

THE DIFFERENCES AMONG WRITING ANXIETY, GENDER AND WRITING ACHIEVEMENT OF ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM STUDENTS OF PGRI UNIVERSITY, PALEMBANG

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Abstract: Written communication has long been claimed as a very difficult skill to acquire. First, it covers mostly the obligation of mastering structures and written form of language in the notion of cognitive problems. Second, the existence of writing difficulties on the basis of cognitive aspect makes foreign language students anxious to be involved in writing. Also, gender plays important aspect to expose in language learning. This paper presents (a) whether or not there was significant difference in students' writing achievement on the basis of gender, (b) whether or not there was significant difference in writing achievement on the basis of writing anxiety, and (c) whether or not there was significant difference in writing achievement on the basis of gender, from 110 undergraduate students, 55 male students and 55 female students, of English Study Program of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of PGRI University, Palembang, in academic year 2011/2012. The samples were selected by using purposive sampling. The data were collected mainly from the students' essays and questionnaire of Foreign Language Writing Anxiety Scale. Then, the data were analyzed quantitatively. The result showed that firstly, student's gender was not significant variable in writing achievement statistically. Secondly, there was statistically significant difference in writing achievement on the basis of writing anxiety level (i.e., low and medium level of writing anxiety). At last, students' writing anxiety showed no statistically significant difference on the basis of gender. However, the findings indicated that statistically, there was significant difference in low level of writing anxiety of male and female students. Closer analysis resulted that students' writing anxiety were affected by evaluation apprehension. Very poor writing achievement was derived from the students' ability.

Key words: *writing anxiety, gender, writing achievement*

In college life, students are common to write more. Written communication is then viewed as the representation of ideas through the demonstration of cohesion and coherence thought. In the field of language teaching and learning, even though students are mostly commanded to write more, it is

still hard to find students who to some extent can cope with writing difficulties. For this reason, writing has long been claimed as a very difficult skill to acquire and is dreaded by L2/FL students (Gupta, 1998). This case might be mainly caused by the fact that written text production is

complex by nature and requires plenty of procedures (Hedge, 2000, p.7). In other words, the success in writing is associated with a high degree of organization, accuracy, the use of complex grammatical, self-expression, flow of ideas, and confidence.

The focus of this study is the sense of what factors affect the students' ability toward writing achievement. Byrne (1993) identifies three causes of why writing is difficult to do: psychological, linguistic, and cognitive problems. In the notion of cognitive problems, writing task covers the obligation of mastering structures and written form of language, while in the side of linguistic perspective, it talks more on how to create such kind of coherence and cohesion. The existence of psychological aspects in writing process reflects on the role of affective domain, the development of affective states or feelings involves a variety of personality factors, for instance, feeling anxious. Others also said that there would be role of gender. Gender in language use also plays important aspect to expose and even the least aspect to paid attention in language learning.

This paper presents a study of the differences among writing anxiety level, gender, and writing achievement statistically.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Academic writing responds to topics of interest to the academic life. Writing for academic purposes aims at presenting a well-informed idea in formal structure. Then, academic writing is defined "as any writing that fulfills a purpose of education in a college or university" (Thaiss, Chris & Zawacki, 2006). They also refer

academic writing as the exception from other types of writing.

There are three causes of why writing is difficult to do. First, it covers mostly the obligation of mastering structures and written form of language in the notion of cognitive problems. Second, the existence of writing difficulties on the basis of cognitive aspect makes foreign language students anxious to be involved in writing. Also, gender plays important aspect to expose in language learning (Byrne, 1993).

If language anxiety is related to writing achievement, it is named writing anxiety (Rose, 1985, p. 7). The sources of writing anxiety are derived from the term of *evaluation apprehension*, *stress apprehension*, and *product apprehension*. As a result, it might effect to students' writing achievement, either positively or negatively. Study showed that students showed their anxiety toward writing through nervousness and worry (Cheng, 2004, p. 330) involving 421 freshmen English major who were taking writing course. As a result, the effect of feeling anxious significantly makes some differences toward students' writing achievement. For some students, feeling anxious toward writing job seriously decreases achievement because of lack of knowledge about written features, like lack of vocabulary and disability of cohesion and coherence as well. At last, this factor can affect students' motivation to take writing course (Cheng, 2004, p. 332).

A study conducted by Jones & Myhill (2007, pp. 456-482) showed gender differences in text and sentence level. The result showed that the gender differences identified for paragraphing and textual organization indicate that, in general, boys'

paragraphing was more competent than girls'. Boys' writing was more likely to be paragraphed appropriately, whereas girls' was more likely to use partial or inconsistent paragraphing or very short paragraphs. However, more boys than girls used no paragraphs at all.

Some studies showed that gender plays role in writing apprehension. Daly (1975) has noted that females have significantly lower levels of writing apprehension than their male counterparts because they get more positive teacher reactions to their writing than do males. Nonetheless, Abdul-Fattah (1995, p. 6) concluded that his female subjects in general and advanced students experienced more writing apprehension than did males and less advanced students.

Larson (1985) reported that female college students higher levels of writing anxiety than males. Women may be more anxious than men in finding a balance between their own expectations and professors' expectations for their writing. Larson (1985) argued that there may be situational demands rather than characteristics inherent in an individual that lead to writing anxiety, and that anxiety increases when students are unable to develop realistic expectations for their writing.

METHODOLOGY

The samples of the study were 110 undergraduate students in the sixth semester students who were taking Writing 4, 55 male students and 55 female students, of English Study Program of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of PGRI University, Palembang, in academic year 2011/2012. The samples were selected by using purposive sampling.

The data were collected mainly from the students' essays in order to know students' writing achievement and questionnaire of Foreign Language Writing Anxiety Scale to know the students' level of writing anxiety. Then, the data were analyzed quantitatively. The purposes of the study were to find out the means and variance of writing anxiety and writing achievement to answer the questions of whether there is significant difference in students' writing achievement on the basis of gender, students' writing achievement on the basis of gender and levels of writing anxiety on the basis of gender.

FINDINGS

To find out whether there are or not significant difference among students writing achievement on the basis of gender, writing achievement on the basis of writing anxiety, and writing anxiety on the basis of gender, the writer used independent sample t-test by operating SPSS 16.0 for statistical analysis. The writer used independent sample t-test to test the quality of the three means of each finding by analyzing the variance.

Writing Achievement on the Basis of Gender

The students utilized a variety of achievement in writing based on their gender. Specifically, gender-based difference in writing achievement showed that male students got higher mean score than female students (mean score of male students' writing achievement = 58.29, while female students' got 57.64). In order of mean differences, male students and female students resulted .753.

Table 1. Summary Statistics of Gender-based Differences in Writing Achievement

	t-test for Equality of Means		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Writing Achievement	.360	108 103.118	.719 .720

The analysis of t-test for equality of means, t_{table} in 95 confidence interval ($\alpha= 5$) of $df = n-2$ ($110-2=108$). The description of $t_{obtained} < t_{table}$ (.719<1.9821) reported that students' writing achievement between male and female students made no statistically significant difference. This data analysis supported the study conducted by Graham, Beringer, and Fan (2007).

Writing Achievement on the Basis of Writing Anxiety Level

Students mostly experienced medium level of writing anxiety in the number of 64 students, clearly stated around 58.2% of 110 students. Hierarchically, the description of students' levels of writing anxiety is as follows: 40.9% students (45 out of 110 students) felt low level of writing anxiety and only 1 (1 out of 110 students) felt high level of writing anxiety.

Table 2. Summary Statistics of Writing Achievement on the Basis of Writing Anxiety Independent Samples Test

	t-test for Equality of Means			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Score Equal variances assumed	22.38	218	.000	34.93 2

Writing Anxiety on the Basis of Gender

To determine whether there is significant difference in writing

anxiety of male and female students, the writer did the test of t-test for equality of means of independent samples t-test. The statistical analysis results showed that t_{table} with $p= 0.025$ ($p=0.05/2$) in 95 confidence interval ($\alpha= 5$) of $df = n-2$ ($110-2=108$) is lower than t_{table} ($1.072 < 1.9821$). Based on the test of 2-tailed significant level, probability $p > \alpha = 0.05$ (.286 > 0.05). The descriptions reported that students' writing anxiety showed no statistically significant difference on the basis of gender. This result of the study supported the previous study conducted by Karakaya and Ulper (2011). For full description, see Table 3.

Table 3. Summary Statistics of Writing Anxiety on the Basis of Gender Independent Samples Test

	t-test for Equality of Means			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff
Writing Anxiety Equal variances assumed	1.072	108	.286	2.491

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the data analysis, it could be concluded that female and male students do not show any significant difference in writing achievement. Female students resulted the same writing achievement as what male students did. Most of members got very poor in writing achievement. Besides, there was statistically significant difference in students' writing achievement on the basis on writing anxiety. Closer analysis found out the reasons why this happened. Writing anxiety is mostly reported as evaluation apprehension, neither stress apprehension nor product

apprehension. Students who experienced medium level of writing anxiety might feel the signs of writing anxiety, but it might not be too harmful for them. No significant gender differences were found in students' levels of writing anxiety on the basis of gender. Even though there was only 1 student who experienced high level of writing anxiety, it did not make any significant difference due to the fact that both female and male students experienced the same levels of writing anxiety. After analyzing closer to the findings, mostly, male and female students experienced medium level of writing anxiety.

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