

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides information about the phenomenon that inspired the research to undertake this study. It comprises five key sections. The first section explores into the background, explaining the issue at hand and detailing the researcher's rationale for selecting a particular topic and conducting the study. The second section focuses on the formulation of the problem, outlining the research question that will be addressed in Chapter Four of this thesis. The third section introduces operational definitions, clarifying certain terms used throughout this thesis that are relevant to the topic. This is done to prevent any potential misunderstanding of terms within the scope of this research. Subsequently, the fourth section presents the research aim, which is the intended achievement once the formulation of the problem is thoroughly addressed. The final section explores the study's significance, emphasising the practical implications and real-world relevance of the research findings.

1.1 Background of the Study

Education has become an essential thing in human life. Education can start from primary education until higher education. Most people tried to get a higher education. Higher education aims to equip students with the skills they need to succeed in the workforce and impact the world (Johnson et al., 2016). The students should fulfil some terms and conditions to graduate from higher education, one of which is doing research as their final assignment. Usually, before conducting research, the researcher will make a research proposal. A research proposal is a formal written plan communicating ideas about a proposed study to get an agreement to conduct the research or to look for funding (Onwuegbuzie, 1997, as cited in Damaskinidis & Christodoulou, 2019). A research proposal can be classified as academic writing. Fang (2021), in his book, stated that academic writing could be defined as writing for academics which can be a medium to produce, codify, evaluate, teach, and learn about knowledge in the discipline of

academics. Murray & Moore (2006) argued that academic writing could be seen as essential but sometimes frustrating for those tasked to produce the academic writing product. Thus, in writing a research proposal, there will be an obstacle that the writer will face, one of which is writing anxiety.

Writing anxiety is the condition when the writer or students feel afraid of getting negative feedback and worry about their writing ability (Wahyuni & Umam, 2017). Writing anxiety can also be defined as difficulty or inconvenience of the mind brought on by writing with varying degrees of anxiety (Cronk-Raby, 2018). Writing anxiety is often ignored rather than speaking anxiety, whereas it has the same effect on the student's performance in each skill. Based on the findings of research conducted by Fitrinada et al. (2018), it was found that there is a negative correlation between writing anxiety and writing performance, which means that if the students' writing anxiety is high, their writing achievement is going to be low. Afterwards, according to Jawas (2019), students who experience writing anxiety will have trouble defining and organising objectives and ideas.

In higher education institutions in Indonesia, particularly in the English Education Department, the Research Proposal Seminar course is compulsory for students to enrol in the 7th semester. In this research context, the research proposal should be submitted as the final assignment of the Research Proposal Seminar course. The underlying issue of this research arises from the researcher's observation and findings in the Research Proposal Seminar course. It was noticed that several students manifested symptoms of writing anxiety, including heart pounding, panic, tension, and nervousness, as mentioned by Ekmekçi (2018). To further explore this phenomenon, preliminary research was then conducted to prove the existence of writing anxiety among students. The instrument used in the preliminary research was the English Writing Apprehension Test (EWAT) proposed by Daly & Miller (1975). The result of the preliminary research indicated that a number of students experience writing anxiety while arranging their research proposal. These findings helped identify eligible participants for the present research, specifically those with the highest levels of writing anxiety. As a result, the researcher decided to conduct a study focusing on the causal factors of students'

writing anxiety in the context of arranging a research proposal, as well as the strategies employed by the students to overcome this anxiety. Additionally, it needs to be explored because writing anxiety experienced by the students can impede and negatively affect their ability to complete the research proposal (Harahap & Syarif, 2022). Differing from the previous studies that employed a quantitative method which the result shown in a numerical perspective, the current study adopts a qualitative method in order to explore the issue. The qualitative method provides a deep exploration and comprehensive understanding of the issue. Consequently, by the presence of this research, it is hoped that the students who experiencing writing anxiety can overcome and alleviate their anxiety, ultimately enabling them to successfully complete their research proposal and could enhance their writing skills in research proposal writing.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background above, the research questions are formulated as follows: 1) What are the causal factors of students' writing anxiety in arranging a research proposal? and 2) What are the students' strategies to overcome their writing anxiety?

1.3 Operational Definition

To avoid misinterpretation of this research, the researcher provided three definitions related to this study as follows:

Writing Anxiety : Writing anxiety is the condition when the writers feel nervous and not ready to write, then not sure about their writing. Sometimes the writers are afraid that their writing is not good enough. In the context of a research proposal, it can be caused by several aspects such as lack of topic interest, teachers' teaching style, plagiarism threat, a high number of assignments, grammar and vocabulary insecurity, the pressure of perfect writing, and lack of writing

practice. Besides, the causes of writing anxiety are categorised into four categories: 1) Instructional practices, 2) Personal belief about writing and learning to write, 3) Self-perceived competencies, and 4) Interpersonal threats. Subsequently, the strategies to overcome writing anxiety are classified into five clusters, 1) Preparation, 2) Relaxation, 3) Positive thinking, 4) Peer-seeking, and 5) Resignation.

Research Proposal

: A research proposal is an academic writing text made by undergraduate students before researching to get supervisors' approval. This project is one of the requirements to graduate from a higher education institution. In the context of this research, the research proposal was made for the final assignment submission of the Research Proposal Seminar course in the 7th semester, which can be continued to a thesis writing course in the following semester.

Academic Writing

: Academic writing is writing with the purpose of academics. It aims to convey the idea of writers in the form of text. In the context of this research is a research proposal. The research proposal will be presented to the examiners and supervisors for approval. After the proposal is approved, the students are able to begin the research.

1.4 Aim of the Research

The research aims to explore the causes of writing anxiety among students when they are arranging a research proposal and the strategies to cope with that writing anxiety.

1.5 Significance of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical Use

This study provided valuable insights into the causal factors behind students' experience of writing anxiety when arranging a research proposal, particularly among those who have enrolled in the Research Proposal Seminar course. The research aimed to reveal the reasons and coping strategies behind this phenomenon and contribute to the understanding of writing anxiety in the context of research proposal writing among university students.

1.5.2 Practical Use

After identifying the causal factors of students' writing anxiety in arranging a research proposal and exploring the strategies to alleviate this anxiety, the research findings can be applied by the students, lecturers, and writers to overcome this issue.

1.5.3 Empirical Use

This study aimed to provide empirical insights into the causal factors of writing anxiety experienced by students in the English Education Department while arranging a research proposal and how they cope with the writing anxiety they encounter.