

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Among the four English language skills, writing is believed to be the main skill that needs to be mastered by academic students in order to fulfill the assignment needs, work for theses and dissertation, and conduct a research project. It portrays an idea that writing is included as the essential skill since it is presumed as a key of a successful language learner. Badrasawi (2016) asserts that writing is a fundamental skill for university student's success in both academic and career life. Learner's language achievement can be determined from his/her writing competence (Wening, 2016).

Writing is one of major components of EFL instruction particularly in Indonesia. It is gradually learnt from primary school to higher education. On high schools both junior and senior, learners are expected to be able to communicate either in oral or written in English. It is as the first and major competence in the scope of English instruction at schools. Meanwhile in university realm, students are demanded to write academically or scientifically. To illustrate, students are required to pay attention to academic or scientific writing aspects such as the diction choice, tone, reader, or the assignment types (e.g. case study, reflective journal, literature review, essay, etc). Also, the writing itself needs three basic stages as preparing, researching, and writing. A scientific evidence is also needed to support the writing. This scientific style tends to make the process of writing

complex and trigger student's psychological or affective factors. The complexity of writing skill can potentially trigger students to experience difficulties such as learner's ability, ideas, and plan, time constraint, teacher's comment and learner's fear. It is also believed that affective factors can impact students' writing result. It can cause the way or process how the writing is carried out. One of the affective factors that have been a focus in numerous studies in second and foreign language writing is anxiety. As this writing problem occurs in university context, it is undeniable for university students to experience anxiety or apprehension about their writing process as it deals with how to properly and academically produce a good piece of writing in which the process requires the sensibility and amount of time. Here, anxiety becomes the factor that inhibits student's writing process. Anxiety is reported as the cause that may interfere student's learning and impact student's performance in running tasks (Horwitz, 2000). Sundari (2018) adds that writing anxiety is a psychological situation faced by an individual dealt with writing task and affects writing process and performance.

In reality, university students tend to have writing problems. The problem of writing scientifically also occurred in English Department of UIN Sumatera Utara. Based on preliminary survey conducted, most of students acknowledged that scientific writing is not a simple and easy subject. The students perceived this subject as the intricate and demanding assignment to do which makes them having worries and confidence issues when it must be presented or evaluated. They conveyed that scientific writing gets them blank of ideas and unexcited to write the paper. Also, the students implied that scientific writing drives them stressful as it requires conscious effort and much practice in the ability to write a given issue

or topic. These scientific writing difficulties they had were also further supported by their statement which was obtained from the preliminary interview as follows:

*“I often **feel burdened** to manage my writing skill because as we know scientific writing is complicated. We cannot just write freely as we have to think about the organization.”* (UINSU:ED:April, 5, 2019)

*“Writing makes me **anxious** because I have to write in a good grammar. I am also often **nervous** if the lecturer checks my writing result.”* (UINSU:ED: April, 5, 2019)

*“Writing got me **panic** if our lecturer sets us the deadline and determined the writing topics. Also, I have no idea how to do writing stages like drafting and revising.”* (UINSU:ED: April, 5, 2019)

The writing anxiety phenomenon had been much explored in related studies. According to prior studies, it is revealed that writing anxiety may become a factor which has a significant correlation to student writing achievement (Badrasawi, 2016; Jebreil, 2015; Fakeye, 2016; Zabihi, 2017). It may be caused by the fear of teacher’s evaluation, insufficient of grammar and knowledge, time limit, and lack-confidence of writing. (Ho, 2016; Lin, Larke, Jarvie, Chien, 2018). Therefore, this phenomenon raised students’ anxiety to perform the scientific writing process thoroughly. This problem carries out the main reason why the researcher focuses on writing skill particularly anxiety factor which takes part in the process of student’s writing.

Given the common belief, most people assume that writing seems to be far less anxiety-provoking than the oral mode of communication as speaking since writing is often done under conditions that allow one more time to decide what to say and how to say it. Shortly, anxiety matter is considered to be mostly happening in speaking skill among other English skills. However, not only in speaking skill, writing skill is also likely important to be further studied in terms

of anxiety factor as both are productive skill. Many EFL learners still find writing difficult, frustrating, and even anxiety-producing. This factor refers to the indication of students to involve in writing activity or avoid it instead. The negative and anxious feeling may relate to their writing process as it potentially interferes their writing product. Zabihi (2017) declares that the low-anxious writer may perform writing well and fluently while the high-anxious writer shows the contrary. Furthermore, the researcher argues that the influence of anxiety in second and foreign language writing is concerned as an underrated writing problem since studies on speaking anxiety are more numerous than studies in writing anxiety.

There are several affective factors impact student's writing process include motivation, attitude, personality, and anxiety. To fill the research gap, the phenomenon of writing anxiety was investigated because the anxiety factor is regarded as an affective/psychological problem which happens to be underestimated case and rarely studied in the realm of academic or scientific writing. Thus, an attempt was required to explore the issue of EFL students' anxiety in writing the scientific paper.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

In this present study, the research problems were formulated as follow:

1. What types of writing anxiety are faced by English department students of UIN Sumatera Utara?
2. How is the scientific writing process realized by English department students of UIN Sumatera Utara?

3. Why does students' writing anxiety happen in the way they are?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

In line with the problems of the study, the objectives of the research were to discover the questions that stated above, they were listed as follows:

1. To investigate the types of writing anxiety faced by English department students of UIN Sumatera Utara
2. To describe the scientific writing process realized by English department students of UIN Sumatera Utara
3. To elaborate the reasons of writing anxiety happened among English department students of UIN Sumatera Utara in the way they are

1.4 The Scope of the Study

There were some limitations and delimitations acknowledged in the current study. Methodologically, the snowball sampling used in this study decreases the generalizability of findings since the subject or informant is not largely selected. Also, this study confined the finding about the writing anxiety and writing process. Here, the finding only discovered the students' writing anxiety and the process of how they write the scientific paper without expanding the interrelatedness with students' writing product. Regarding to the students' writing process, the students did not perform the process thoroughly in the class as they are conditioned to learn by distance. By this situation, the researcher delimited the way to collect the data by holding the interview instead of doing the observation. As this study was conducted during Covid-19 outbreak, the

researcher collected the data of students' writing process through the phone interview.

1.5 The Significance of the Study

The findings of this study were expected to bring valuable results either in theoretically or practically for teachers, syllabus makers, and students particularly in the field of second and foreign language writing. The significance of the study can be pointed out as follows:

1. Theoretical Significance

Research results can be important for theory development or for the improvement of practice particularly in foreign language writing. The theory was beneficial to denounce to scholarly researchers and writing teachers that not only cognitive factors, but also affective factors are necessary to be taken into consideration in writing process. More specifically, the influence of anxiety in foreign language writing was expected to add more foreign language writing theories in a great body of research. It was to inform about the factor of anxiety can play an important role as it impacts students writing process and achievement.

The research findings redounded to the further foreign language writing anxiety studies which are useful for scholarly researchers, and SL/FL writing teachers in order to offer them valuable reference and information towards the existence of anxiety in writing process.

2. Practical Significance

Practically, this research was conducted in a hope of providing some pedagogical concerns for:

a. Writing Teacher

This research findings can be a guidance for writing teachers to be aware of the existence of foreign language writing anxiety and take actions about the issues. Writing teachers were expected to not only concern to student's cognitive competence in writing, but also acknowledge the affective or psychological problems. The findings were also intended to encourage writing teachers to consider and react over anxiety problem that occurs in student's writing activity by offering the meaningful solutions of how to reduce or minimize student's anxiety in writing.

b. Students

As anxiety-provoking occurs in student's writing process, it is important for EFL writing students to be also aware of their affective factors and their feelings. This research finding may help them to recognize and notice their own type of writing anxiety and the causes that get them anxious to perform writing academically. By knowing the type of anxiety and the reasons that trigger the anxiety, it helped the students to anticipate the problems and provide the way out for themselves to overcome their anxiety during their academic writing process.

c. Syllabus Makers

As academic writing is one of the requirements to fulfill student's assignment and project, the findings derived from this study can be a consideration to syllabus makers to take the writing anxiety problem into account. The finding can provide information or review about how to design or develop the writing syllabus that support student's needs to perform writing better with a less-anxiety academic writing process.

