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Shaping the Future: With 21st Century Skills

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대한영어교육학회

The 24th Korea TESOL International Conference

Oct. 15-16, 2016
hosted by
Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul

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Willy Renandya
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Proceedings Editors-in-Chief

Dr. David Shaffer
Gwangju, South Korea

Maria Pinto
Universidad Tecnologica de la Mixteca, Oaxaca, Mexico

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Foreword

The 2016 KOTESOL International Conference was held on October 15 and 16, 2016, under the theme of *Shaping the Future: With 21st Century Skills.* There were 197 presentations given over the two days, with Thomas Farrell and Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa headlining the conference as the plenary speakers. In this volume of the *Proceedings*, we offer 36 papers, written by invited speakers and presenters from South Korea, Japan, Thailand, the Philippines, the USA, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia.

What *are* 21st century skills? Acknowledging the fast changing world we live in, 21st century skills focus on learning how to learn, and knowing how to find the information we need among a plethora of sources. Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa opens this volume with a discussion on how to effectively teach and raise multilinguals in the 21st century. Todd Beuckens looks at how to incorporate technology inside and outside the classroom to maximize the effect of traditional learning environments. Burcu Tezcan-Unal and Kara Mac Donald define what the phrase "21st century skills" means to each. Both then focus on how English language teachers can incorporate teaching these skills into the classroom, with Burcu focusing on the changing role of the teacher and the structuring of activities, and Kara relating 21st century skills to popular communicative instructional approaches and putting these in the context of Korean students. Willy Renandya clearly articulates the major differences between intensive reading and extensive reading, while Robert Murphy presents brain-friendly ways to foster deeper understanding and autonomy.

The focus on "how" to shape our students' future – and the future of English language teaching – continues with papers on how teachers have solved problems or issues in their classrooms: Norman Fewell and George MacLean talk about how to get students to write collaboratively online, Christopher Haswell focuses on using international students as teaching assistants, Damian Lucantonio looks at how to teach students to write an abstract, and Joanne McCuaig focuses on how to write a research paper.

Feisal Aziez, Alexander Nanni, and Nick Clements build on themes introduced by our invited speakers by focusing on project-based learning and the content-based classroom – *how* to teach students to learn English by working on projects in English, or by using content aimed at native speakers of English.

Christopher Miller, Amanda Maitland El Amri, and Jason Gold focus on keeping the students interested and engaged in the classroom by having them connect emotionally to the material being taught by using a variety of techniques in the classroom. Empowering the student is also important for Steve Urick, who looks at the factors necessary to successfully get students to bring music to the language classroom; for Carl Vollmer, whose students learnt to monitor their own language use by transcribing brief videos of conversations and thereby identifying positive points, problems, and opportunities for improvement; and for Kuniko Yoshida, Takayuki Kato and Yoshihiro Minamitsu, who detail their own learning curve in getting students to use learning logs to self-regulate their learning.

These are but a few of the papers that are contained within the pages of this record of the 2016 Korea TESOL International Conference. We hope you enjoy this volume of the *KOTESOL Proceedings*.

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Maria Pinto & David E. Shaffer
Editors-in-Chief

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Proceedings of the Korea TESOL International Conference

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Students' Writing Anxiety: Causes and Effects of a Moodle-Based Writing Course

Truly Almendo Pasaribu
Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

This study aimed at examining the causes of writing anxiety among Indonesian students in paragraph writing classes and the effects of a Moodle-based writing course on their anxiety. With these goals in mind, this study collected data by means of the SLWAI (Second Language Writing Anxiety Index; Cheng, 2004), interview sessions, and questionnaires. The result of the SLWAI showed that only 3 students (5.8%) experienced a low level of writing anxiety. The interviews revealed that anxiety stemmed from difficulties in organizing ideas, linguistic difficulties, fear of being evaluated, low self-confidence, lack of writing experience, and difficulties in managing time. The second questionnaire indicated that learning in an online writing environment was a positive experience. The discussion revealed that a Moodle-based writing course was beneficial in reducing student writing anxiety.

INTRODUCTION

Writing in a foreign language can be a challenging activity for many learners. Studies have shown that it is hard to write in the first language, but it is even more difficult to write in a foreign language (Gilmore, 2009). This experience may make students feel more anxious, which can pose potential problems to their learning process (Chen & Chang, 2004). Not only may they feel pain in expressing their ideas through words, they may also find their study less enjoyable and less motivating.

In Paragraph Writing classes at Sanata Dharma University, the second-semester EFL students are given opportunities to practice their writing skills to compose English paragraphs well. The focuses are basically on analyzing and producing different genres of paragraphs; namely, descriptive, narrative, and argumentative genres. Based on an exploration of the learners' context, a number of Indonesian students mentioned that they found writing in English painful. For example, they avoided writing because they didn't want to make grammatical mistakes, and they felt that they were anxious because they did not have sufficient vocabulary to express their ideas and opinions. This made them suffer from writers' block when they were given a writing topic. In line with Cheng (2002) and Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert (1999), we know that this type of writing anxiety then affects students' writing performance negatively.

Teachers experiment with various strategies to deal with students' anxiety. One of them is using digital tools to help them manage the learning materials. Digital tools may create effective learning environments to overcome such anxiety.

Researchers have claimed that computer-mediated communication can help reduce anxiety (Greenfield, 2003; Sullivan, 1993; Warschauer, 1996; Zhang, 2011). Sullivan (1993) argued that this environment is less teacher-centered because it gives students more time to respond. Based on previous research, it could be assumed that the implementation of a Moodle-based writing course may provide a less-threatening writing environment and may even help the students cope with foreign language writing anxiety.

This study aimed at answering two questions: (a) What causes writing anxiety among Indonesian students in a paragraph writing course, and (b) What are the effects of a Moodle-based writing course on students' writing anxiety? With these goals in mind, after elaborating the theoretical framework and methods employed, the research discusses possible factors causing the students' writing anxiety and the students' opinions of Moodle-based writing projects on their anxiety. Finally, it concludes with major ideas and findings of the research.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section elaborates extensive literature related to the current study; namely, literature on foreign language anxiety, foreign language writing anxiety, and Moodle-based writing courses.

Foreign Language Anxiety

Studies on foreign language learners' anxiety that have been investigated (Carroll, as cited in Krashen, 1981; Gregersen, 2003; numerous studies in Horwitz & Young [Eds.], 1991) show how anxiety influences the process of learning language in various aspects. For example, Carroll (as cited in Krashen, 1981) notes a small negative correlation between test anxiety and accomplishment in intensive foreign language courses. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1991) suggest that anxiety may lead to student difficulties in understanding instructions. Furthermore, Gregersen (2003) elaborated that learners with language anxiety may find it hard to recognize their own errors effectively. In the Indonesian context, Marwan (2008, p. 124) found that "most learners have experienced a certain degree of anxiety in their FL learning. Factors like lack of confidence, lack of preparation, and fear of failing the class have become the primary causes of their anxiety." Furthermore, Anandari (2015) explains that students experienced a high level of anxiety when they had to speak English in public. These previous studies showed that EFL learners can experience anxiety easily when exposed to a foreign language environment.

Foreign Language Writing Anxiety

Studies have also discussed the nature of language writing anxiety or language writing apprehension (Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999). Writing anxiety or writing apprehension, named by Daly and Miller (1975), is defined in a variety of ways. According to Daly and Miller (1975), "[Writing anxiety] refers to a situation and subject specific individual difference associated with a person's tendencies to

approach or avoid situations perceived to potentially require writing accompanied by some amount of perceived evaluation" (p. 327). In general, it is defined as the negative and anxious feelings that disrupt part of the writing process (McLeod, 1987). It relates to the tendency of people to approach or to avoid writing.

Furthermore, Scovel (1991) argues that anxiety can be classified into two categories: facilitative anxiety and debilitating anxiety. He states that "facilitating anxiety motivates the learner to 'fight' the new learning task" (p. 22). It is considered to be a positive factor because it encourages learners to increase their efforts. The latter, on the contrary, is a negative feeling that may pose harm to the learning process. Although Shanping and Qingyang (2015, p. 29) argue that "the distinctions between each pair of anxieties are not very clear," other studies suggest that anxiety affects students' writing debilitatively (Cheng, 2002; Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999).

Several studies have explored possible reasons for second language writing anxiety (Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999; Zhang, 2011). Some possible factors for foreign language learners' anxiety are the fear of not being able to express themselves clearly in their writing and the fear of being evaluated. In addition, according to DeDeyn (2011), learners do not only worry about their linguistic difficulties in expressing their ideas, but they also worry about others' judgement.

Moodle-Based Writing Course

Studies suggest that collaborative writing and digital environments help students reduce anxiety (Choi, 2013; Hussin, Abdullah, Ismail, & Yoke, 2015; Smith, 1984; Wu, 2015). Digital tools provide a learning environment that gives students the opportunity to extend their interaction and learning beyond the limitations of space and time (Kelly & McAnear, 2002). Oblinger (2005) adds that this generation tends to work in groups, spends more time studying, and follows advanced technology. Because we are teaching in an era when information is no longer rare, we must explore various activities to get the students to engage passionately in the learning process. In this case, technology offers a rich learning environment for students to gain knowledge independently. Students are able to explore information through digital tools such as web-based encyclopedias or videos. The current research used Moodle, a free learning management system, for it allows for the integration of graphic organizers and e-forums that were assumed to support student collaboration as well as autonomy. These tools are integrated because they play important roles in the writing process; namely, brainstorming, drafting, editing, and revising before publishing.

METHOD

Participants and Instruments

This research employed a descriptive study involving 51 students who were in the second semester of the English Language Education Study Program at Sanata Dharma University. This study obtained data from 11 male students and 40 female students who took the Paragraph Writing course in 2016. The data were

collected by using several instruments: the Second Language Writing Anxiety Index (SLWAI; Cheng, 2004), interview sessions, and a questionnaire.

Research Procedure

To know the levels of the students' anxiety, this study distributed the SLWAI (Cheng, 2004) at the beginning of the semester. Four students who had the highest level of anxiety and four students who had the lowest level of anxiety were interviewed to further elaborate the factors of their anxiety. At the end of the semester, this study distributed a questionnaire to discover students' opinions of a Moodle-based writing course on their anxiety. To further analyze and elaborate the students' opinions, 8 out of 51 students who had the lowest and highest levels of anxiety were interviewed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Levels of Students' Anxiety Before Using Moodle

The results of the SLWAI (Cheng, 2004) were analyzed descriptively. A total score above 65 points indicates a high level of anxiety; a total score in the 50–65 range indicates a moderate level of anxiety; and a total score below 50 indicates a low level of writing anxiety.

TABLE 1. Description of the SLWAI

Anxiety Level	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
High	24	47.1
Moderate	24	47.1
Low	3	5.8
Total	51	100

The scores of the participants in this study ranged from 36 to 88, which can be broken down into three categories. As shown in Table 1, there were 24 students out of 51 (47.1%) who experienced a high level of writing anxiety and 24 students (47.1%) who experienced a moderate level of writing anxiety. Only 3 students (5.8%) experienced a low level of writing anxiety. The numbers shown in Table 1 are thought-provoking because Krashen (1982) claimed that learners with low anxiety are more successful. Due to the important role of this affective variable, it is vital that this research investigate the causes of student anxiety.

Causes of Writing Anxiety

The interview session involved 8 students (4 students with the highest level of anxiety and 4 students with the lowest level of anxiety). The questions were delivered to allow the students to narrate their experiences in facing writing anxiety. The causes of student anxiety in Table 2 were identified when the

participants narrated their responses in the interview sessions.

TABLE 2. Writing Anxiety Based on the Interview

Issues Identified	HAS	Percentage (%)	LAS	Percentage (%)
Difficulties in generating and organizing ideas	4	100	0	0
Linguistic difficulties	3	75	2	50
Fear of being evaluated	2	50	2	50
Low self-confidence	1	25	1	25
Lack of writing experience in English	2	50	0	0
Difficulties in managing time	2	50	0	0

Note. HAS = High-Anxiety Students; LAS = Low-Anxiety Students.

Writing anxiety stemmed from multiple sources. Generating and organizing ideas in the written form can be painful for foreign language learners with high levels of anxiety. One high-anxiety student mentioned the difficulties of transforming ideas into paragraph form. He experienced difficulties in expressing the ideas in topic sentences and supporting sentences. Culturally speaking, Indonesian students tend to use the Asian rhetorical model (Wahab, 2006), whose development of the paragraph is not written in a direct manner. Due to this cultural difference, the student responded that he experienced difficulty in organizing the ideas. As a result, he had difficulties in other processes such as drafting and evaluating what had been written.

Another cause of anxiety was lack of linguistic knowledge in the foreign language. This finding is in accordance with Hyland (2003), who argued that "[students] themselves identify language difficulties, such as an inadequate grasp of vocabulary and grammar, as their main problems with English writing and as the main sources of frustration when being unable to express their ideas in appropriate and correct English" (p. 34). The linguistic issues mentioned in the interview can be broken mainly into grammar mastery, vocabulary inventory, punctuation errors, and figurative language. Although the lecturer had emphasized the importance of content, the students were still self-conscious of making odd sentences.

It was also evident that students were anxious due to the fact that they had to publish their works to be evaluated by their friends (their classmates). When they learned that they would be evaluated, they experienced excessive worry of others' judgements of their writing (DeDynn, 2011). They feared the possibility of being evaluated negatively by their friends. Some students compared themselves with others and felt that their skills were worse than others. In other words, they felt inferior in terms of writing in the foreign language, which led to anxiety. Some students experienced anxiety because they didn't have confidence in expressing their ideas. Interestingly, one low-anxiety student and one high-anxiety student mentioned that although they knew what to write, they felt insecure about their writings for different reasons. The low-anxiety student did not feel confident because she realized that her language use was not perfect. The high-anxiety student had a different reason for being unconfident: He felt his writing was

inferior compared to other students' work.

High-anxiety students were also not confident about their writing because they didn't have much experience. One student preferred to express his ideas by speaking in a foreign language, and he only practiced writing when he had to or when he felt that he wanted to write. Another high-anxiety student mentioned a different reason: She felt that when writing in English, she was unable to use figurative language. She had to translate the figurative expression from Indonesian to English.

Another form of writing that made them anxious was timed writing that they experienced in their tests. The interview revealed that when they were under pressure, they couldn't develop their ideas well, let alone transform them into grammatical sentences. One high-anxiety student felt panic-stricken thinking about the theme, feeling that she needed more time. Moreover, another high-anxiety student experienced getting stuck. This student preferred writing at home because there she could manipulate the task within a favorable learning environment.

In all, difficulties in generating and organizing ideas, linguistic difficulties, fear of being evaluated, low self-confidence, and lack of writing experience in English contributed to student writing anxiety. As has been stated previously, because anxiety plays an important role in successful learning, some studies investigated ways to reduce anxiety. One of the methods that has been well documented is that of providing a digital environment (Hussin, Abdullah, Ismail, & Yoke, 2015; Wu, 2015). To help the students in the class to reduce anxiety, this teacher took up the challenge to implement online learning: Moodle-based writing.

Effects of Using Moodle-Based Writing Course

One way to reduce student anxiety was to offer them a different experience in the classroom. After the implementation of the Moodle-based writing course for paragraph writing, this study distributed a questionnaire and surveyed the students as shown in Table 3.

The data from the questionnaire revealed that doing online assignments was a positive experience. There were 49 out of 51 students (96%) who agreed that doing online assignments was a positive experience. Table 3 shows that 43% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they felt less anxious when they had longer to write on a forum/blog. Moreover, it revealed that when doing online projects, 60% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they were not afraid to share their work to others. They had a positive experience and felt less anxious as they strongly agreed or agreed that they could manage their time well when doing online projects (55%), that they were more organized (64%), that they could write longer (53%) and better (70%), that they could get insights from other references (64%), and that they got useful comments from friends (88%) and their teacher (96%). In accordance with the questionnaire, the interview also indicated that students mostly experienced advantages of a Moodle-based writing course. Although some technical difficulties appeared in the learning process, the interview showed that it helped them reduce writing anxiety.

The issues identified from the interview suggest that the Moodle-based writing course was beneficial in several ways. At first, there were four high-anxiety students who felt anxious when they discovered that they would be evaluated.

TABLE 3. The Effects of the Moodle-Based Writing Course

Statements	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Doing online writing assignments is a positive experience.	0	1.96	1.96	45.10	50.98
I feel less anxious when I have longer to write online than on paper.	1.96	15.69	39.22	35.29	7.84
I am not afraid to do online writing projects because my friends and teacher can read my ideas.	3.92	7.84	27.45	43.14	17.65
I can manage my time well when doing my online projects.	0	9.80	35.29	50.98	3.92
I feel that I am more organized when writing my work online.	0	3.92	31.37	52.94	11.76
I write longer on the forum/blog.	0	7.84	37.25	45.10	7.84
I can express my ideas better when writing on the forum/blog than on paper.	0	5.88	23.53	41.18	29.41
I gain insights from other Internet links to improve my writing.	1.96	3.92	29.41	56.86	7.84
I like to read the comments from friends on my blogs because they are useful for me in improving my writing ability.	0	3.92	7.84	49.02	39.22
I like to read the suggestions and comments from teachers because they are useful for me.	0	0	3.92	33.33	62.75

They were afraid that they would be negatively evaluated. But after receiving positive feedback to improve their work, they felt positive about the evaluation. As the data from the questionnaire suggested, the students found online feedback from their friends useful. The interview revealed that they had a better-than-expected response from peers, which made them more confident. Online evaluation made the process more effective, which was confirmed by Hussin, Abdullah, Ismail, and Yoke (2015).

One low-anxiety student mentioned that she enjoyed helping her friends revise their works. Another interviewee believed that responding to her friends' writings helped her develop her ability to evaluate her own writing. Another advantage of peer evaluation was that students became more aware of the errors in their sentences and learned how to fix them. To some extent, they experienced facilitative anxiety as they could deal with the anxiety and felt motivated to write better.

Giving them a sense of audience for their writings also challenged them to write better. It pushed them to write more meticulously. The interview revealed that they were excited when their writings were published to a wider audience. Publishing to a wider audience gave one low-anxiety student a sense of

satisfaction for she did not only get feedback from her friends, but she also got ideas from her friends' work. She even mentioned that she shared the class blog on her social media so that more people could read it and post comments.

Moreover, in the era of technological innovation, online projects make it easier for students to explore sources through the Internet. Warschauer (1996) argued that technology boosted students' motivation because they thought computers enabled them to learn faster and better. He added that "students felt that they had control of their learning" (p. 19). Students in the Paragraph Writing class experienced the same thing. When they had problems they consulted the Internet. Another major advantage of the Moodle-based writing course was that students felt that doing online projects was useful because they could easily access other references that could help them write well. One high-anxiety student mentioned that when she was unsure about the order of her sentences, she would access YouTube (www.youtube.com) and Online Dictionary (www.onlinedictionary.com) to revise them. She thought that she had more opportunities to practice and learn English. Indeed, one advantage of digital learning is that students can access much information and become independent.

Online assignments gave them flexibility because they could do them anywhere and anytime. In writing assignments, they could manage their time in brainstorming, making an outline, and writing their first draft before the submission dates. Some students mentioned that they were more inspired when they were accompanied by music when writing. Some preferred to write at night. When they were in a more relaxed learning environment, learning became less threatening and could boost their desire to learn.

In sum, students felt that doing writing activities online gave them several benefits: receiving feedback and appreciation, giving constructive evaluation to their friends, publishing of their works, accessing more references, and adjusting the learning process to their learning styles. Although most of the students experienced positive effects of the Moodle-based writing course, a few students experienced difficulties in accessing the Internet due to a lack of a strong Internet connection. To make digital learning more fruitful, we should make sure that a Internet connection is available to all students.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has discussed the levels of student writing anxiety and its factors. It was found that writing anxiety stemmed from several different sources; namely, difficulties in organizing ideas, linguistic difficulties, fear of being evaluated, low self-confidence, lack of writing experience, and difficulties in managing time. After the implementation of the Moodle-based writing course, the students indicated that learning in an online writing environment helped them in getting useful feedback, in getting more references, in publishing their works, and in adjusting the writing process to their own learning style, which resulted in a reduction in their anxiety. In short, the results of this study support the argument that in relation to anxiety, learning in a digital environment can be one strategy to alleviate student writing anxiety.

The Author

Truly Almendo Pasaribu teaches writing and reading courses at Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. She obtained her bachelor's degree in English literature from Universitas Negeri Malang and her master's degree in linguistics from Gadjah Mada University. Her research interests include issues related to writing skills, discourse studies, and technology in education. Email: tr.almendo@gmail.com

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