purposes (Ahangari and Barghi, 2012; Marashi, 2014; Sioco & Vera, 2018). In producing good sentences, EFL uses grammar to be meaningful and acceptable (Ahangari and Barghi, 2012). Students learn grammar as the basic concept of English so that they can acquire abstract and decontextualized language. However, the grammatical error refers to the language accuracy, which is then compared to the language fluency, then the importance of using correct grammar shifts the level of needs.

In a multicultural class, the anxiety experienced by students will vary from one to another. Feelings of anxiety occur in the learning process because of the disruptive behavior of classmates, thus making student performance worse (Abdullah, et. al., 2022). While learning a foreign language, EFL learners lose the immersion environment, they do not have a strong drive, and they get restless and embarrassed when they make mistakes. In the process of writing, students struggle to organize their ideas to produce compositions, although it is not often that they make mistakes by using incorrect grammar. Since the EFL's first languages (L1) are different, the use and application of linguistics branches also vary regarding the mistakes or errors. It is more unpredictable in a multicultural atmosphere, in which the students come from different ethnicities and different first language acquisition. Then, with multilingualism on the rise, learning foreign languages (FLs) is so common these days, that it is often taken for granted. Yet, regardless of how ordinary it might seem, mastering a new language is and always will be an immensely complex task bringing back them to the feelings of anxiety (Sokip, 2022; Banditvilai & Cullen, 2018).

Furthermore, the classification of anxiety is divided into three categories, somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and avoidance behavior (Cheng, 2004; Rudiyanto, 2017; Wahyuni & Umam, 2017). When EFL learners feel panic, they cannot write anything down because they cannot find any ideas in that condition. Anxiety because of too high expectations from the writing that is made is also very influential on writing performance (Rezaei, 2017). And the scariest thing is when EFL learners have a type of anxiety related to avoidance behavior, where they tend to avoid anything related to writing. The three types of anxiety are closely related to the emotional, mental, or psychological aspects of EFL learners in writing. Reviewing some of the existing facts and factors that influence the anxiety of the writing learning process, the following are questions that arise for later analysis.

- (1) what is the level of writing anxiety of EFL students?
- (2) what is the relationship between writing anxiety and EFL students' background (gender, year of study, and region)?
- (3) what are the types of writing anxiety faced by EFL students?
- (4) what are the factors that contribute to EFL students' writing anxiety?

## 2. METHOD

### Research design and sample

A quantitative approach by using a survey design was applied to answer three research questions related to the levels, types, and factors of writing anxiety of EFL students. There were 75 students taking writing subjects became the participants in this research. They were students in year 1 (25 participants) who took basic writing, students in year 2 (25 participants) who took intermediate writing in previous semesters, and students in year 4 (25 participants) who took advanced writing. These participants were undergraduate EFL learners from the English Department in one of the Teacher Training Institutes in Indonesia.

### Research Instrument

To answer the problems that have been formulated, we use a questionnaire that has previously been carried out by a pilot study of 15 students. This was done to see whether the questionnaire was reliable to be filled in by the participants. The questionnaire was adapted and developed by Cheng (2004) and Rezaei and Jafari (2014). There were 22 items adopted in the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI), which was developed by (Cheng, 2004). It was related to the level of awareness of EFL students and described the type of writing anxiety, namely somatic anxiety, and avoidance behavior. We use 5-Likert's scale with the following breakdown, 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= uncertain, 4= agree, and 5= strongly disagree. These 22 items in SLAWI were used to answer RQ1 related to the writing anxiety level of students, and answered RQ2 which related to the student's background, and to answer RQ3 which related to the type of writing anxiety in EFL students. The last, RQ4 was analyzed by using 10 items developed by (Rezaei & Jafari, 2014). Those 10 items of the Writing Anxiety Inventory (WAI) were used to find out the factors that contribute to the writing awareness of EFL students.

**Data analysis**

To answer the four Research Questions: RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4, we divided several questionnaire questions according to needs and how to analyze them. To complete RQ1, a descriptive statistical test was used to calculate the mean score of the questionnaire to obtain data on the level of writing anxiety: high level, moderate level, or low level. We counted seven items (1, 4, 7,17,18,21, and 22) which previously had to be reversed because they contained negative statements. Then we categorize the results of the mean score as follows:

Table 1. Category of mean value

Score	Level
Score above 65	High-level anxiety
Score between 50-65	Moderate level anxiety
Score below 50	Low-level anxiety

Then, to find the significance of each relationship between students' EFL background and their writing anxiety, an independent sample t-test, and one-way ANOVA were used. To calculate the significance of gender and writing anxiety, an independent sample t-test was used. One-way ANOVA was used to calculate the significance of writing anxiety as influenced by the year of study and the student's region. The analysis answered RQ2.

The next analysis used a descriptive statistical test again to determine the type of writing anxiety of EFL students (RQ3) by calculating the mean scores of several items. The items were divided into 3 categories, namely cognitive anxiety (1, 3, 7, 9, 14, 20, and 21), somatic anxiety (2, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, and 19), and avoidance-behavior anxiety (4, 5, 10, 12, 16, 18, and 22). Other items such as items 1, 4, 7, 17, 18, 21, and 22 which contain negative statements must be counted reversely which are then added up and added to each category.

The last descriptive statistical test was used to answer RQ4 about factors that contribute to EFL students' writing anxiety. We analyzed these factors from the last 10 items (CWAI) by calculating the percentage and mean score of each item.

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

During the data collection process, namely by distributing questionnaires using the Google form, the answers collected did not match the number of targeted participants. Out of a total of 90 EFL students who were research participants, only 58 participants' answers were collected. The period used to distribute the questionnaire is approximately 2-3 weeks. The presentation of data is divided into several parts, namely the background of EFL students, the writing anxiety level of EFL students, EFL students' type of anxiety, factors that contribute to writing anxiety, and the discussion.

**3.1 EFL students' background**

A descriptive statistics test was run to check EFL students' backgrounds. The analysis of participants' gender illustrated that 13 (22.4%) were males and 45 (77.6%) were female. The majority of the participants were EFL students from year 2 (f=29, percentage=50%) and year 4 (f=21, pct=36.2%). The smallest number of participants obtained in the questionnaire, namely students from year 3 with only 8 participants (13.8%). Judging from the area of origin of the participants, they found 7 islands of their origin. The majority of participants came from Nusa Tenggara, namely 25 people (43.2%). In addition, there were also quite a lot of participants from Java, namely 22 people (37.9%). The others came from Sumatra (f=1, pct=1.7%), Madura (f=1, pct=1.7%), Kalimantan (f=4, pct=6.9%), Ambon (f=4, pct=6.9% ), and Papua (f=1, pct=1.7%). That description of EFL students' background is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. EFL Students background

Factors	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	13	22.4%
	Female	45	77.6%
Year of Study	Year 2	29	50%
	Year 3	8	13.8%
	Year 4	21	36.2%
Region	Sumatera	1	1.7%
	Jawa	22	37.9%
	Madura	1	1.7%
	Kalimantan	4	6.9%
	Nusa Tenggara	25	43.2%
	Ambon	4	6.9%
	Papua	1	1.7%

### 3.2 Writing anxiety level of EFL students

To analyze the anxiety level of EFL students, several questions on SLWAI and all questions on CWAI were analyzed. There are three categories of anxiety levels, namely high level, moderate level, and low level. The results of the analysis illustrate that some EFL students experience a moderate level of anxiety with a total of 39 students (67.2%). There are 14 students (24.2%) who have low levels of anxiety. Unfortunately, only 5 students (8.6%) of the 58 other students have a high level of anxiety. Based on the overall mean ( $M= 54$ ), it could be categorized that the EFL students had moderate level anxiety. The data on the level of anxiety was tabulated in Table 3 below.

Table 3. The anxiety level of students

Anxiety level	Number of Students	Percentage (%)	Min	Max	Mean
High level	5	8.6%	67	74	69.60
Moderate level	39	67.2%	50	64	55.15
Low level	14	24.2%	38	48	44.79
Total	58	100%			
	Overall Mean	54			

### 3.3 The relationship between writing anxiety level and gender

An Independent sample t-test was used to measure the relationship between the writing anxiety of EFL students among different genders. The results of the analysis described that the significance value is 0.743, which was greater than the value  $\alpha= 0.05$ . So it can be concluded that there was a significant difference in writing anxiety between male and female students. The results of the analysis of the relationship between writing anxiety and gender are in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Independent sample t-test analysis of anxiety based on gender

Score		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	Equal variances assumed	,108	,743	-1,553	56	,126	-3,63419	2,33977	-8,32131	1,05294
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,613	20,634	,122	-3,63419	2,25274	-8,32408	1,05571

As shown in Table 4, the significance value ( $p=0.743$ ) is higher than the alpha value ( $\alpha=0.05$ ). So  $H_0$  was rejected. That is, there was a significant difference between writing awareness and gender ( $df=57$ ,  $t=-1.553$ ,  $p> 0.05$ ).

EFL students' writing anxiety and year of study

In analyzing the relationship between writing anxiety of EFL students tested it using one-way ANOVA. It can be seen from the significance value  $p= 0.009$ , where the value was less than  $\alpha=0.005$ . Therefore,  $H_0$  was rejected and it could be concluded that there was no statistically significant difference between writing anxiety and year of study ( $F=1.666$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The data is tabulated in Table 5 below.

Table 5. One-way ANOVA analysis of writing anxiety and year of study

Writing Anxiety Year of study	N	Mean Score	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Year 1	29	51,137	Between Groups	505,288	2	252,644	5,108	,009
Year 2	8	54,250	Within Groups	2720,091	55	49,456		
Year 3	21	57,571	Total	3225,379	57			

EFL students' writing anxiety and students' origin

Based on the obtained result, the significant value ( $p= 0.879$ ) was more than  $\alpha= 0.05$ . Hence, the  $H_0$  was accepted. This means that there is a significant difference in the level of writing anxiety among EFL students in different regions. The result of the analysis is presented in the table below.

Table 6. One-way ANOVA analysis of writing anxiety and students' region

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	143,276	6	23,879	,395	,879
Within Groups	3082,104	51	60,433		
Total	3225,379	57			

### 3.4 EFL students' type of anxiety

To find out the dominant type of writing anxiety, the mean scores of each type of writing anxiety: cognitive, somatic, and avoidance-behavior were analyzed. The type which obtained the highest mean was defined as the dominant writing type of anxiety. Here the descriptive statistic test of writing anxiety is presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7. The means of types of writing anxiety

Types of Anxiety	Numbers of students	Total Score	Mean	Min	Max
Cognitive anxiety	58	2201	18,9741	10	30
Somatic anxiety	58	2123	18.3017	10	33
Avoidance-Behavior anxiety	58	2084	17.9655	10	31

In Table 7, the highest mean score (M= 18.9741) was cognitive anxiety. Somatic anxiety obtained a lower mean score (M= 18.3017), and avoidance-behavior anxiety scored the lowest mean value (17.9655). Thus, it could be mentioned that the cognitive was the dominant type of anxiety.

### 3.5 Factors that contribute to writing anxiety for EFL students

In an analysis of factors that contribute to writing anxiety for EFL students, 10 items were analyzed. Most EFL students were feeling anxious about linguistic problems issue (pct= 9.3%). They also got writing anxiety when they had a writing process under constraint (pct= 8.5%). Surprisingly, they did not feel anxious about getting a writing test (pct= 7.3%). Also, EFL students did not feel anxious with the high frequency of writing assignments (pct= 7.3%). The other factors contributing to writing anxiety are presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Factors that contribute to writing anxiety

No.	Items	Score/item	Percentage
1	Negative comments and evaluation	189	8.1%
2	Writing test	170	7.3%
3	Lack of sufficient English in writing practice	188	8.1%
4	Instruction of English writing	185	7.9%
5	The topic is given by the lecturer	177	7.6%
6	Linguistics problems, such as inadequate mastery of vocabulary, sentence structures, grammatical errors, etc.	215	9.3%
7	Pressure to offer perfect English writing	186	8,0%
8	High frequency of writing assignments	170	7.3%
9	Process of writing under constraints	197	8.5%
10	Low confidence in English writing	186	8.0%

The results regarding the level of writing anxiety reveal that the mean average is 54, which shows a moderate level of writing anxiety. Regarding this problem, Aljafen (2013) considers normal average writing anxiety level. One is the feeling of being naturally motivated to put more effort into improving their performance and becoming better writers. In addition, the level of anxiety can improve students' writing skills and help them produce well-organized writing Ni (2015). This finding is similar to Wahyudi et al (2019) who covered writing anxiety Indonesian context and found that the majority of Indonesian EFL students in their study experienced moderate levels of anxiety. However, the findings of this study are not according to research conducted by Rezaei and Jafari (2014) and Jebreil et al. (2015) which recites high-level writing anxiety among Iranian EFL university students. Moreover, Min and Rahmat (2014) also reported high levels of writing anxiety among students studying at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) influenced their writing performance.

The results show that there is a significant difference in the level of anxiety between men and women. This is supported by Jebreil et al (2015), who found statistically significant results indicating that males experience higher rates. This may be due to the giving of negative comments by the teacher which is a source of writing anxiety in the top ranking Rezaei and Jafari (2014) and Alfiansyah et al. (2017). On the other hand, Rahim et al. (2016) reported that time stress was the most common cause of writing anxiety. It's no wonder that language difficulties are the dominant cause because it requires extra effort and time. In addition, some of the facts above show that Indonesian students experience anxiety due to a lack of experience in writing, a small vocabulary, grammatical errors, and confusion in sentence structure and spelling. This is supported by the statement that the lack of knowledge of the linguistic component is a common challenge faced by EFL learners when they write in English. It even makes them lazy to write because it is difficult for them to express their ideas brilliantly and with good grammar (Wahyuni and Umam, 2017). On the other hand, linguistic components such as sentence structure, grammatical rules, and spelling have always been important instruments in teaching and learning English. EFL students feel anxious when writing compositions because they are not able to deal with these complicated things which results in hampering their writing performance. In this process, the most significant reasons that contribute greatly to writing anxiety are found.

#### 4. CONCLUSION




The findings of this study, show that the level of students' writing anxiety is at an average level ( $M = 54$ ). This shows that their writing anxiety level is not that high. However, of the three aspects measured, including gender, length of study, and region, only length of study did not have a different significance. That is, the EFL students in this study both had writing anxiety even though they had had quite a long writing experience. Meanwhile, in the gender and regional aspects, significant differences were found. That is, male and female students have different levels of anxiety. This is what must be measured further to find out what factors cause these differences. Other matters related to the region also show significantly different results. This means that EFL students from Sumatra, Java, Madura, Kalimantan, Nusa Tenggara, Ambon, and Papua who participated in this study had different levels of writing anxiety. It is also necessary to carry out specific and in-depth measurements to know for sure the magnitude and what factors cause it to occur.

Regarding the type of writing anxiety, cognitive anxiety produces the greatest value ( $M=18.97$ ). Almost close to cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety has a magnitude of  $M=19.30$ , and the smallest is avoidance-behavior anxiety of  $M=17.96$ . Overall, the factor that most influenced EFL students' writing anxiety was the linguistics problem with a percentage value of 9.3%. Surprisingly, EFL students did not feel anxious when they were given tests and writing assessments. This is indicated by the percentage of each item, namely 7.3%. Further research needs to be carried out to reveal the reasons why they do not feel anxious about the issue of tests and writing assessments.

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