

How Much Do the Affective Factors Contribute to Writing Performance?: A Path Analysis Study of Chained Predictors

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Abstract: Affective aspects are considered as one of the most influencing factor in learning foreign language. The aim of this study is to figure the model of affective aspects as factors in predicting writing performance of the EFL college students. The sample of this study consists of 134 students of English Department, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim. The result of this study confirms that writing anxiety, writing self-efficacy, and writing attitude contribute to and writing performance (39.2%). Also, their attitude towards writing is more likely influenced by how they perceived their self-efficacy towards writing activities rather than their anxiety (12.5%). The findings reveals that self-efficacy and attitudes matter in doing writing tasks and students who have a low level of attitudes are caused by how they perceive their own self-efficacy. Writing anxiety level is not the most predictive factor in determining students' writing performance.

Key Words: writing anxiety, writing self-efficacy, writing attitudes, writing performance, affective factors

Abstrak: Aspek afektif dianggap sebagai salah satu faktor yang paling berpengaruh dalam belajar bahasa asing. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui model aspek afektif sebagai faktor dalam memprediksi kinerja penulisan mahasiswa jurusan bahasa Inggris. Sampel penelitian ini terdiri dari 134 siswa Jurusan Bahasa Inggris, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim. Hasil penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa kecemasan, efikasi diri, dan sikap menulis berkontribusi terhadap kemampuan menulis (39,2%). Selain itu, sikap terhadap kegiatan menulis cenderung dipengaruhi oleh bagaimana mereka menilai efikasi diri mereka terhadap aktivitas menulis, bukan kecemasan mereka (12,5%). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa efikasi diri dan sikap berpengaruh dalam melakukan menulis dan siswa yang memiliki sikap yang kurang positif disebabkan oleh bagaimana mereka yakin pada kemampuan mereka sendiri. Selain itu, kecemasan bukanlah faktor yang paling prediktif dalam menentukan kinerja menulis.

Kata kunci: kecemasan menulis, efikasi diri menulis, sikap menulis, kinerja menulis, faktor afektif

INTRODUCTION

Writing, especially in a foreign language, appears mostly in educational settings. It is an essential component of ELT curriculum, particularly in the teaching of English for academic purposes. However, the issue regarding writing in second language is considered as complicated since the target language proficiency lacking of the EFL students becomes a concern in learning English for academic purpose. It is widely acknowledged that, comparing to other language skills, writing is considered as the most complex skill to be taught (Cahyono & Widiati, 2011, p. 69).

Since it is believed that writing is one of the most complicated skill among others, myriad factors have been investigated which may affect writing performance of foreign language learners. The literature suggests two main reasons for this. One is that writing is an active and rigorous productive skill that requires not only a certain amount of linguistics knowledge, but also thinking strategies. The other major reason of writing skill is considered as a difficult to master deals with affective elements, such as attitude, motivation, and self-efficacy (Wu & Wu, 2008). Indeed, writing is more than a matter of cognition.

Affective factors have become the center of attention in the research of SLA/FLA and ELT for decades. According to Gardner & MacIntyre (1993, as cited in Graham, 1997, p. 92), affective factors are those emotionally relevant characteristics of the individual that influence how he/she will respond to any situation. Learners' affective factors are obviously important in accounting individual differences in learning outcomes. Their affective states tend to be volatile, affecting not only overall progress but responses to particular learning activities (Ni, 2012, p. 1508). Cognitive and emotional activities can deeply affect writing performance, thus, it is a necessary to nurture the affective aspects of EFL learning. As to support this statement, Sarkhoush (2013) considered high writing apprehension and low writing self-efficacy as blockage factors that may hinder the actual performance of the writers. It is a need for EFL students to be aware of their capabilities, their attitudes, and their feeling. They should try to minimize the effects of the blockage factors. The problem of this research focuses on the model of relationships among the some affective factors (anxiety and attitude and self-efficacy) in writing and its relation to L2 writing performance. The general question of the study can be formulated as "Which patterns of relationship is significant between students' affective factors in writing and their writing performance?" In order to make it clearer, the main research problem is elaborated into some research questions as follow: 1) is there any significant correlation between students' anxiety, self-efficacy and attitude in writing toward writing performance?; 2) how much does students' writing anxiety, writing self-efficacy and writing attitude contribute to their writing performance?; 3) which pattern of relationship is significant between students' writing self-efficacy, writing anxiety, as well as writing attitude and their writing performance?

METHOD

This study proposes to analyze the forms of relationship among the students' writing anxiety, writing self-efficacy, writing attitude and L2 writing performance. As the researcher intends to find out how these variables form a structural relationship, a correlational design involving Path Analysis was deemed to be an appropriate model for this study.

The target populations in this study was the Indonesian undergraduate students majoring English and acknowledge argumentative writing. However, the ac-

cessible population was UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang cohort 2014 with the total number of the students is 205 students. The selection of the undergraduate program students of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim was based on the consideration that the students are already obtained comprehensible input from qualified lecturers, a conducive atmosphere for teaching-learning process and a well-developed curriculum for English study program. In selecting the sample of the study, the researcher conducted a proficiency test to the population in order to set the homogenous sample. The researcher used TOEFL-like test, focusing on Section 2 and 3 (Structure and Written Expression and Reading Comprehension). Therefore, the total respondent for this study was 134 students.

To collect data in this study, there were two kinds of research instruments; a writing test and a set of questionnaire on students' attitudes toward writing, writing anxiety and writing self-efficacy. In order to measure students' writing performance, the researcher developed writing prompt. Whereas, the questionnaire for students' attitudes towards writing was adapted from the Writing Attitude Questionnaire developed by Wolcott and Buhr (1987), the questionnaire for students' writing anxiety was adapted from the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) developed by Cheng (2004), and to obtain the students' writing self-efficacy, the researcher adapted the Writing Self-Efficacy in Writing Inventory developed by Yavuz-Erkan (2013).

RESULT

The researcher used SPSS 20 with significance level of 5%. Path analysis technique used in testing the contributions indicated by the path coefficients of the causal relationships among variables X1 and X2 to X3 and X1, X2, and X3 towards Y.

The result shows that the dominant variable which contributes directly to writing performance is students' self-efficacy towards writing activity (X2). It contributes .484 or 48.4% of all total values. Besides, writing attitudes also contribute .24.5% slightly higher than writing anxiety. It can be said that self-efficacy and attitudes matter in doing writing tasks. Students with high self-efficacy tends to write better essay than those who perceive low self-efficacy. Then, the contribution of writing self-efficacy (X2) to writing attitude (X3) is .356 or 35.6% of the total values. It means that the students' attitude can be accounted for by 35.6% of the students' self-efficacy. Their attitude towards writ-

ing is more likely influenced by how they perceived their self-efficacy towards writing activities rather than their anxiety. In addition, the Table 1 shows that the contribution of students' self-efficacy towards writing (X2) to writing performance (Y) mediated by their attitudes (X3) is .443 or 44.3% of the total values. It means that the students' writing performance is more influenced by their efficacy and attitudes towards writing. Based on this result, the students with good writing performance are those who have high self-efficacy, low anxiety and good attitude toward writing. Furthermore, in order to do well on writing performance, students should be guided to have positive attitude and encouraged to boost their self-efficacy and minimize their anxiety towards writing.

Table 1 shows that the dominant variable which contributes directly to writing performance is students' self-efficacy towards writing activity (X2). It contributes .484 or 48.4% of all total values. Besides, writing attitudes also contribute 24.5% slightly higher than writing anxiety. It can be said that self-efficacy and attitudes matter in doing writing tasks. Students with high self-efficacy tends to write better essay than those who perceive low self-efficacy. Then, the contribution of writing self-efficacy (X2) to writing attitude (X3)

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The result of the data analysis of the present study reveals that writing anxiety, writing self-efficacy, writing attitude are significantly contributed to writing performance. This result follows the previous finding and cited in the present study. As can be seen from Figure 1, the direct contribution of writing anxiety towards writing performance is the very least compare to other

Table 1. Summary of Path Contribution of the Independent and Dependent Variables to the Dependent Variable

Path Contribution	Causal Contribution		Total
	Direct	Indirect (Through X ₃)	
X ₁ to X ₃	-.075	-	-.075
X ₁ to Y	-.202	-.0184	-.220
X ₂ to X ₃	.356	-	.356
X ₂ to Y	.484	.0872	.571
X ₃ to Y	.245	-	.245

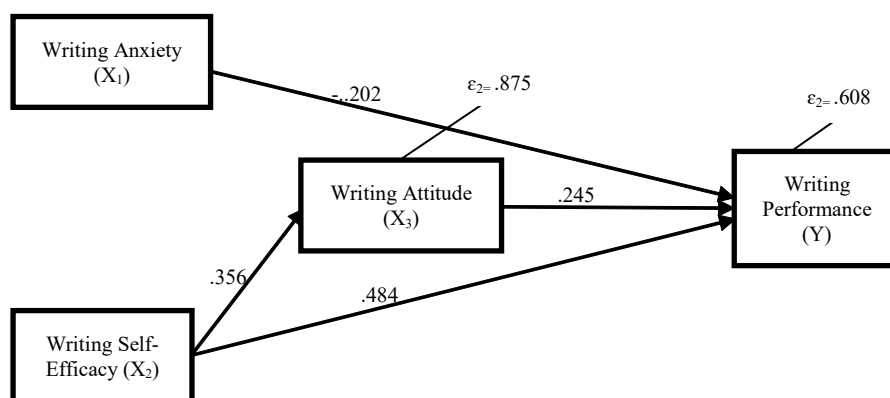


Figure 1. Path Model with Significant Correlation among the Variables Investigated in this Study

variables with only $-.202$ or -20.2% , the direct contribution of writing self-efficacy is the highest with 41.9% , followed by the contribution writing attitude towards writing performance with 24.5% , and other factors that contributed to writing performance is $.60.8$ or 60.8% .

Figure 1 shows that the only variable that significantly contributes to the writing attitude is writing self-efficacy. This result may confirm the underlying theories of the correlation between anxiety, self-efficacy and attitude in the context of composing a written text. As has been mentioned previously, writing self-efficacy has high contribution to writing attitude which is $.356$ compare to writing anxiety.

DISCUSSION

Based on the result of simultaneous testing of the first layer, it showed that the value of significance was $.000$ ($p < .05$) indicating that there was significant contribution among writing anxiety, writing self-efficacy, and writing attitudes towards L2 writing performance. Also, the result of simultaneous testing of the second layer showed that the value of significance was $.000$ ($p < .05$) indicating a significant contribution among writing anxiety and writing self-efficacy towards writing attitude. In addition, the residual or the coefficient of error is very high. It means that there are some other variables that might contribute significantly to L2 writing performance. As Brown (1994) stated that cognitive as well as affective aspects are needed by students in order to be an advanced learner. Those unknown variables figured as residual coefficient may come from the cognitive, metacognitive, demography, and other affective aspects which have been the main factors affecting students' achievement in second language learning.

Writing Anxiety, Writing Self-Efficacy, Writing Attitudes, and L2 Writing Performance Contribution

The initial model was proposed in this study including the relationship among the affective factors in writing as exogenous variables and writing performance. As the result of the hypothesis testing, the regression models derived from the full path model, there is empirical evidence showing that there are significant correlation among the proposed path. This result is in line with the study conducted by Gardner, Tremblay

and Masgoret (1997) in which they revealed the relationships among language learners' individual differences including affective variables which affect their achievement. However, based on the result of analysis of the partial testing of the path, it is revealed that some paths do not have significant correlation. The affective factors contribution to EFL proficiency being portrayed in this study may give an explanation of some existing theory. Based on the result of the study, the residual or the coefficient of error is very high. It means that there are some variables other than those being investigated in this study which contribute to EFL proficiency. In order to be an advance language learner, students need both cognitive and affective aspects (Graham, 1997; Brown, 1994). Those unknown variables figured as residual coefficient (60.8%) may come from the cognitive aspects which have been the main factors affecting students' writing achievement in second language learning. Despite of the high residual coefficient value, the hypotheses formulated from the first layer of multiple regression of the path model is proved to have significant contribution the endogenous variable (Writing Performance).

Based on the finding of this study for the first hypothesis shows that there is a significant contribution of writing anxiety towards writing performance which means that the students' level of anxiety influences and contributes to their ability in writing an essay, in this research was composing an argumentative essay. Their performance in composing an essay can be explained and predicted by their level of anxiety. The path analysis shows the direct writing anxiety contribution to writing performance was only 20.2% .

The result of this study has significant empirical evidence to prove the direct correlation of writing anxiety toward L2 writing performance. This is in line with the research findings of Yavuz-Erkan and Sabani (2011), Choi (2013), Fajriyah (2016). This findings suggested that writing anxiety level had affected the students performance in composing a text. The higher the anxiety level, the lower the writing score is. This result was unsurprising since the negative detrimental effects of anxiety on L2 writing performance have been proven in many studies (e.g., Hassan, 2001; Zhang, 2011; Fajriyah, 2016).

However, this research contrasted with a recent study conducted by Ardila (2016) which found that apprehension does not contributes to EFL writing ability. The different result is probably due to the fact that the text type of the writing test used in the research is different. Argumentative essay is considered as the

most difficult text type for the undergraduate students to compose. This may hesitate the students to jot down their ideas in a mean time eventhough the chosen topic is familiar to them. This deliberative apprehension or anxiety should be seen as a challenge to the lecturer or teacher.

This result also contrast to the findings of studies conducted by Hartono (2012), Sarkhous (2013), and Majidifar and Oroji (2014) who found that there was no correlation between writing anxiety to writing performance. The possible explanation of this is probably due to the writing test that is used in the research. Argumentative is a high anxiety-provoking writing genre in nature. Because this kind of writing type is still being learned by the time the research collecting the data, there's a probability of students might not completely grasp the knowledge in composing argumentative essay.

Furthermore, the statement from Arnold (1999) who states that anxiety ranks high among factors influencing language learning is not proven. The result of the present study show that the very least contribution among all variables is the writing anxiety. In the same vein, study conducted by Liu (2007) is unfortunately opposing the current result study. He said that anxiety is the most powerful predictor on the learners' performance among the affective factors. It is the writing self-efficacy which become the most powerful predictor in this present study (48.8%).

One of the most significant aspects of this is that educational research supports the view that self-efficacy is not used but is informed by the antecedents mentioned above and, importantly, can be manipulated in the classroom (Schunk et al., 2008). Therefore, supported by this statement, it is crucial for students to dig deeper in themselves on how they perceive confident towards writing and it is worth for teachers to address their students' self-efficacy in the classroom. Self-efficacy is a very important concept that must be considered in designing courses. Since self-efficacy is improved with training, it is important to train students' self-efficacy (Gist, 1989; Frayne & Latham, 1987; Yalcinap, 2005).

The finding also shows that writing self-efficacy is the most significant predictor on the learners' performance. Self-efficacy belief is something that is dynamic, fluctuating, and changeable because it is context specific. The students' self-efficacy beliefs might change due to their experience in implementing several writing strategies (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996; Setyowati, 2015).

The result of this study also shows that some of the students are high-efficacious in writing but their essay score was categorized as fair and poor. In the academic life, there are times when students are high in efficacy but low in outcome expectation due to structural constraints in the environment such as grading curves, institutional discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity or gender. To find out whether these environmental constraints did occur in the present study, more data are needed. With insufficient data and counting only the result of self-efficacy questionnaire, the researcher was not able to make credible conclusion. Thus, the explanation of why some students are high in their writing self-efficacy but low in their actual outcomes, and vice versa, the researcher needs to conduct further study and equipping herself with more instruments like interview and field observation. Therefore, future researcher who are interested in cognitive studies and its relation to EFL writing can investigate this specific area to have better understanding of the nature of writing.

Having discussed the result of self-efficacy beliefs and its relation to EFL writing, the researcher realizes that there are still many holes to fill. Cognitive studies and EFL writing are promising fields for writing researchers to yield more knowledge and understanding in foreign language writing.

This result related to writing attitude towards writing performance confirms the study conducted by Ni'mah (2016) saying that there was a significant positive correlation between attitudes towards writing and learners' writing performance. This result also opposing the finding from a study conducted by Chihara and Oller (1978) which concluded that there is no relationship between attitude and writing performance. They correlated the variables involving the attitudes of Japanese students of EFL and writing ability. The result of the study results showed weak correlations between factors distilled from the attitude measures and their ability in L2 writing. Attitude is an aspect of affective factors which have been frequently studied in relation to second language learning (Yokochi, 2003). This present study confirms the direct contribution to students' writing performance. This result also confirms what Gordon (1980) has highlighted that language attitude is the best indicator of English achievement among school students followed by attitude towards the learning situation. Students' attitude may prompt students' intention and motivation to learn the target language. It can also be seen from the path from attitude to motivation which shows significant correlation.

At the end, as the result of the study, students' writing performance is maximized by good self-efficacy and mediated by positive attitude.

Writing attitude is related to personal beliefs about skills, abilities, social relationships, and future outcomes (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003) is revealed having a positive attitude may maintain the students' social relationship with the language environment which mainly takes place in classroom with the language teacher and fellow students. In addition to the direct correlation, the indirect path from self esteem to anxiety is also considered to have a higher contribution compared to the other path in this model (see Table 1). The notion from Bandura saying that the relationship between writing performance and anxiety was mediated by self-efficacy is yet to be proven since the assumption test which is the heteroscedascity testing was not fulfilled for the third layer.

Writing Anxiety, Writing Self-Efficacy, and Writing Attitudes

The path of correlation between writing anxiety and writing attitudes is found to be insignificant. The result of this study is in contrast to the research conducted by Khodadady and Khajavy (2013). The possible explanation of this insignificant path is probably due to the fact that the students feels positive and enjoy towards writing activity so eventhough they are anxious, they still can compose the essay.

On the other hand, the result of writing self-efficacy towards writing attitude shows significant contribution. This confirms what Marchis (2011), Lim (2001) and Riddle (1994) have highlighted that self-efficacy has a significant predictive power on students' attitudes toward writing activity.

Attitude is associated with the amount of effort they would expand in the subject (Hemming & Kay, 2010, p. 48). In order to make the learning process in the foreign language classes more effective, good attitudes and feelings are needed to be raised. It is important for student and teacher to work together in the classroom figuring out how to make their learning as effective as possible.

CONCLUSION

Based on the summary of path contribution, it is concluded that the dominant variable which contributes directly to L2 writing performance is X2 representing

the variable self-efficacy. It contributes .48.4 or 48.4% of all total values. Then, the next dominant contribution through the path the contribution is .443 or 44.3 % of all total values. This means that in the path, students' writing performance can be accounted for 44.3 % of the students' self-efficacy mediated by attitude. Based on this result, in order to do well on writing an essay, students should be guided to have positive attitude and good self-efficacy and minimize their anxiety. Effective path for the EFL proficiency is from self-efficacy and mediated by attitude. The other independent variables are found not to have direct significant contribution to the students' EFL proficiency. Based on the result of the study, it is concluded that the significant variable which affects L2 writing performance is mainly the students' self-efficacy. The implication towards teaching and learning is that students' self-efficacy in learning English is important in nurturing positive attitude in the teaching and learning process so that they can maximize their performance in L2 writing activity.

Due to several limitation of the present study stated previously, it is urgent to provide some suggestion for further research related on the same topic as the present study. First, practically and pedagogically, since writing anxiety can be a problem for EFL students, teachers or lecturers are expected to continue their attempts to find out the causes standing behind their students' writing anxiety and experiment the coping strategies to help them turn the process of writing into an enjoyable event. It is important for educators to consider and explicitly address their students' academic self-efficacy beliefs in an effort to provide more engaging and effective instruction. This findings could also help in guiding the policy in relation to teaching writing in Indonesian EFL context. The detailed information about the context and the methodology of this present study could help the readers and respective stakeholders in terms of applicability and transferability future research using alternative methods, such as interviews and thorough observation, might obtain a more complete view of writing anxiety, writing self-efficacy and writing attitudes

Second, for further research, it is strongly recommended for other researchers to do the same study focusing on other factors influencing writing performance. However, the data sampling should be made more valid by following the suggestion of 20:1 parameters. Therefore, by considering the parameters, the total of the sample can be made adequate or more in order to avoid bias. In addition to the sampling technique, the selection of sample should be carried out

randomly to provide more generalized findings. It is also important to provide a wide range of proficiency level so that the result may show significant contribution of the dependent variables to the EFL proficiency as dependent variable.

The variable that has been found to have a significant contribution in this study is self-efficacy. Therefore, investigating self-efficacy and other factors may be more effective. In addition, since there is a high residual coefficient in this study, it is important to involve other variables from other aspects instead of merely affective factors, cognitive factors such as IQ and students' learning strategies. In addition, the research findings will be a special interest to test designers and curriculum developers as they have drawn their attention to the necessity of creating other tools to make writing class less stressful.

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