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Students' Writing Anxiety in Learning English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract

This research aimed to investigate the writing anxiety experienced by eleventh-grade students in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Bali. By conducting a quantitative research method, this research involved 76 students as the participant of the study. The research employed an adapted questionnaire from Cheng (2004), consisting of 27 designed statements. The result revealed that many students face challenges with writing anxiety in English. The findings showed that linguistic challenges, such as concerns about using expressions and sentence patterns incorrectly, and time constraints like feeling stressed under time pressure, significantly contribute to writing anxiety. Additionally, the positive aspect of the study demonstrated that students actively work to minimize mistakes in their writing, emphasizing the importance of accuracy in managing writing anxiety which may imply the motivation to learn English.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, acquiring language is essential due to the rapid development of the era and technology. Language acquisition in particular refers to developing a new language that aims to a broad communication (Ellis, 2015). Krashen (1982) and Amelia (2016) mention that one of language acquisition challenge is that "productive skills are harder than receptive skills". While both receptive and productive skills are crucial for any learner, the challenges they present can be different. Receptive skills, like listening and reading, typically involve understanding information, while productive skills, like speaking and writing, they typically producing the language. Thus, productive skills like writing can be perceived as requiring a higher level of self-expression (Khabooshan & Saeedirad, 2022). Speaking and writing help

students to produce and use the language. It can be said that speaking and writing are harder skills because it shows how long the students comprehend the language (Budayanti et al., 2023). Enhancing writing skills has been studied for decades in various and interesting ways. Writing requires some process of combination of students' thoughts, ideas, and organization into written form (Birhan, 2021). Hence, students tend to face difficulties in the process of writing since it requires students' skill in organizing ideas.

Many students, including English as a foreign language (EFL) students, face some difficulties in the writing process. Park (2022) states that some of the students commonly feel stuck or frightened when having writing tasks. Because of those feeling, writing tasks can trigger strong emotions and cognitive barriers to students factors like motivation, anxiety, and even self-confidence all play a role in how students approach and experience writing (Tunagür, 2021). Negative situations and obstacles encountered during the writing process can increase these anxieties, making the process from thought to word even more challenging (Karahan, 2021). The challenges that the students faced with anxiety in writing often find the entire process, from start to finish, in every steps in writing process (Morali & Boran, 2021; Turkben, 2021). Furthermore, Sarikaya and Bulut (2022) argue that minimizing anxiety is essential to make students have a good learning experience. This can be concluded that it is essential to understand and address anxiety, as it can significantly impact student's ability to express themselves in writing.

When it comes to learning a new language, feelings of anxiety can make things much harder (Balta, 2018), especially in writing skill. It is because writing has complex layers, including grammar rules worry, emotional expression, and cognitive organization, that is why it requires a longer process (Turkben, 2021). This skill should be learned in a good way. Karahan (2021) mention that if someone wants to acquiring a language skill, they need to learn it in a healthy way. This is because every experience someone has in learning and teaching becomes part of their thoughts and understanding in their mind. For that reason, having good writing experience is important for students so it will not make students feel more worried and negative about learning. Feeling worries and anxiety that students have when producing writing is known as writing anxiety. Baskan (2021) states that writing anxiety is the stress students feel before or while writing.

In addition, Iksan and Halim (2018) defines writing anxiety as the apprehension felt by students towards any writing activities. Writing anxiety also refers to the fear of a writing result that won't turn out the way students wanted or expected (Cocuk & Yelken, 2021). Several things, like not knowing enough or feeling unsure about themself, the worry that people might say negative things about the writing, and feeling not good enough, all of them might contribute to this anxiety. It can make students avoid writing or not want to write, harming writing abilities and attitudes, and stopping to form good writing habits (Khabooshan & Saeedirad, 2022; Park, 2022). Moreover, when writing anxiety goes up, people are more likely to avoid the task and come up with excuses (Cocuk & Yelken, 2021).

Feeling anxious about writing is a complicated thing. Experts often conceptualize it in three dimensions: cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance behavior (Cheng, 2004). Cognitive anxiety means having negative thoughts about writing, like thinking "I'm not good at this" or "I'll mess up my assignment." Somatic anxiety is about the physical feelings of anxiety while writing, like sweating, shaking, or a fast heartbeat. Avoidance behavior is when

people do things to dodge writing, such as delaying or leaving assignments until the very end. Baskan (2021) defines writing anxiety as being more scared of writing than seeing the advantages of being able to write. If the anxiety is either too low or too high, a person faces difficulties in the writing process. If students face these difficulties, it might be hard for them to master a language. Thus, writing anxiety plays a big role in how well students learn a language (Liu, 2020).

Looking at the research, it can be seen that many studies have been done on the topic of writing anxiety. Several studies have explored writing anxiety among language students who learn foreign languages. Erol (2021) focused on Syrian refugees in Turkey learning Turkish as a foreign language. The study involved 214 participants. The findings revealed that the writing anxiety level was at a medium level. Erol stated that it is influenced by environmental and social factors rather than internal or mental factors. Baskan (2021) explored the link between writing anxiety and writing self-efficacy in Turkish language students, comprising 247 international students at B1 and B2 levels. The results showed a significant positive relationship between writing anxiety and writing self-efficacy. However, no significant difference was found in Turkish students' scores from the writing anxiety scale concerning their language level. Aunurrahman (2019) investigated writing anxiety among second-semester English as a foreign language student in Pontianak, Indonesia. Among the 92 randomly selected students, 53.26% experienced low writing anxiety, while 46.74% faced high writing anxiety. Things like how they are judged, what they produce, and feeling stressed can direct to anxiety. Especially stress, it still held an important part. The research recommends that helping students handle issues with writing can really help to make anxiety less and make their writing skills better.

In addition, the study from Mulyono et al. (2020) found that all 221 Indonesian foreign language students experienced writing anxiety in English. The majority reported a moderate level of anxiety. Moreover, students across all levels commonly expressed somatic anxiety, avoidance behavior, and cognitive anxiety, with avoidance behavior being the most dominant. In line with this, Aloairdhi (2019) studied writing anxiety in university students and the finding showed that the 105 participants experienced a moderate level of writing anxiety. The primary sources of this anxiety included concerns about evaluation, idea generation, grammar, time pressure, and a lack of confidence. This is relevant to the preliminary issues that occurred during observation which shows that students, especially when going to higher grade experience anxiety during writing.

Prior research has shown that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at the university level face a lot of challenges. Many writing problems seem to happen because there are things missing or not done well in teaching and learning during secondary school (Al-Hammadi & Sidek, 2015). Anxiety, as one of writing problems, is when students cannot feel sure about themselves and the writing they're doing, and they feel scared and see their mistakes while doing a task. Writing anxiety can happen because of different reasons, like not knowing enough about the topic, not using spelling rules correctly, or being afraid of not doing well. Within these difficulties, writing problems occur with students struggling with anxiety, and it becomes a significant issue. Furthermore, this problems seem to be happened a lot in the secondary school since the time in secondary school is one of the phases that are sensitive for students when they start to dive more deeply in acquiring a language (Karahan, 2021). These

studies are generally conducted in secondary schools and university levels, and little has been done at the senior high school level, particularly for those in grade 11, who are in the middle because they have already completed one year of senior high school and will graduate the following year. Therefore, it would be interesting to conduct the same research for those in grade 11 since grade 11 is going to go higher to grade 12 which is the last grade in senior high school which means they need to be serious on their learning which may increase their anxiety, especially on writing

This research aimed to fill the existing gap by investigating into how eleventh-grade students, who are learning English as a foreign language, feel about writing. The main goal is to understand why they get anxious about writing and what makes it hard for them to write well. The novelty in our study lies in its specific focus on the eleventh-grade students in a senior high school in Bali, addressing a crucial phase in language acquisition. While existing research has explored challenges at the university level, this study focused on the secondary education period. As mentioned before, state that during this time, students are moving from learning the basics to understanding more complex ways of writing. As students try to write in a language that's not their first, the worries they have can affect how well they learn the language. show that understanding these worries can help us figure out what might be stopping students from becoming really good and confident writers. It also aimed to provide more insights into the writing anxieties faced by EFL students.

METHOD
Design

This study belongs to quantitative study since this study was about investigating EFL students' writing anxiety learning English as a foreign language. To determine whether Indonesian students, specifically those who enrolled in English language classes at senior high school in Bali, experience writing anxiety when composing in English, a quantitative study was conducted. This study involved collecting data from a representative sample of Indonesian students to assess their experiences and perceptions related to writing anxiety in English.

Participants

This study aims to address the research questions. To explore the writing anxiety of eleventh-grade students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in secondary school, a quantitative research approach was employed. Specifically, the study focused on 76 students as its specific subject group. The population is from students in one of public senior high school in Bali, Indonesia. The sample, consisting of 76 responses (N = 76), was chosen randomly for the research. This research took place in the second semester of the academic year 2023-2024. The questionnaire was made available online to participants via Google Form. The questionnaire's Google Form link was shared with the participants. The introduction of the questionnaire provided all the required information and instructions for the participants.

Data Collection

To collect the data, a scale in terms of questionnaire to measure writing anxiety was used. The research utilized a questionnaire adapted from Cheng (2004) to explore different aspects of the writing anxiety faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. This writing anxiety scale has a reliability coefficient of .891, which means it's a reliable measure for the research. The reason for choosing this scale to assess writing anxiety is because its

demonstrated high reliability and validity through correlation and factor analysis. The questionnaire contains 27 statements, half of which (16) convey negative meanings, while the other half (11) express positive meanings. Each statement is based on a Likert Scale, allowing respondents to choose from options like "strongly disagree," followed by "disagree," "uncertain," "agree," and "strongly agree.". The questionnaire was translated into Bahasa Indonesia to make sure it's easy to read. After that, the researcher carefully went through the translated questions again, making adjustments to ensure that students can fully understand all the items.

Data Analysis

To analyze the collected data, Miles et al., (2014) approach was implemented. This analysis method involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, providing a robust framework to comprehend the intricate details of writing anxiety among the specified subject group. After completing the data collection procedure, it was found that 68 responses from all the students (N = 76) were complete in the questionnaire. It means that only 68 (N=68) data obtained. Therefore, quantitative analysis was conducted on these 68 complete responses to answer the research question. The data were structured for analysis in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) using Microsoft Excel tables. Descriptive statistics, including mean (M), standard deviation (SD), and percentages, were calculated to report the characteristics of the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study was about investigating EFL students' writing anxiety learning English as a foreign language. To determine whether Indonesian students, specifically those who enrolled in English language classes at one senior high school in Bali, experience writing anxiety when composing in English, a quantitative study was conducted. This study involved collecting data from a representative sample of Indonesian students to assess their experiences and perceptions related to writing anxiety in English. Descriptive statistics were utilized to present the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) values for both positive and negative statements. In Chart 1, the mean and standard deviation for the negative statements were displayed. The number on the left side represented the statement numbers.

The assessment of writing anxiety was conducted using Likert scale: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) uncertain, (4) agree, or (5) strongly agree. When a participant receives higher points on the scale, like a score of 4 or 5, it indicates that the participant is feeling more anxious about writing. In the other hand, lower points, such as a score of 1 or 2, suggest that the participant is not experiencing much anxiety when it comes to writing. So, if a participant gets high points, it shows that they find writing stressful, but if they get low points, it means they do not feel as worried or anxious about writing. The number 1-16 represents the statements in the questionnaire.

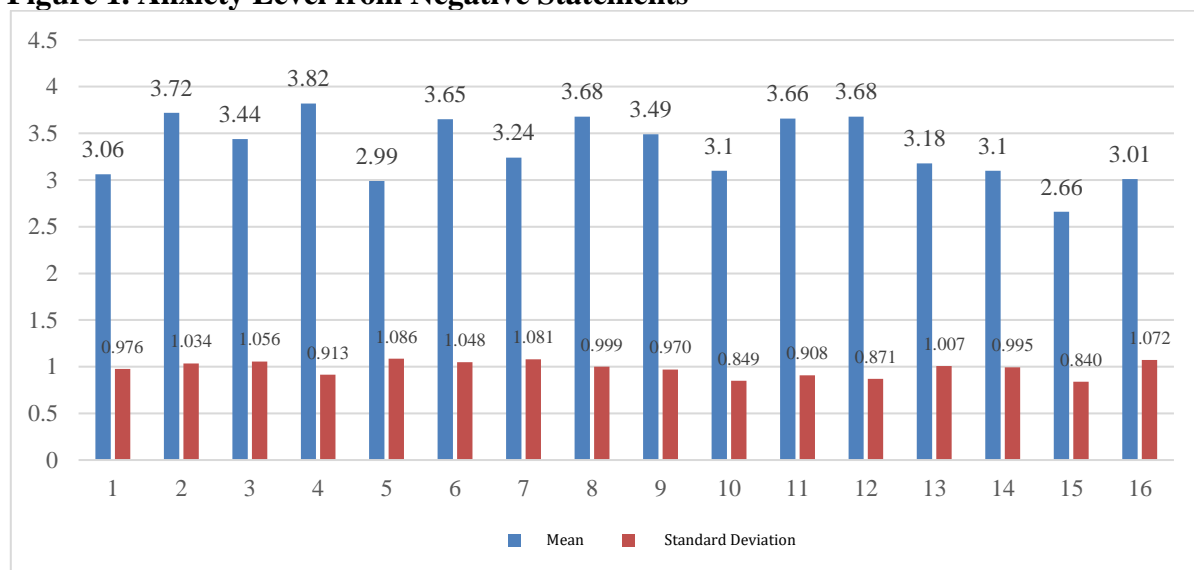**Figure 1. Anxiety Level from Negative Statements**

Figure 1 showed that the students' experiences writing anxiety. Between the 16 statements presented, 14 of them scored an average above 3 and 2 of them were under 3. It can be said that the students generally face an anxiety when they start to writing. The higher the score, the more feeling anxious that students can feel if they write something in English.

The statement that received the highest score was statement number 4, where students expressed concern about using expressions and sentence patterns incorrectly when writing in English. The statement was "When writing in English, I often worry that I will use expressions and sentence patterns inappropriately". The score for this statement was 3.82. This high score showed that many students in the study share a common worry regarding the proper usage of expressions and sentence structures in their English writing task.

Connecting with the findings from Rezaei and Jafari (2014), it's understandable that the statement about worrying about using expressions and sentence patterns scored the highest. Rezaei & Jafari mentions that it's common for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students to find it challenging to develop a good expression and sentence structure on language skills. This skill is crucial for writing because if students could not master it, making significant progress in writing becomes difficult for them. If students struggle with language knowledge, it can lower their confidence and make them less motivated to write. Sundari and Febriyanti, (2017) in their study mentioned that students who were more advanced in their writing abilities tended to have lower anxiety about writing. In other words, when students become more skilled at writing, it can help reduce their anxiety about it. So, getting a high score on that statement shows how important it is to help students with their language challenges. This support can help them feel better about writing and reduce their worries.

The second highest score was statement number 2. It said "As an EFL student, I feel my heart pounding rapidly when I write English texts under time constraints" with a mean of 3.72. In line with Aloairdhi (2019)'s findings, where many students believe that factors such as evaluation, generating ideas, grammar, time pressure, and lack of confidence are the main sources of writing anxiety. So, the high score on statement number 2 showed that time pressure is a significant concern for students. This study finding indicated that one of the primary factors

provokes writing anxiety is the time pressure. This statement meant that the student who is learning English as a foreign language (EFL) generally experiences a rapid heartbeat or nervous when have tasks to write English texts in a limited time. It can be said that there might be stress or worry related to the limited time when writing.

Looking at the overall score for the negative statements, the mean for all of the negative statements was 3.34. The standard deviation of the negative statements was 462.02. Besides, it can be concluded that the students, who learn English as a foreign language specifically in one of senior high school in Bali, face writing anxiety. This finding also implied that linguistic challenges and time have essential roles that can contribute to writing anxiety among the student.

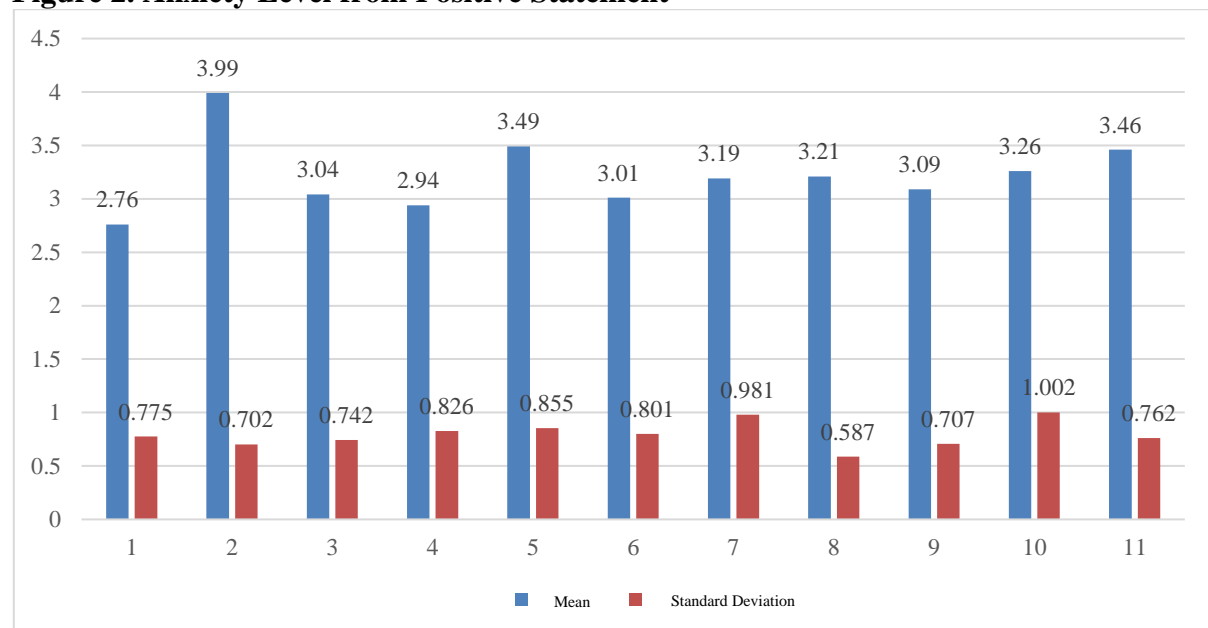**Figure 2. Anxiety Level from Positive Statement**

Figure 2 showed the analysis of the positive statements from the questionnaire. The analysis for the positive statements is the opposite direction where scores of 4 or 5 indicate that students feel less anxiety. Then it can be said that it is contrast to the negative statements, in positive statement, the higher scores show a lack of writing anxiety. However, the lower score the higher level of anxiety might students feel. For example, the statement "As an EFL student, I often choose to write my thoughts in English rather than Indonesian," received a mean of 2.76. This lowest score indicated that the students might experience a higher level of anxiety in situations where they choose to express their thoughts in English rather than in their native language, Indonesian. The lower mean of 2.76 showed that some students might feel more anxious when they choose to write in English instead of Indonesian. Thus, choosing English over Indonesia could be a bit more stressful for them.

It is important to note that it is not the same with the negative statements. In negative statement, if the mean scores show higher scores, it indicated more anxiety. If in the context of positive statements, it is the lower scores that show a higher writing anxiety. The data from Chart 2 showed the mean of writing anxiety concerning the language choices made by EFL students and choosing English over Indonesian may contribute to higher levels of anxiety. Furthermore, looking at the highest score in the positive statement, statement number 18. The

statement was "I usually do my best to avoid writing incorrect English texts". In a study conducted by Aunurrahman (2019) found that many students knew how to handle their writing anxiety. In accordance with this research, when examining the highest score among positive statements, statement number 18 obtained a score of 3.99. It meant that students really try not to make mistakes when they write in English. The high score showed that students were working hard to be accurate and avoid errors in their writing. This showed that students were serious about doing well in their writing and were trying to manage their writing anxiety by focusing on getting the writing right.

Anxiety, as one of writing problems, is when students can't feel sure about themselves and the writing they're doing, and they feel scared and see their mistakes while doing a task. Writing anxiety can happen because of different reasons, like not knowing enough about the topic, not using spelling rules correctly, or being afraid of not doing well. Within these difficulties, writing problems occur with students struggling with anxiety, and it becomes a significant issue. Furthermore, these problems seem to be happened a lot in the secondary school since the time in secondary school is one of the phases that are sensitive for students when they start to dive more deeply in acquiring a language (Karahan, 2021).

Students today face difficulties in writing, especially when it comes to generating ideas. They frequently made errors in grammar and used vocabulary and language inappropriately. Many find it hard to express themselves well due to limited time during class (Mulyanah & Ishak, 2021). It is related to this finding, where students worry about using the right expressions and sentence patterns, reflecting their struggle with language structure. The concern about time also matches what students experience now, showing how stress from time deadlines causes anxiety. However, students actively try to avoid mistakes in their writing. Despite making grammatical errors and using words incorrectly, they work hard to be accurate. To help them, teachers should use more interesting and enjoyable teaching methods for writing classes. This study implies that managing anxiety is a must for the students in order to increase their learning achievement, especially the students grade 11 since they need to be focus on their learning to pass the upcoming exam which means every single distraction, including the anxiety must be managed well by the students

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis of negative statements indicated that students generally face anxiety when writing in English. The highest scores in negative statements showed that many students have similar concerns. Students were worrying about using expressions and sentence patterns incorrectly. Moreover, students also worried about the time constraints. The research highlighted how stress from time pressure can give challenges and have a big role in causing anxiety for EFL students. The findings revealed that students in one of Bali's senior high schools face writing anxieties. This anxiety was mainly influenced by difficulties in language structure and expression and limitations of time. In the other hand, students also work to minimize mistakes in their writing. The students were working hard to be accurate and avoid errors in their writing. Thus, it showed that even though students face anxiety, they are trying their best to avoid mistakes in writing. Research on anxiety about learning English as a foreign language has important implications for improving teaching and learning. These findings may provide a basis for the development of supportive teaching strategies, increasing students' self-

confidence, and managing test anxiety. This research has limitations because it involves a sample from one school; therefore, it is recommended for further research with a larger sample.

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