

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Writing is important for EFL students because it is a basic skill that supports language development, academic success, critical thinking, cultural understanding, and career opportunities. It empowers EFL students to communicate effectively in English and enriches their overall language proficiency. This is in line with Bhowmik (2021) who stated that writing is a vital skill to function effectively in a foreign language. In an EFL setting, writing becomes even more vital, as a significant number of students are studying English for academic and professional reasons, which demand advanced writing abilities. However, in the context of writing, it involves various things including generating ideas, organizing thoughts coherently, maintaining focus, using proper grammar and vocabulary, and effectively communicating the intended message to the reader. According to Hadley (1993), writing requires composing, which implies the ability either to tell or retell pieces of information in the form of narrative or description, or to transform information into new texts as in expository or argumentative writing.

Consequently, writing is perceived as an intricate process, making it difficult to attain, and thus frequently inducing student anxiety during writing. Anxiety, as one of the factors influencing language learning, and has a negative effect toward students in writing. Writing anxiety serves as a hindrance to the development of writing abilities, leading high-anxiety individuals to not only demonstrate less proficient writing but also to adopt a distinctive writing style in contrast to those with lower anxiety levels (Smith, 1984). Based on research conducted by Toba et al. (2019), Indonesian EFL learners face various writing problems, which can be categorized into three main areas: linguistic, cognitive, and psychological problems. Besides their low ability in the writing aspects, they also have

writing anxiety. Basically, this problem comes from students' negative perceptions of writing. As a result, they often experience writing anxiety, with factors such as language difficulties, concerns about negative teacher responses, inadequate writing techniques and practices, limited topic knowledge, and time constraints contributing to this phenomenon. This assertion is supported by research conducted by Wahyuni and Umam (2017) which revealed that Indonesian EFL students experience high levels of anxiety

Building upon the earlier explanation, the author discovered a similar phenomenon among ninth-grade students at a junior high school in Tasikmalaya during MBKM activities in the research field. Consequently, the author initiated a classroom action research to address the emerging issues. These students encounter anxiety in writing instruction, as evidenced by their hesitancy to articulate ideas when tasked with writing, coupled with a noticeable lack of self-confidence that manifests as reluctance to actively engage in the writing process. The author's survey, employing Cheng's (2004) SLWAI questionnaire with 22 items on a five-point Likert scale, found high levels of anxiety among students, with a mean score of 75.45%. The author could state that students experience a high level of writing anxiety since the average score is above 65 percent (≥ 65), indicating a high level of anxiety (Rezai & Jafari, 2014). Furthermore, an average score under 50 points indicates a low level of writing anxiety, and an average score between 50-65 indicates a moderate level of writing anxiety, and an average score above 65 indicates a high level of writing anxiety (Wahyuni & Umam, 2017; Wahyuni et al., 2019).

Hence, an appropriate teaching method is needed for effective writing instruction to reduce students' writing anxiety. In this case, the author sees a high potential opportunity to implement the Students Team Achievement Division (STAD) technique in the class. Based on the class observation, the students' characteristics such as enjoying chatting, actively

engaging in discussions with their peers, frequently engaging in peer-feedback sessions with their classmates to correct their mistakes and displaying anxiety when instructed to write words in English on the whiteboard. Therefore, a cooperative approach is likely to be highly effective, where students will feel less anxious as the responsibility for a writing task is distributed among members. Students' anxiety was reduced by working together which focused on science and made them feel more accepted in the classroom (Cooper et al., 2018). This can reduce the pressure on individual students, making the writing process less daunting. This is in line with the result of a study conducted by Jiang (2016) stated that students' writing anxiety is significantly reduced after the use of cooperative writing, which is in line with the social interdependence theory. According to this theory, group members' mutual collaboration fosters the development of constructive interpersonal relationships and improves psychological well-being. Furthermore, since they work together as one they can support each other. Those who feel anxious about writing can receive help and guidance from their peers, and reducing the sense of isolation and insecurity. The selection of STAD as one of the cooperative learning techniques utilized in this study is based on its recognition as STAD is considered one of the simplest cooperative learning, thus, it is highly suitable as an introductory approach to implementing cooperative learnings for junior high school students, considering that students are novices in cooperative learning and necessitate instructions that are straightforward and devoid of complexity.

Previous studies have revealed the effectiveness of applying STAD technique in improving students' writing skills. This improvement is evident through their active participation in class activities and their enthusiastic response to this technique. Furthermore, the impact of STAD was profound, with all writing components meeting at least a good level in the grading criteria. These findings highlight the value of the STAD technique as a

potential technique for improving students' writing skills (Rahmatika, 2019; Suryani & Azlim, 2018; Wahyuni, 2014).

While previous studies have explored the use of the STAD technique to improve writing skills, there has been minimal exploration of its application in reducing student anxiety related to writing. In practice, it shows that students often experience anxiety when working on writing instruction, and this anxiety can have a negative impact on their overall writing ability. In particular, research has shown that writing anxiety has a massive impact on students' writing progress and writing acquisition (Nugroho & Ena, 2021). Therefore, this research attempts to address the existing gap by focusing on the application of the STAD technique as a strategy to reduce students' writing anxiety.

1.2 Formulation of the Problems

Based on this research background, the questions of this research are formulated as follows:

1. To what extent the Student Team Achievement Division technique reduce students' writing anxiety?
2. How can the Student Team Achievement Division technique support students in reducing their writing anxiety?

1.3 Operational Definitions

1. Writing Anxiety

Writing anxiety is defined as the apprehensive and pessimistic feelings when faced with the task of writing in English, encompassing feelings of unreadiness or inability to write, and manifested in cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance anxiety, in this case it was experienced by English Foreign Language (EFL) students in Indonesia, specifically one of junior high school students in Tasimalaya with a score of 75.45 or above on anxiety assessment scales, who are perceived to lack knowledge about writing aspects and perceive writing as challenging and difficult,

with the research aiming to investigate the efficacy of the Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) technique in reducing EFL students' writing anxiety.

2. Teaching Writing

In the context of this study, teaching writing involves implementing specific guidelines. These guidelines include tasks such as planning, organizing ideas, writing, and revising. The writing process itself is structured into planning, drafting, editing, and finalizing stages, aiming to reduce writing anxiety and enhance writing proficiency among EFL students using the STAD Technique.

3. Student Team Achievement Division (STAD) Technique

STAD is one of the methods in cooperative learning divided students into groups to collaborate to achieve the common goal. In the STAD technique, the students grouped heterogeneously based on their rank of learning achievement, gender, and ethnicity. In this research the students need to collaborate on a shared writing task to achieve the goal. The STAD technique is often used by other researchers in writing classes to enhance students' writing skill, but in this research the STAD technique is used for reduce students' writing anxiety since the STAD technique has proven as an effective method to enhance students' writing skills.

4. Teaching Writing Using STAD Technique

Teaching writing using the STAD technique involves four phases: class presentation, team study, quizzes, and team recognition. Class presentation involves student-centered approaches, using narrative text videos to aid comprehension. Team study entails collaborative discussions and drafting narrative texts based on instructional material. Quizzes assess individual understanding through narrative composition. Team recognition

rewards top-performing groups, aligning with principles of cooperative learning and the Merdeka curriculum implementation.

1.4 Aims of the Study

The aims of this study are to investigate the extent to which the STAD technique reduce students' writing anxiety and how it can supports students in reducing their writing anxiety.

1.5 Significance of the Study

1. Theoretical uses

This research has the potential to provide new insights into the use of the STAD technique as an effective method in overcoming writing anxiety in EFL students.

2. Practical uses

This research provides new insight for the teachers to develop a more engaging and effective method to teach writing.

3. Empirical uses

The study procedures and findings are intended to encourage other researchers interested in recreating a study with a similar topic or objective.