

“I Get Blank When I Start Writing”: Analysis of EFL Student’s Anxiety In Writing Descriptive Text

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A B S T R A C T

In various educational worlds, of course, we learn foreign languages, one of which is English. English is challenging and can cause anxiety, one of which is in writing. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners often face many challenges when it comes to developing their writing skills. The recent research aims to discuss EFL students’ anxiety in writing descriptive text. This study used narrative inquiry. A narrative inquiry explore the experiences and feelings of an EFL students’ writing anxiety. The research participants are two students. These two students were taken from 1 Senior high school student and one was taken from Junior high school. Data collection uses semi-structured interview with 45 minutes. The interviews were held at a private Islamic boarding school in Probolinggo East Java. Data Analysis uses thematic Analysis. The results of this study reveal that students’ writing anxiety level is still relatively high, therefore, teacher motivation and guidance to students must be increased so that students can deal with or evaluate writing anxiety experienced by students. Finally, in learning English as a second language (ESL), it is important for students to have adequate vocabulary knowledge so that they are not confused and anxious to write English texts.

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Introduction

Since the 4.0. industry revolution in which people are able to get information perfectly throughout the world, people need a mean of international communication much more than it used to be (Hamdani 2020). English is one of the international languages that most used in many countries in the world including Indonesia (Studi, Bahasa, and Madura 2022). As we may know, English has become an international language which is certainly very important to learn, especially if the knowledge regarding four skills exist in English can be deepened by learning (Thamrin, N. R., & Oktoma, E. (2023)). Learning the English language in the current era is of critical importance. (Kholili 2023). Nevertheless, the learning of English, for instance, in EFL educational context, is still at a low level. (Kholili, A., & Ferdiyanto, F., (2020).

The ability to write effectively becomes the most difficult talent for people to acquire, particularly for students who need to be able to articulate their thoughts and feelings in a well written format. One of the language skills that should be learned when studying English is writing. (Ferdiyanto, F., (2023) The use of written communication is inseparable from human life because people often produce many types of writing to express their ideas and thoughts. (D. P. Ayu and Nurweni 2023). Writing, as one of the productive skills of the English language, is very important in communication (Zulaiha and Triana 2023). Writing forces individuals to think critically about ideas and express them in ways that others can understand. Writing can also be said to be a complex process (Bram and Angelina (2022). Therefore, writing in a foreign language is said to

be a complex skill that requires the spread of linguistic, strategic and affective elements (Takarroucht 2022).

Writing is seen as a powerful tool to stimulate thinking and learning (Ramadhanti and Yanda 2021). In communicating, writing is also a tool that can be a way to convey information across time and space, but the majority of people still do not know the neural substrate. This shows that English is limited to a few occasions, such as schools, international meetings, and conferences. As a result, English in Indonesia is categorized as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Romadhoni, Saroh, and Asryan 2022). Therefore, writing is important for everyone, especially young children who still don't know, anything. In writing, of course, we do not just write what we will write, so it is important for us to pay attention to several things in writing, both in the form of writing and in other things.

Therefore, writing must be learned from an early age. Sometimes writing is often worried by someone even though it is an easy thing so that negative emotions arise in a person. The negative emotions mentioned above are negative emotions that arise during writing activities. The term "writing anxiety" is used to describe the emotional condition that arises when students are given instructions to write a piece of writing (Suhartoyo, E., & Fransiskus, F. (2024).

However, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners often face many challenges when it comes to developing their writing skills (Zaman Fadhly (2023). (Pravita and Kuswandono (2022). Writing in a second or foreign language can be a daunting task because of the various stages, strategies, and techniques involved in the process of producing coherent writing. Moore and Murray stated that "Writing is the act, the process of discovering and organizing ideas, putting them down on paper and reshaping and revising them"(Ubaid et al. (2023). Therefore, writing must be learned early.

To measure L2 writing anxiety, it is important to use tools that are sensitive to second nature or foreign languages. Writing anxiety in EFL can be defined as fear so in the context of EFL Writing anxiety directly affects learners' motivation and academic achievement in addition to its influence on practice in the classroom. For the past 30 years, a group of researchers has observed anxiety during the English writing process as one of the most inhibiting factors impacting learners' ESL/EFL writing performance and possibly preventing them from performing well in the writing process (Delvi Wahyuni, Witri Oktavia, and Leni Marlina 2019).

The researchers are interested in conducting a focused research that aims to find out the anxiety level of writing descriptive texts of students in using English, one of which is experienced by students in one of the boarding schools, Sidomukti, Kraksaan, namely Pondok Pesantren Darul Lughah Wal Karomah. This research is comparable to some previous studies.

Several studies have been conducted that anxiety in writing is one of the factors to determine the ability to master writing skills namely (Sari 2020); (Alfiani, Nurkamto, and Supriyadi 2023); (Kawengian and Subekti 2023); Aripin and Rahmat (2021); (Karlina and Hidayanto Pancoro 2018); Fareed, M., Khan, I., & Akhtar, H. (2021); Afdalia, T.et.al,(2023); Putri, D. D. (2022); Nugraheni, D. A. (2023). However, a few research have discussed about EFL students' writing anxiety at Islamic-based boarding. As a result, this study would like to explore the this issues.

From the previous research we can find out that no one research that examines students from Islamic Boarding School as well as no one research has been conducted in this Islamic Boarding School, and thus researchers tend to fill this gap. This Islamic

Boarding School was chosen because it is considered as one of the favorite Islamic Boarding School in this city due to the many achievements made by its students, however, the researcher's initial observation showed that their students still faced anxiety in learning English, especially in writing English texts. In the research process, researchers here use the narrative inquiry method to facilitate researchers in the research process. Researchers here find it easier with the narrative inquiry method because in the research process, researchers ask 2 students to retell experiences that have occurred so that researchers can easily analyze. Therefore, the researchers are interested in conducting a study that is focused on finding out the anxiety level of writing descriptive texts in using English, one of which is experienced by students in one of the Islamic boarding schools, Sidomukti, Kraksaan, namely Islamic Boarding School at Darul Lughah Wal Karomah. Therefore, the researcher wanted to find out the extent of EFL students' anxiety in writing descriptive texts. And this research aims to help students deal with or evaluate the writing anxiety experienced by students.

Research Method

This research employs narrative inquiry. A narrative inquiry is one in which a researcher can explore the experiences and feelings of an EFL student's (Mutmainnah, Silvhiany, and Eryansyah 2022). Different forms of qualitative research focus on studying one person, collecting data through story collection, reporting on individual experiences, and discussing the meaning of those experiences for individuals.(Creswell 2007).

The data collection procedure contains a qualitative narrative inquiry research approach that focuses on human stories. This research examines human experiences through life story interviews, oral histories, photo sound projects, biographies. In qualitative methods, the author seek to engage deeply in the context of their lives. The author can do this activity by direct observation using field notes for the purpose of making student notes and interviews. The author developed a list of structured interview questions based on the Structured Interview Guide. Narrative analysis focuses on the stories told by participants. The story aspect is seen as a complete entity with a beginning, middle, and end (MOHAJAN 2018). This is used so that researchers focus on a specific context, namely students' anxiety in writing descriptive texts in English.

Therefore, stories are created and recreated during the interviews and then talked about, so that the researcher and the participants can consider the stories as representations of a reality that has happened before. Meaning-making first occurs between the narrator (the person with the experience) and the listener (the researcher). In the next step, this process is repeated at a different - perhaps more personal - level with the researcher acting as the narrator.

In the process of this investigation, researchers develop stories of experiences experienced by each participant, by tracing past experiences and participants' memories of certain school episodes. This method tells a person's story in what is done and invites each other to reflect on the meaning of the story. Data sources include stories of experiences while writing, stories of challenges in school writing, reflective journals, and autobiographical writing. The stories I gathered were based on investigations, two semi-structured interviews and subsequent conversations with 2 students. These two students were taken from 1 Senior high school student and one was taken from Junior high school. The researcher chose these two students because these two students can be said to represent all students in the pesantren in terms of English writing anxiety. The

interviews were held in Islamic Boarding School at Darul Lughah Wal Karomah office for 45 minutes each.

Result and Discussion

Result

In this case, the researcher said that in writing a descriptive text they were still lacking in vocabulary so they still had to prepare a dictionary in translating it. The first thing they do when they are assigned to create a descriptive text in English is to determine the main idea first and then they create the text little by little. After that they translate it into English using a dictionary. Based on the opinions about vocabulary mastery above, it can be said that vocabulary mastery is quite a complicated thing to master because vocabulary is the main element of the main language skills. If students want to write an English text, they must master some vocabulary first (Hakim, Abidin, and Bahari 2020). Vocabulary is one of the basic competencies that must be mastered by students in order to obtain other skill competencies, one of which is writing. It is difficult to master other competencies without mastering and understanding vocabulary. Therefore, most English teachers try to build students' vocabulary by using various teaching strategies in teaching vocabulary. various teaching strategies in teaching vocabulary. (Putra, Herman, and Permata 2024)

According to them, the dictionary is one of the tools that can help them in translating an English text. This proves that vocabulary, text structure, grammar and dictionaries have such an important relationship in writing an essay, especially in English texts. From here T1 and T2 said that :

T1 said

"I first think about the main idea of what I want to write, then I write in Indonesian first, after that I translate it into English. In writing English descriptive text, I don't have much vocabulary, so I use a dictionary to overcome this obstacle."

T2 said

"When I write English texts, especially descriptive texts, the first thing I do is think about the main story that I will write, the use of a dictionary in my opinion is one of the mandatory in improving my vocabulary."

The Importance of Using Word Structure in Text

First, students' vocabulary acquisition differs from one student to another as their abilities differ. Younger students face difficulties rearranging words to form sentences due to their limited vocabulary and their inability to convey their ideas in a communicable form. Secondly, they lack the knowledge of how to correct mistakes. Catching spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors is the ultimate goal of writing activities (M. Ayu and Zuraida 2020)

From the results of the second question, the student perceived that the most important thing in writing descriptive text is mastering the text structure in the descriptive text and mastering the vocabulary that will be written in the descriptive text. When students do not understand the sentence structure and grammar in descriptive writing, it makes students less interested in learning the material because there is no facility that contains the material so that students better understand the content conveyed (Ahmed and Kumalasari 2023). Writing is complicated because it is very important to Therefore, it is important to understand the right structure and language in writing, and it is very important for writing success (Fadilah, F. (2022).

This proves that in writing descriptive texts we must master the English language as well as its structure and grammar. The following are the statements made by the two female students :

T1 said

"In my opinion, the things that we must master in writing an English text are grammar and vocabulary. Because if we don't master it we will find it difficult where we will start from. therefore before I write I have to master it first"

T2 said

"Understanding grammar and its structure and vocabulary in my opinion is one of the most important goals or the most important thing in writing a text, where from this we can write a text, especially descriptive texts in English".

Student's Motivation

Everything we do must have experiences or events that we never forget. The impact of external factors on motivation has always been a subject of study. Students' motivation is strongly related to their environment, whether it is the transition from school to university, the learning environment, or the presence of anxiety-inducing factors. Anxiety emerged as an important factor negatively affecting motivation in several studies (Franchisca et al. 2024). In this study, the researcher found that one of the students had an experience that could not be forgotten, which experience was anxiety in writing descriptive texts. From here the teacher must often provide a motivation or direction to students so that students do not feel anxious in writing, especially writing texts in English. As experienced by T1 and T2 that:

T1 said

" I once made a descriptive text after being checked by the teacher, which was more wrong, namely grammar such as tenses and verb usage in writing descriptive text, so I felt insecure to other friends. Therefore, I tried to learn again from the things that were wrong with me "

T2 said

"After my teacher explained the descriptive text, I didn't really understand the explanation, so it made me lazy in doing it, plus my friends had already finished doing the task from the teacher. That is one of the things I never forget".

Experiential Learning

Specifically, athletes with low irrational beliefs and controlled motivation tend to experience higher anxiety symptoms than athletes with high irrational beliefs and controlled motivation (Miller et al. 2023). From the next result, the researcher found a form of anxiety in writing descriptive texts felt by students, and to deal with it they practiced and tried to find other texts to learn. Therefore, they feel inspired to write a text, so that they do not feel anxious and become a habit in writing a descriptive text. This was felt by T1 when writing descriptive text. T1 said that:

T1 said

" When I get anxious about writing English descriptive texts, there are several things I do: first, I create the text in Indonesian first, then I check whether what I have written is in accordance with the structure or not. Then, I translate it using a dictionary "

Vocabulary Acquisition

In learning English as a second language (ESL), it is important that students have adequate vocabulary knowledge so that they can use the language effectively. A single vocabulary word, phrase, or chunk of words needed to use the language meaningfully is called a vocabulary (Haniff Mohd Tahir et al. 2020).

In writing English texts vocabulary is always the main thing, because if we do not have the vocabulary to write a text in English. Therefore vocabulary knowledge is often seen as an important tool that can help learners in writing English texts especially in descriptive texts as well as being a learning for second language learners, therefore limited vocabulary in a second language hinders writers in writing texts.

T1 said

"My biggest obstacle when I was given the task of writing English texts was my lack of vocabulary, so when writing I was confused about what vocabulary to include. In this case, I don't have a dictionary to look up vocabulary that will be used in writing descriptive texts".

T2 said

"In writing descriptive texts, the biggest obstacle I have experienced is that I don't know how to look up vocabulary in the dictionary, so I am confused and worried about whether the vocab I write is correct or wrong."

The Emergence of Anxiety Begins with A Lack of Self-Confidence

Anxiety often arises when we want to do something that is forced because we are afraid that if we are not in accordance with what we do everything will fall apart. Therefore, writing anxiety as one of type of anxiety associated with a situation where a person, despite having writing skills, students often also experiences difficulties in the writing process (Arindra 2020). However, if anxiety is not addressed immediately it will become a habit, so we will not learn from what we are afraid of. Therefore, we must find a solution in dealing with these obstacles. One way is to practice often so that we don't tend to be rigid in doing something we were worried about before. This must be accompanied by teacher motivation or assistance so that students feel that they can do it. So that students can practice and become accustomed to responding to it. The same thing with writing descriptive text here, in writing so that we don't get stuck when we are going to write descriptive text in English. This is evidenced by the statement below:

T1 said

"The thing that scares me in writing English descriptive texts is the mistakes in grammar and vocabulary that I use. So that when I am about to write a descriptive text, everything I have learned is lost, because my anxiety is too excessive"

T2 said

"One of my fears in writing descriptive text, when I want to start writing, everything disappears or errors because of my anxiety about writing descriptive text. Because I was once when I was told to write, everything I was going to write suddenly I get blank when I start writing . That's one of the things I worry about when I'm about to write."

Discussion

The data obtained from interviews and observations show that the first respondent (T1) has several obstacles or anxiety in writing descriptive texts, one of which is the lack of vocabulary they have, errors in writing grammar and the level of anxiety in writing texts in English so that everything they have is lost instantly when they are about to write descriptive texts in English.

Furthermore, to reduce these obstacles, students take the initiative to use a dictionary when writing descriptive texts in English. So that students can increase their vocabulary in using an English dictionary and can reduce their anxiety level in writing English texts.

The second respondent's statement (T2) is not much different from the first respondent's statement that having a lot of vocabulary can reduce their anxiety level in writing because of that they become confident and not anxious in writing texts in English. The use of correct grammar is also important in writing English descriptive texts. Therefore, something that becomes their own obstacle gives them motivation to find solutions to the problems they experience, especially in the anxiety experienced by female students of the Darul Lughah Wal Karomah Islamic boarding school and this research has novelty from previous research that there has been no research examining students who come from this Islamic boarding school and this research is the first research conducted at the Darul Lughah Wal Karomah Islamic boarding school so that researchers want to fill the gap.

Conclusion

In this case, the researcher said that in writing a descriptive text they were still lacking in vocabulary so they still had to prepare a dictionary in translating it. According to them, the dictionary is one of the tools that can help them in translating an English text. This proves that vocabulary, text structure, grammar, and dictionaries have such an important relationship in writing an essay, especially in English texts. Catching spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors is the ultimate goal of writing activities. From the results of the second question, the student perceived that the most important thing in writing descriptive text is mastering the text structure in the descriptive text and mastering the vocabulary that will be written in the descriptive text. This proves that in writing descriptive texts we must master the English language as well as its structure and grammar. In this study, the researcher found that one of the students had an experience that could not be forgotten, which experience was anxiety in writing descriptive texts. From the next result, the researcher found a form of anxiety in writing descriptive texts felt by students, and to deal with it they practiced and tried to find other texts to learn. Therefore, they feel inspired to write a text, so that they do not feel anxious and become a habit in writing a descriptive text. In learning English as a second language (ESL), it is important that students have adequate vocabulary knowledge so that they can use the language effectively. In writing English texts vocabulary is always the main thing, because if we do not have the vocabulary to write a text in English. Therefore, writing anxiety as one of type of anxiety associated with a situation where a person, despite having writing skills, students often also experiences difficulties in the writing process.

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