

THE ROLES OF WRITING ATTITUDES AND WRITING APPREHENSION IN EFL LEARNERS' WRITING PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

The present study used a mixed method research design since it aimed at examining the degree of relationship between the students' writing attitude, apprehension, and writing performance and investigating the causes of both factors. The finding of the study revealed that there was a significantly positive correlation between attitude towards writing and learners' writing performance ($r=.240$ and $\text{sig}=.049<.05$) and the difference of performance was significant ($\text{Sig}=.018 < .05$). The writing apprehension and writing performance were significantly negatively correlated ($r=-.246$, $\text{sig}=.043$) and the difference of performance was significant ($\text{Sig}=.000 < 0.05$). The interview result showed several factors causing the students' writing attitude and apprehension. The positive attitudes were caused by the importance of English as an international language, the relationship of English and science, the interest in writing and English, and the lecturer's evaluation. Students having negative attitude confessed that they were not good at English, writing in English was a difficult activity, and they did not write much. Low writing apprehension was caused by the interest in writing, being good at grammar and vocabulary, and positive thinking in completing the task. At last, students with high apprehension thought that they were afraid of making mistakes; since they were not good at English, they tended to translate *bahasa Indonesia* into English, and they were not able to develop topics given by the lecturer.

Keywords: Writing Attitude, Writing Apprehension, Writing Performance

INTRODUCTION

Learning how to write in a second language is one of the most challenging tasks of second language learning. This might not be surprising in view of the fact that even for those who speak English as a first language, the ability to write effectively is something that requires extensive instruction sometimes. Hyland (2003) points out that the ability to communicate ideas and information effectively through the global digital network is crucially dependent on good writing skill. It is increasingly seen as vital to equip learners for success in the future.

Despite writing is a prominent skill, many students still face some problems to write a passage. Steinberg (1982) claims much of the difficulty of writing stems from the large number of constraints that must be satisfied at the same time. In expressing an idea the

writer must consider at least four structural levels: overall text structure, paragraph structure, sentence structure (syntax), and word structure (spelling). Another great difficulty for writers is maintaining connective flow. The relationships between ideas must be clear. Yet, in order to write about an idea, it must be expanded downward into paragraphs, sentences, words, and letters. Sometimes writers become lost in the process of downward expansion and lose sight of the high-level relationships they originally wanted to express. Brown (2000) strengthens the difficulty in writing by asserting that written products are often the result of thinking, drafting, and revising procedures that require specialized skills that not every speaker develops naturally.

Apart from the language difficulties, there are psychological factor such attitudes toward writing and affective factor such writing apprehension which affect the students' writing performance. Allport (1954, in Gardner, 1985) states 'an attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related'. Rose (1984) defines attitudes toward writing as 'evaluation orientation' toward the act or result of composing. Attitudes toward writing are most likely formed by one's history of evaluation by others and are reflected in the evaluations a student levels at or imagines others leveling at his work. These evaluations can be broad ('This paper is not good') or specific ('My conclusion seems tacked-on'). An assumption of this study is that evaluation is rooted in a comparison with internalized criteria other audiences will use. Evaluation becomes inappropriate when the criteria a student has internalized and/or attributes to others are overblown or inadequately understood. In this case, the evaluation employed by a writer focuses on the reasons behind their compositional choices. Therefore, a teacher needs to help students develop the capacity to judge their own work-to judge it appropriately, to keep the context and purpose in mind and to temper their usual judgment as they struggle with the sorts of new tasks that, ultimately, will enhance and develop the criteria by which they will then judge future homework.

As reported by several studies, writing attitude is proved to be an essential factor which significantly correlates with the students' writing performance. Graham & Fan (2007) suggest that writing attitude influences the writing performance in which students with positive attitudes perform better than those with negative ones. A negative attitude towards writing may lead to less efficient processing during writing. This may be particularly disruptive for writing, as it is a challenging task that requires considerable effort. McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth (1995) report that attitude may influence writing ability through its impact on factors, such as cognitive engagement. For example, students with a more favorable attitude are likely to write more often and expend greater effort when composing than students with a less favorable attitude. In addition,

Knudson (1993) proves that girls have a more positive attitude towards writing than boys and girls tend to outperform boys on a variety of writing measures (Berninger & Fuller, 1992).

Another factor which influences the students' writing performance is writing apprehension. It refers to anxiety about writing and is originally defined as "the measure of anxiety about writing that outweighs the projected gain from the situation" (Daly & Miller, 1975 in Atkinson, 2011). Therefore, writing tasks assigned to the apprehensive students will not be done effectively since they run out of ideas and do not know how to write the essay well. Writing apprehension appears to be a consistent relationship between various forms of anxiety and language performance in formal and informal situations. Apprehension level may thus be a very potent influence on the affective filter. Reported by many studies, it is proved that the higher the apprehension, the lower the measures of language performance achievement, including writing (Lee & Krashen, 2002; Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 2000). Besides, Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) find that language apprehension is the best single correlate of achievement. Onwuegbuzie, Bailey and Daley (2000) report foreign language apprehension was one of the best predictors, approximately explaining 22% of the variance of foreign language achievement. Chastain (1975, in Dulay et al, 1982) reports a significant correlation between test apprehension and success in audio-lingually taught French at an American university. The negative correlation ($r = -0.48$) indicates that low test apprehension was associated with greater success, which is consistent with the studies cited above.

There were several studies investigated the correlation between students' attitude and their writing performance. In the foreign setting, Gupta and Woldemariam (2011) and Sarkhoush (2013) examined the relationship and found that students whose positive attitudes toward writing have better writing performance than those whose negative attitude. These findings support the theory proposed by Dulay et al (1987) and Gardner (1985). In Indonesian setting, Pamuji (2015) also found the positive correlation between them. On the other hand, Apriani (2015) found the negative relationship between students' attitude and their speaking performance.

Some researchers also have investigated the correlation between the writing apprehension and writing performance. In the foreign setting, Erkan (2011), Al Asmari' (2013), and Sarkhoush (2013) examined the relationship quantitatively and found that students with low writing apprehension have better writing performance than those with high apprehension. Thus, those findings support the theory of writing apprehension proposed by Daly-Miller (1975). On the other hand, in Indonesia setting,

Katamba (2013) found that there was no correlation between apprehension and students' achievement. Tupang (2010) then qualitatively examined the type of English writing apprehension mostly experienced by Indonesian learners and found that cognitive apprehension was the most experienced. Another qualitative research about writing apprehension was also conducted by Al-Shboul (2015) who found that lack of knowledge in English structure, negative attitude toward writing, negative writing experience in the past, and inadequate knowledge in academic writing caused the apprehension.

Even though there were several studies investigated the correlation between learners' writing apprehension and attitude and writing performance, the present study is worth conducting because there are some gaps from previous studies. First, most previous studies examining the correlation were conducted in foreign countries which have different characteristics of L2 learners, culture and L1 language. Therefore, the present study examined the phenomena in Indonesia since the studies about the correlation are not abundant in Indonesia. Next, most samples used in the previous research is students majoring English while the sample of this study is non-English learners since it is assumed that if the learners are enrolled in the English program, they tend to have good attitude toward English and low apprehension while the non-English program students varied.

The previous studies adopted the questionnaires from one expert while the present study adapted the contents from the relevant sources as the setting of the research is different. Some previous studies also used the writing apprehension questionnaires specified for writing in native language so the present study employed questionnaires of English as a foreign language. There are various finding about the correlation of writing attitude, apprehension, and writing performance, some found a positive correlation but others did not so further research is necessarily conducted.

The present study was conducted at Architecture Technique, Chemistry and Physics Department, Science and Technology Faculty, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. The students of Architecture, Chemistry, and Physics Department are required to take PPBI (Program Pengembangan Bahasa Inggris) and English for Specific Program for two semesters. The researcher examined the correlation between the students' writing apprehension and attitude and their writing performance. She also investigated the comparison of students' writing performance according to their writing attitude and apprehension and found out why they have certain attitude and apprehension. The research on the students' writing apprehension and attitude is significant to be conducted because the lecturers need to know how to teach writing when the students

have certain attitude towards writing and feel apprehensive. Besides, there are no researchers who investigate the writing attitude and apprehension of Architecture, Chemistry, and Physics program students at UIN Maliki Malang.

RESEARCH METHOD

The present study used a mixed method research design because it aimed to examine the degree of relationship between the student's writing attitude, apprehension, and writing performance and the causes of both variables. The present research was conducted at Architecture, Chemistry, and Physics Department, Science and Technology Faculty, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim. It is one of the state universities in Malang, East Java. The population is selected because the students are required to take PPBI (Program Pengembangan Bahasa Inggris) and ESP for two semesters. There were 68 students as the sample of this present research. To measure the relationship among students' attitude towards writing, writing apprehension and their writing performance, the researcher used four instruments such as writing attitude questionnaire, writing apprehension questionnaire, writing test, and semi-structured interview. She adapted the attitude questionnaires from Rose (1984) and Gardner (1985) and the writing apprehension questionnaires from Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) by Daly & Miller (1975) and Cheng (2004). The research was conducted on March, 14-31 2016 at UIN Maliki Malang. There were two raters who assessed the 68 essays to gain accurate performance of the students' writing. The researcher used SPSS 16 to analyze the data in finding the degree of correlation and comparison then she analyzed the result of semi-structured interview

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The finding of this study revealed the alternative hypothesis saying that there is a statistically significant correlation between students' attitude towards writing in English and their writing performance was accepted ($r=.240$ and $\text{sig}=.049<.05$). The finding supports the results of the previous studies measuring the relationship between attitude towards writing in English and writing performance conducted by some researchers (Gupta and Woldemariam, 2011; Sarkhous, 2013; Pamuji, 2015). The researchers discovered a positive correlation between students' attitude towards writing in English and their writing performance so did the researcher of this study. Their findings were also consistent with the theory proposed by Dulay et al (1987) and Gardner (1987) who stated that attitude of students affects their writing performance. Even though the finding was significantly positive correlation between the students' attitude and writing performance, the score of coefficient correlation was low $p = .240$. Therefore, attitude can be considered as a predictor of writing performance but the

correlation was not sufficiently strong to be used as the basis to make prediction for the students' writing performance.

The researcher uses Pearson Product Moment to calculate the degree of correlation between the students' attitude towards writing in English and their writing performance. Table 3.1 below is the result of the computation for the correlation of the two variables.

Table 3.1 Correlation between Attitude and Writing Performance

		Attitude	Writing
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.240*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.049
	N	68	68
Writing	Pearson Correlation	.240*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.049	
	N	68	68

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The next finding shows that there is a negatively significant correlation between writing apprehension and writing performance ($r=-.246$, $sig=.043$). The finding suggests that most of high achievers tend to be less apprehensive and vice versa. As reported by Liu & Jackson (2008), language apprehension has negative correlation with risk-taking in the language classroom. It denoted that when the learners are less apprehensive during the writing class, they will be able to write a good essay better than those who are highly apprehensive. The willingness to write more and take risk in the classroom may provide them more space to practice using English and leading to the improvement of their language performance. Therefore, when they feel apprehensive, they tend to get discouraged and neglect the writing assignment. Consequently, they will have lower writing performance.

Even though the finding shows significantly negative correlation between writing apprehension and writing performance, the correlation coefficient of this finding was $-.246$ which was categorized as low. It can be concluded that the apprehension can be a

factor which affects the writing performance but their correlation was not sufficiently strong to be used as the basis of the prediction for the students' writing performance.

Table 3.2 The Correlation between Apprehension and Writing Performance

		writing	apprehension
Writing	Pearson Correlation	1	-.246*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.043
	N	68	68
apprehension	Pearson Correlation	-.246*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.043	
	N	68	68

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The next finding of this study shows that there is a different writing performance between the students with positive and negative attitude towards writing in English. It is proved by the result of the significance score of Independent Sample Test of .018 which is lower than .05 (significance level) so the alternative hypothesis is accepted while the null hypothesis is rejected. In sum, attitude gives an influence towards the students' writing performance.

Table 3.3 Comparison of Students' Writing Performance between Students with positive and negative attitude towards writing

	Attitude	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Sig. (2-tailed)	F	T
Writing	1	19	57.94	8.42	1.93	.018	.89	2.49
	2	19	50.31	10.36	2.38	.018		2.49

As reported by Graham & Fan's (2007) conclusion that writing attitude influences writing achievement. Students with positive attitude tend to give their best in the pre-writing and writing process. In the pre-writing process, they read many related sources that can enrich their composition ideas and in the writing process, they stick to the writing framework and complete the task with pleasure feeling.

In this study, the researcher also found that there was a different result of students' writing performance between students with low and high apprehensive. The result of Independents Sample t-test revealed that Sig. = .000 < 0.05 was lower than the level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis of this research was rejected and alternative hypothesis was accepted. It can be concluded that apprehension does influence the students' writing performance.

Table 3.4 Comparison of Students' Writing Performance between Students with Low and High Apprehension

	Apprehension	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Sig. (2-tailed)	F	t
Writing	1	33	41.42	18.13	3.16	.036	20.95	-2.14
	2	33	48.30	3.57	.62	.046		-2.14

Based on the mean score of students with low apprehension is 48.30 is higher than students with high apprehension of 41.42. It suggests that the students with low apprehension perform better than students with high apprehension. Apprehensive students are likely to suffer from the concern about the possibility of failure, flawed performance, fear of evaluation, negative attitudes toward writing task and writing situation (Cheng, et al., 1999), their writing performance are mostly lifeless, mechanical, full of grammatical errors, repeated concepts and unsupported organization (Hettich, 1994).

The result of interview shows that there are several reasons causing the students' attitude towards writing. Students have positive attitude towards writing in English because of several reasons. Firstly, English is an international language which must be mastered by anyone who wants to be success in the global era. Being able to write in English is a key of success since there are many companies require their employees to communicate in oral or written form nowadays. The students also realized that their major which is natural science is strongly related to the speaking English countries which are the center of knowledge today. They also have prolific publications which are written in English so the students have to know English to increase their knowledge. Moreover, today's education system applied by Indonesian universities, including UIN Maliki Malang also require their students to publish national and international journal articles which are written in English.

Some students have positive attitudes toward writing because they do like English and writing. According to Dornyei (1994), interest is one of the four motivational factors

related to a subject. If an individual has an interest in the subject, he/she may have a positive attitude towards learning that subject. The students also think that the lecturer's evaluation and teaching strategy influence their attitude. This phenomenon is supported by Gardner (1985) who considered the evaluation of the course and the teaching method as two factors to measure the individual's attitude.

The research subjects of this study are found to have negative attitude towards writing in English due to some factors. Firstly, in the writing process, the students are required to write in the good structure so they are afraid of making mistakes. They also do not write much in daily activities since they are busy with their assignments. Moreover, writing in English is considered as difficult activity because they do not know the grammar and vocabulary. Indeed, grammar and vocabulary are important parts in the writing as Hyland (2003) claims learning to write in a foreign or second language mainly involves linguistic knowledge and the vocabulary choices, syntactic patterns, and cohesive devices that comprise the essential building blocks of texts.

The research subjects revealed their reasons why they were not apprehensive during the writing process. Firstly, writing was their hobby so it was not such a burden if they were asked to write in English by their lecturer. They composed the text without having apprehension since they were confident in completing the task and were able to organize their ideas as well. Bandura (1986 in Pajares, 1993) argues that confidence in being able to successfully perform a task can influence the writing performance. The students also mastered the grammar and vocabulary so they do not find any difficulties in composing a text in English. Because writing is seen as a product constructed from the writer's command of grammatical and lexical knowledge (Hyland, 2003), students who are good at grammar and vocabulary tend to be able to write so their composition result will be good.

Some learners also felt high apprehensive in the writing process. They acknowledged that they were afraid of making mistakes since they were not really good at grammar and vocabulary. Their mind was jumbled when they had to organize their ideas and grammar and vocabulary at the same time. Williams (2003) suggests that one way to reduce the conflict between form and content is to separate composing from editing. Here, they just need to focus on their ideas without thinking the structure which will be revised in the editing process.

The biggest mistake done by the most foreign language writers, including the participants of this study is translating their mother language into English. Their compositions do not seem English-like essays since they do not think in English in the

writing process. The last obstacle causing the students' high apprehensive was developing the topic. The lecturers should be able to take part in this process, as suggested by Hyland (2003) teachers need to stimulate the students' ideas through pre-writing tasks, such as journal writing and parallel texts. Because writing is an act of discovering meaning, a willingness to engage with students' assertions is crucial, and response is a central means to initiate and guide ideas (Straub, 2000).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research revealed that there was a statistically positive significant correlation between the students' attitude towards writing and their writing performance as well as the correlation between the students' writing apprehension and their writing performance. It also proved that there was a different writing performance between the students with positive and negative attitude towards writing with the result showed that students with positive attitude performed better than the students with negative attitude. The writing performance of students with low and high apprehensive was also different. The finding described that the students with low apprehensive performed better than the high apprehensive ones.

There were some factors causing the students' attitude towards writing in English and writing apprehensive. The positive attitude was caused by the importance of English as an international language, the relationship of English and science, the interest in writing and English, and the lecturer's evaluation. Students having negative attitude confessed that they were not good at English, writing in English was a difficult activity, and they did not write much.

There were several factors causing the students' writing apprehension. Low writing apprehension was caused by the interest in writing, being good at grammar and vocabulary, and positive thinking in completing the task. At last, students with high apprehension thought that they were afraid of making mistakes since they were not good at English, they tended to translate *bahasa Indonesia* into English, and they are not able to develop topics given by the lecturer.

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