Exploring Non-English Department Learners' Writing Anxiety: A Narrative Inquiry in Online Learning Environment

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Abstract (10pt)

This study aimed at investigating Arabic Postgraduate students' writing anxiety during online learning of the pandemic Covid-19. This study employed a mixed-method design. This study employed narrative inquiry as the method of a qualitative study on the conceptions of narrative modes of thought (content) and sequence of events (form). The study focused on students' writing anxiety after one semester of attending online academic writing classes in Postgraduate Program in Arabic Education. The narrative content of the findings indicated students of Postgraduate Program in Arabic Education experiences with writing anxiety during online learning about academic writing including the factors causing writing anxiety and its impact. The factors causing writing anxiety during online learning include learners' psychological factors, low level of learners' writing skill and confidence, lack of grammatical knowledge, lack of vocabulary mastery, lack of writing motivation, and poor internet connection. Further, learners' writing anxiety can give impact their writing quality product and achievement. This empirical evidence implies that both lecturer and students must increase their efforts to create a good learning environment in which learners can manage their emotions and produce higher-quality academic writing products. This study also suggests that future researchers working on similar topics investigate the learners' writing anxiety in another field of study and context.

Keywords: academic writing, Covid-19, online learning, writing anxiety

مستخلص البحث

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكتابة الأكاديمية، كوفيد-١٩، التعلم عبر الإنترنت، قلق الكتابة

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تقصي قلق الكتابة لدى طلاب الدراسات العليا العرب أثناء التعلم عبر الإنترنت لجائحة كوفيد-١٩. استخدمت هذه الدراسة تصميمًا مختلطًا. استخدمت هذه الدراسة الاستقصاء السردي كمنهج دراسة نوعية لمفاهيم أنماط التفكير السردية (المحتوى) وتسلسل الأحداث (الشكل). ركزت الدراسة على قلق الكتابة لدى الطلاب بعد فصل دراسي واحد من حضور دروس الكتابة الأكاديمية عبر الإنترنت في برنامج الدراسات العليا في تعليم اللغة العربية. أشار المحتوى السردي للنتائج إلى تجارب طلاب برنامج الدراسات العليا في تربية اللغة العربية مع قلق الكتابة أثناء التعلم عبر الإنترنت حول الكتابة الأكاديمية بما في ذلك العوامل المسببة لقلق الكتابة وأثرها. تشمل العوامل المسببة لقلق الكتابة أثناء التعلم عبر الإنترنت العوامل النفسية للمتعلمين، وانخفاض مستوى مهارة الكتابة وثقتهم، ونقص المعرفة النحوية، وعدم إتقان المفردات، ونقص الدافع للكتابة، وضعف الاتصال بالإنترنت. علاوة على ذلك، يمكن لقلق المتعلمين من الكتابة أن يؤثر على جودة كتابتهم وإنجازاتهم. يشير هذا الدليل التجريبي إلى أنه يجب على كل من المحاضر والطلاب زيادة جهودهم لخلق بيئة تعليمية جيدة يستطيع فيها المتعلمون إدارة عواطفهم وإنتاج منتجات كتابة أكاديمية عالية الجودة. تشير هذه الدراسة أيضًا إلى أن الباحثين المستقبليين الذين يعملون في مواضيع مماثلة يدرسون قلق المتعلمين في الكتابة في مجال وسياق آخر من الدراسة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكتابة الأكاديمية، كوفيد-١٩، التعلم عبر الإنترنت، قلق الكتابة

Introduction

Coronavirus is often called as Covid-19. It is a virus that killed many lives. The WHO (World Health Organization) has categorized it as a pandemic due to its widespread nature. Since everyone is required to work from home, even those in the education industry, most nations have declared a state of emergency. Due of the epidemic, students are now learning online instead of going to physical classes every morning. Online learning is necessary to eliminate face-to-face interaction between students or between students and teachers (Ravi, 2020). This situation requires learners to study independently through numerous online learning platforms. It makes the new environment both for the learners and the teachers.

Psychologically, the implementation of online learning writing during the pandemic give numerous impacts. Teachers and students all around the world have encountered numerous problems when adopting online platforms for teaching and learning (Thandevaraj et al., 2021). Due to the quarantine, lots of students have been separated from their classmates and teachers, and they are now required to remain at home longer out of concern for their own and their families well-being. People may consequently develop anxiety and despair (Islam and Alam, 2021; Dedeilia et al., 2020; Son et al., 2020).

University students experience anxiety when learning how to write in a university setting online. One's performance might be impacted by anxiety in both positive and negative ways. (Thomas et al., 2017). A little anxiety is periodically required for learners' focus and accuracy throughout the writing process. It has a significant impact on learners' writing skills, and most of it is regarded to be one of the major obstacles in learning a language analysis. It occurs as a result of students becoming worried due to the abrupt switch from traditional to virtual education during the pandemic. (Kamaruddin et al., 2021). They are not familiar with this kind of online learning before the Covid-19 pandemic. They also have poor internet to access the writing material (Kashefian-naeeini & Dabiri, 2022). Therefore, some of

them leave the class because of the problem of the internet. Consequently, they cannot understand the material of writing well.

Further, learning academic writing is very complex. It involves various components. Therefore, the learners who do not like tho this activity are more prone to suffer from writing anxiety (Kurniasih et al., 2023). As a result, learning to compose written material for a certain context or objective takes time and effort (Liu, 2020). Language challenges, for example, can cause anxiety in students during the writing process (Nawas, 2020; Putra, 2013). This has a significant impact on education in an online learning environment during a pandemic, as the learning process transforms away from in-person lessons and toward online learning. Students were encouraged to be independent and autonomous learners, especially in the writing class, and professors modified the manner of delivery in an emergency by utilizing a variety of learning platforms. Additionally, it is said that the failure of learners to write English more effectively, especially in academic papers, is mostly hampered by their nervousness about learning a foreign language (Sabti et al., 2019).

In this case, they must discipline to manage their study during online learning. Given the importance of technology in online writing programs, students get more worried when they have difficulty accessing and comprehending teaching resources. It is unclear how students interacted with learning resources in online learning, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Le et al., 2022). Meanwhile, in offline classes, teachers already manage their schedules. Also, they have more chances to interact with teachers and peers ((Kurniasih et al., 2023). It can make them understand and practice writing well.

Writing anxiety has been studied extensively in the classroom setting, but it has received little attention in the online learning environment. According to previous studies, there has been a paucity of examination of the perspectives of teachers and students. Additionally, the new circumstance may affect students' emotional states, causing them to feel worried owing to the varied learning environments. Student-teacher and student-student interaction are limited in an online situation. According to the phenomenon, it is essential to conduct a comprehensive study investigating teachers' strategies for reducing students' writing anxiety in online writing because

the new method of teaching writing introduces new variations, such as teachers' content being provided via pre-recorded video, teachers' feedback through the application, and limited interaction in the classroom.

This narrative approach can contribute to our comprehension of Arabic Postgraduate Program students' writing anxiety in online learning classes. The study may also have some practical consequences for Arabic Postgraduate Program and lecturers in terms of providing good and continual teaching of academic writing in the setting of online learning. The purpose of this study is to discuss the reasons that cause Arabic Postgraduate Program writing anxiety during online learning and its impact. According to the purpose of the study, it can be stated that the research question of this study is "How are the reasons that cause Arabic Postgraduate program students' anxiety in writing during online learning and its impact?"

Methods

This study presents a narrative inquiry method in the field of university learners. It highlighted how a narrative approach may be used to elaborate on the writing anxiety of learners in an online learning setting during the Pandemic of Covid-19. The benefit of employing this method is that a narrative inquiry described, focused on, and gave a thorough comprehension of the phenomena of participants' experiences (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2019). This method could aid in this study's systematic analysis of the participants' stories regarding their writing anxiety as well as in explaining the significance of their experiences to one another. Additionally, this method of inquiry allowed the narrative inquirers to obtain fresh, original knowledge from the participants' lives (James, 2018) and logically arrange their biographies to present the facts understandably (Creswell, 2013).

Since the researchers have specific predefined things that want to find, it was used the purposive sampling technique (Ivankova et al., 2006; Jupp, 2006) to recruit participants in the study. To put it another way, the researchers chose the participants based on specific standards that were pertinent to the research questions. More specifically, since the aim of the study is to examine the writing anxiety experienced by undergraduate university learners during the academic process of online learning environment, potential participants in this study must be Arabic Postgraduate Program learners who have taken or are currently taking an academic writing online

course. Additionally, they must have extensive experience in academic writing through excelling in the academic writing online course to express the participants' rich perspectives.

The researchers followed the ethical guidelines for qualitative research by Hammersley and Traianou (2012) while recruiting participants. First, the researchers invited each potential participant to the meeting. Phone calls and emails were used to distribute the invitation. For various reasons, a few of the targeted participants turned down the invitation. Further, the researchers described the purpose of the study and the terms of the participants' involvement in advance on informed consent form sheets, which were presented to them. Additionally, we requested their signature on the authorization form, which serves as a formal declaration of their informed agreement to participate in the study.

After gaining the trust, two university learners, Indah (female, 25) and Nirmala (female, 27), were the research participants. They attended a rural university in Tulungagung and used pseudonyms. Both were Indonesian. They were the university students of Arabic Education Department at second semester who have joined academic writing class through online learning.

Result and Discussion

1. Results

1.1. Factors Causing Anxiety in Academic Writing

"I was bored and uncomfortable while learning online." Indah's statements demonstrated her dissatisfaction with the online learning approach that was now being deployed. She was nervous and could not concentrate on the lesson. "I couldn't understand the material very well because I was not interested in delivering the material". This showed that she was having difficulty accepting the material offered in the online learning system.

At the beginning of the lesson, Indah remarked, "I was still able to grasp the material quite easily because it was still about the theory of how to write good academic writing and I was not too bored following the lesson." "However, when I started practicing writing and applying the material, I felt very confused." "This occurred because I was unable to consult with the lecturer in sufficient time because

consultations were only conducted once a week and with written feedback only". "In my opinion, indirect feedback was less effective because I could not understand what the lecturer was saying without directly meeting". It merely contributed to her confusion about her situation. If she wanted to ask her classmates, she was not truly familiar with them because they rarely engage in online classrooms.

"I was having trouble understanding how to make good online academic writing because academic writing required to be extremely detailed to explain the supporting arguments of the theory that I quoted." "Aside from that, I was having trouble deciding what topic to write about." "This situation frustrated me because the lecturer also set the writing progress at each meeting." Because of the deadline, It made her stag and very difficult in continuing his writing progress.

Indah found grammar and vocabulary mastery to be relatively easy. "It was not so much a problem with grammar and vocabulary as it was with developing a writing topic". "If I had difficulty in developing writing, then I will feel very lazy". "That condition made me even more indifferent and seemed not to commit to continuing my writing." "That was also influenced by the atmosphere of online learning, which makes me less enthusiastic than when participating in face-to-face learning".

Indah's worry was heightened when she could not acquire a good internet connection. "When my internet connection was poor, I became very anxious and bored." Because of the signal, I frequently drop in and out of online classes. It almost made me give up." "Aside from that, my concentration was messed up because I cannot fully listen to the material." In those circumstances, I normally leave the lesson early". " I did not have the motivation to join the class".

Nirmala, like Indah, discovered numerous issues that made her anxious about academic writing in online learning. "I am very frustrated with online learning." "In my mind, academic writing is a difficult subject that cannot be taught entirely online." "I was having trouble coming up with writing ideas here." "Interaction and feedback in the limited online class also made it difficult for me to understand what the lecturer

had explained." It meant that the limited time and interaction between the student and lecturer made her could not understand the material of academic writing.

"I was also appealing negatively and lacked the motivation to participate in online learning. I was bored in class. I frequently closed and left the camera during lecturing. This was because the interaction in online learning was less enjoyable for me". It indicated that Nirmala lacked the motivation to join online classes. She did not comfortable with the situation of online classes.

Further, the factor that caused Nirmala to feel anxious about academic writing was the complexity of writing. "In my opinion, writing requires thoroughness and mastery of truly qualified skills. Writing necessitated diligence and mastery of highly competent talents. During the writing process, I frequently came into problems ranging from poor grammar to a lack of vocabulary. For example, I made an error in the subject-verb agreement unintentionally. If that were the case, I have to re-read my writing or use an online grammar checker". Nirmala did not have good writing skills. Besides, the implementation of online learning made her difficult to increase her ability in academic writing. She was lazier to upgrade her skills.

"Other than my lack of writing skills, I was also hesitant to write down my ideas". Nirmala was afraid to express her ideas in writing. She thought that everything she wrote was constantly incorrect and insufficient. She appeared to be less capable than his other friends. She felt quite insecure when his writing was presented or read by others. "Consequently, I rarely consulted my writing progress to the lecturer". This harmed her writing progress. She needed feedback from the lecturer to revise what was still incorrect in the project he was working on.

In online learning, Nirmala did not prepare the material and her project of writing well before the lecturing. "I usually did not prepare the material before lecturing. I was not confident in online learning classes. So, I just join the class without good preparation". This condition made Nirmala not confident to speak up during the presentation class. She only heard the lecturer's explanation without giving her

argument about writing. She also did not present her writing during the class. Thus, she only to be a passive student during online learning.

1.2. Impact of Writing Anxiety

"Because I often felt anxious, I could not produce a good writing product". The statement from Indah indicated that the quality of her academic writing was still bad. She got a low score from her lecturer. When she submitted her writing product and the lecturer gave indirect feedback, numerous errors were in her writing. It made her frustrated and must revise her writing as well as possible. "When I found numerous errors in my draft, I would feel more anxious. This was my weakness." According to her, lecturers' feedback with many errors could make her more anxious. Consequently, she felt very lazy to revise and continue her writing draft.

Indah also got bad achievements in academic writing. "At the end of the semester, I only got B for academic writing. It happened because numerous errors were in my writing product." She can finish her writing on time, but she cannot write in detail and she often made faults. Thus, the lecturer only gave her a B score which indicated her writing must be revised more.

"I thought about the impact of my anxiety on academic writing. I should not feel anxious, but I cannot ignore it during the online learning process". The impacts of writing anxiety truly damaged Indah She cannot produce a good writing product and she got a bad score from the lecturer. It influenced her achievement, especially in writing.

Almost the same as Indah, Nirmala suffered from the negative repercussions of her writing anxiety. " I was having trouble concentrating on my writing. So, I was unable to complete my work with an excellent writing product. I was unable to accomplish the academic writing task on time as well". Nirmala's writing product got numerous feedbacks from the lecturer. At the end of the submission, many errors still were in her writing. Besides, she cannot submit her product on time as the deadline from her lecturer.

" I felt shy because I could not submit on time and finally I got a bad score". She got a bad score from the lecturer. Because of the score, she felt shy in their friends and disappointed in herself. It made her more anxious and traumatic in doing

academic writing. Therefore, in the future, she would not be confident to join the writing class or to write academic writing in her final thesis. It truly disturbed her writing achievement.

2. Discussion

This study elaborates on non-English department students writing anxiety which includes factors and its impact during the online learning process using a narrative inquiry. Analyzing how the Arabic Postgraduate Program learners talk about their experiences during academic writing classes through online learning. According to the finding of the study, Indah and Nirmala get frustration during online learning classes. This result was in line with the previous studies (Faismaul & Mahbub, 2023) that stated Students frequently had stressful times during their essay writing procedures due to challenges in clearly presenting their views. Moreover, Students frequently encountered difficulties in writing, notably in coherently connecting two paragraphs, properly outlining the components of the issue, and avoiding contradictions (Hidi & Boscolo, 2007). This state undoubtedly encourages individuals to believe that writing is a "dangerous and unattractive" activity. Thus, they feel more stressed.

The results of this study also revealed that Indah felt apprehensive due to the lecturer's lack of feedback. It was corroborated by the result that students in online learning only occasionally received teacher feedback on their writing (Kurniasih et al., 2023; Miri & Joia, 2018). Writing anxiety in this instance is linked to teachers' feedback (Rasool et al., 2023). Students occasionally received solely peer feedback from their pals. They became increasingly concerned about whether the feedback was accurate or not. Additionally, the students expressed concern if peer feedback was used in the online writing classes (Sulfiana et al., 2022). It happened because the students were scared that other students mocked their writing product.

Another factor causing writing anxiety is the complexity of writing. Indah and Nirmala were difficult to develop their idea in the academic writing project. Furthermore, certain researchers maintained that difficulties in organizing coherent concepts, describing various parts of problems, and avoiding inconsistencies are logically classified as cognitive domain obstacles (Saghafi et al., 2017). Likewise,

Rezaei and Jafari (2014) argued that students face more problems during the writing process since they experience writing anxiety, such as generating ideas. They noted that those issues are primarily the result of a lack of thinking skills and previous information, which might have a significant impact on increasing their anxiety level.

Next, the finding of this study stated that Nirmala lacked grammar and vocabulary mastery. It meant that she felt anxious because of low writing competencies in grammar and word choices (Abd Rahim et al., 2016). In Shang's (2012) study, students claimed that their English writing anxiety was induced by their concern about making mistakes in language structures such as grammar and vocabulary. In short, high-anxiety writers demonstrate considerably worse levels of grammatical knowledge, language ability, vocabulary mastery, and linguistic skills (Jebreil et al., 2015), resulting in lower-quality writing projects.

Afraid of producing mistakes, according to all of our participants, is another factor that contributes to writing anxiety. They stated that they were hesitant to write a text because they were worried about making mistakes. Negari and Rezaabadi's findings (2012) found that when students were guaranteed that their writing would not be graded, they performed better than in exam conditions. Similarly, Shang (2012) discovered that the fear of producing grammatical and vocabulary errors was the leading source of writing anxiety among English learners.

As previously stated, academic writing anxiety is significantly influenced by students' enthusiasm for writing. The results of this study were consistent with those of an earlier study (Saghafi et al., 2017), which discovered that learners' motivation for writing, expectations for their efforts, attitudes toward it, and interests can all have a significant impact on their writing anxiety. Recently, Sabti et al. (2019) argued that there was a negative correlation between students' motivation for writing and their worry overwriting. Lack of writing motivation can cause students to experience higher levels of anxiety while writing, which can negatively affect their productivity and success.

In addition, the finding of this study elated that writing anxiety was caused by the availability of an internet connection. Sometimes, when the learners joined online classes, their internet was poor. It disturbed their online learning. This condition was

like the finding of the study (Zhang, 2019). Students may be unable to access their online classes if they do not have a strong internet connection. As a consequence, they felt anxious about their writing product. For instance, because of limited network capacity, students were unable to access online learning and must rely on their mobile phones regularly. This causes students to be excluded from lessons and has an impact on their academic performance. These factors contributed to students' melancholy and anxiety (Kalok et al., 2020; Odriozola-González et al., 2020).

Dealing with the impact of writing anxiety, the finding of this study showed that it can affect the learners' quality of writing product and achievement. It meant that negative feelings had a substantial impact on learners' writing performance and achievement. More anxious learners tend to perform worse in writing, and vice versa (Faismaul & Mahbub, 2023). Similarly, Ningsih and Kusumaningputri (2015) argued that when students' writing results are low, they become more anxious. The outcome hurt their attitudes toward their work. This unfavorable effect of writing anxiety can affect all students, including those who have a minimal level of anxiety. If students try to overcome and use their worry as a technique to avoid making mistakes, anxiety can work as a controller.

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to investigate the Arabic Postgraduate Program learners' writing anxiety online learning during the pandemic Covid-19. The narrative inquiry of Indah and Nirmala shows that numerous factors influence the learners' academic writing anxiety during online learning Covid-19 Pandemic. According to their story, psychological factors, low levels of learners' writing skills and confidence, lack of grammatical knowledge, lack of vocabulary mastery, lack of writing motivation, and poor internet connection become the factors that cause writing anxiety in academic writing classes. Those factors cause the learners to feel anxious about their academic writing product. Their writing anxiety also gives impact their quality of writing product and achievement. According to the finding of the study, it could give implication in English teaching and learning. The teachers can learn about the factors that cause the students anxiety to write, so that they can prevent the writing anxiety by solving the problem related to those factors. Also, they can implement the

appropriate teaching method to make the students interested in writing. Thus, it can be the way to solve the students' writing anxiety.

This study was only limited on the factors of Arabic Postgraduate Program learners' writing anxiety during online learning of academic writing course. Additionally, some suggestions for further researchers and educators are provided. It is advised that future researchers who undertake a study on a related topic look into learners' concerns in areas outside writing, given the limits of this study. Moreover, it is also necessary to conduct a study on the other learning model. Teachers are suggested to know the factors causing writing anxiety to implement the appropriate strategies in alleviating their students' anxiety. Teachers are expected to use learning tools, specifically in online education

Acknowledgement

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