

Can Writing Anxiety Change Over Time? Evidence from a Mixed-Method Study

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Abstract: Researching the role of psychology in language learning is interesting because of its significant impact, particularly on emotion, which is believed to be at the heart of language learning. Some theories of language learning acquisition believe that anxiety is a situation-specific psychological aspect that may remain stable in any learning situation. This study delves into the difference in writing anxiety over time (within 2022-2025). A total of 33 EFL students have fully participated in this study since 2022 (at the beginning of their study) until their final year (2025). Adopting a mixed-methods design, the quantitative data were obtained from the SLWAI Questionnaire developed by Cheng (2004), and the qualitative data were collected through interviews with selected students whose anxiety remained stable, increased, or decreased over the course of their study. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, guided by interview guidelines that could be further developed based on participants' responses. The findings revealed significant differences in writing anxiety from 2022 to 2025. However, the level remains stable over time, which means that students have a high level of anxiety with different mean scores. The mean score was 74.36 (high) in 2022, 71.82 (high) in 2023, and 69.03 (high) in 2025. The students have explained various factors causing changes in anxiety over time, including a shift in focus from speaking to writing, international academic endeavors, adequate background knowledge of writing topics, and factors related to teachers and peers. This study encourages writing teachers to implement anxiety-reducing strategies to alleviate students' writing anxiety. Suggestions for further research are also provided.

Keywords: writing anxiety, EFL students, longitudinal study, qualitative.

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■ INTRODUCTION

Writing is a demanding and effortful task that requires students to invest time and perseverance in using grammatical patterns, organizing effectively, and exercising sound judgment (Hartwell & Aull, 2023; Sun & Wang, 2020; Toba et al., 2019). Writing difficulties stemming from cognitive and emotional factors contribute to heightened levels of writing anxiety (Shen et al., 2024). Writing activities are considered the most demanding among the three language skills. To convey ideas clearly, students have to deal with the complexity of vocabulary,

writing mechanics, grammar, and word choice. (Dendup & Onthanee, 2020; Nugraheni, 2023; Toba et al., 2019; Valizadeh, 2022). In addition, writing requires consistent practice, as some studies have found that students face difficulties due to a lack of it.

Moreover, other studies have shown that students often experience negative emotions during the writing process. (Jennifer & Ponniah, 2017) found that students were worried about receiving low grades and negative evaluations from teachers and peers. Furthermore, students also felt stress, panic, and anxiety when they were

assigned to write. A recent study also found that Thai EFL students were anxious about writing assignments, linguistic difficulties, and test anxiety. The study also revealed that the students experience a high level of anxiety (Talasee & Poopatwiboon, 2024). Other factors causing writing anxiety in a professional context were time pressure, insufficient practice, and linguistic difficulties. These findings have been reported by a study conducted by Patty (2025). (Rasool et al., 2023) stated that students face many challenges during the writing process due to inadequate grammar knowledge, inadequate practice, and limited vocabulary, which may lead to writing anxiety

Writing anxiety has proven to have a negative correlation with writing performance. The previous studies have figured out that students with a high level of anxiety could not perform well in their writing (Abdel Latif, 2015; Chuang, 2019; Gibriel, 2019). Cheng (2004) categorized anxiety into three types, namely cognitive anxiety (fear of negative evaluation), somatic anxiety (physical symptoms, like trembling, fast heartbeats, and sweating), and avoidance behavior (avoiding writing activity). These situations influence students' writing performance. Studies have found that cognitive anxiety was associated with positive self-talk and the use of relaxation techniques (Talasee & Poopatwiboon, 2024). In addition, the students also did systematic preparation and quality control, cognitive and environmental regulation, social support, and technology utilization. (Patty, 2025) most dominant type of writing anxiety (Kurniasih et al., 2024; Patty, 2025)

In order to cope with anxiety, some scholars have found some most common strategies implemented by the students, which are planning, setting goals, seeking social support, and doing. Another study reported that the participant engaged in diary-writing practice, a supportive writing environment, writing-challenge practice,

and vocabulary checking (Santri et al., 2022). Overall, these findings suggest that EFL students manage writing anxiety through a combination of complementary cognitive, emotional, social, and technological strategies. The various forms of coping, from planning and positive internal dialogue to using technology and creating a conducive learning environment, confirm that anxiety management is not a single process but a multidimensional endeavor that evolves with learning needs and contexts.

Some studies were done under a cross-sectional design. The first research investigated writing anxiety experienced by 132 EFL students. The students were at a moderate level due to linguistic difficulties, lack of writing practice, and topic choice (D. Wahyuni et al., 2019). The second study focused on investigating the level of writing anxiety using the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI). The findings indicated that students experienced different levels of anxiety. 54% were in high, 44% were in moderate, and 2% were in the low level of writing anxiety. Most of the students experienced cognitive anxiety due to mental changes when writing English texts (Wahyuni & Umam, 2022).

Previous studies on foreign language anxiety have provided valuable insights into its patterns and influencing factors across various educational contexts. (Huang et al., 2025) found that the Production-Oriented Approach significantly reduced Chinese university students' writing anxiety, and this effect persisted even after the intervention period. Similarly, Kostia Bobanovic (2016) found that academic level, rather than gender, had a significant impact on EFL students' writing apprehension, with more advanced students exhibiting lower anxiety. Kruk et al. (2024) further demonstrated that writing anxiety follows a nonlinear trajectory, decreasing in the early phases before stabilizing later, suggesting that emotional fluctuations are inherent to the development of L2 writing proficiency. These

studies confirm that anxiety is not static but evolves with students' learning experiences and linguistic development.

In addition, the latest study examined the relationship between three variables: metacognitive strategies, self-efficacy, and writing anxiety. The research was conducted using a two-wave longitudinal design, in which students experienced two settings: online and offline learning. The findings revealed that writing self-efficacy positively predicts improvements in metacognitive use over time (Shen et al., 2024).

Despite these valuable contributions, most studies examined writing anxiety using a cross-sectional design, which only provides a snapshot of students' condition at a specific moment, focusing on statistical changes in writing or general anxiety levels. However, they have rarely explored how EFL students experience and interpret their evolving anxiety throughout their learning journey. Most prior research views language anxiety as a relatively stable, situation-specific construct, measured at a single point in time. This study challenges this view by demonstrating that anxiety develops dynamically through the interaction of personal, social, and academic factors over time. Thus, this research expands the theoretical framework of language anxiety from a static concept to a more contextual and process-oriented understanding.

This gap calls for a longitudinal exploration that captures both the emotional depth and contextual nuances of language anxiety over an extended period, particularly tracing the emotional trajectories and contextual factors shaping EFL students' anxiety from their first year (2022) to their fourth year (2025). This approach overlooks the dynamic nature of writing anxiety, which is influenced by a constantly evolving learning experience. This research is significant because it offers a deeper understanding of how anxiety changes over time. The insights gained will be vital for developing teaching strategies that

address both language skills and students' emotional well-being, fostering a more inclusive and student-centered classroom. This study aims to answer two research questions:

- a. Is there any significant difference in students' writing anxiety over time?
- b. How does anxiety evolve in individuals?

■ METHOD

Participants

This research was conducted at Universitas Islam Malang. The subjects were drawn from students who completed the SLWAI Questionnaire in 2022 during the writing Essay course. They were asked to fill in the same questionnaire in 2024/2025. The total population is 78 students; for this study, only 33 students were included because the rest did not complete the 2022 questionnaire. The participants' distribution is shown in the table below.

Table 1. Distributions of the participants

No	Gender	Male	Age
1	Male	9	18-21
2	Female	24	18-21

From the 33 participants, three were selected for interviews based on their questionnaire responses. Students whose anxiety levels stayed stable, decreased, or increased to high levels were invited.

This study acknowledges the potential for survivorship bias, as only 33 participants who consistently completed questionnaires from 2022 to 2025 were included in the analysis. This sample comprises students who persisted throughout the study period; those who discontinued participation were excluded from the analysis, potentially limiting the external validity and generalizability of the findings. The identified anxiety dynamics may reflect the characteristics of students who are relatively more resilient or have a higher

academic commitment than the overall baseline population. However, this consistency of participation allows for a more accurate analysis of intra-individual changes within a longitudinal framework, which is not achievable through a cross-sectional design. Therefore, while the results require contextual interpretation, this study still makes a significant theoretical contribution to understanding the dynamic nature of language learning anxiety over time.

Research Design and Procedures

The current study employed a mixed-methods approach with an explanatory sequential design. The data collection step begins with quantitative data, followed by qualitative data. This research aims to answer two research questions. First, the purpose is to investigate the difference in students' writing anxiety over time.

Second, it provides in-depth information on how anxiety evolves. The quantitative data were collected through questionnaires. Qualitative data collection through interviews and analyses will also be conducted in this study to further explain the quantitative findings.

Instruments

The instrument of SLWAI, adopted from Cheng (2004), was used to identify writing anxiety. This questionnaire is a Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). It consists of 22 items, some negatively worded and requiring reverse scoring. The 22 items in the questionnaire were broken down into three categories: Cognitive (1, 3, 7, 9, 14, 17, 20, 21), Somatic (2, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, 19), and Avoidance Behavior (4, 5, 10, 12, 16, 18, 22). The following table outlines the questionnaire blueprint.

Table 2. Cognitive anxiety

Items	Statement
1	While writing in English, I'm not nervous at all.
3	While writing English compositions, I feel worried and uneasy if I know they will be evaluated.
7	I don't worry that my English compositions are a lot worse than others'.
9	If my English composition is to be evaluated, I would worry about getting a very poor grade.
14	I'm afraid that other students would deride my English composition if they read it.
17	I'm afraid of my English composition being chosen as a sample to be discussed in class.
20	I'm afraid of my English composition being chosen as a sample to be discussed in class.
21	I'm not afraid at all that my English compositions would be rated as very poor.

Table 4. Somatic anxiety

Items	Statement
2	I feel my heart pounding when I write English compositions under a time constraint
6	My mind often goes blank when I start to work on an English composition
8	I tremble or perspire when I write English compositions under time pressure.
11	My thoughts become jumbled when I write English compositions under time constraints.
13	I often feel panicked when I write English compositions under time constraints.
15	I freeze up when unexpectedly asked to write English compositions.
19	I usually feel my whole body rigid and tense when I write English compositions

Table 5. Avoidance behaviour

Items	Statement
4	I often choose to write down my thoughts in English
5	I usually do my best to avoid writing English compositions.
10	I do my best to avoid situations in which I have to write in English.
12	Unless I have no choice, I would not use English to write a composition
16	I would do my best to excuse myself if asked to write an English composition
18	I usually seek every possible chance to write English compositions outside of class.
22	Whenever possible, I would write compositions in English.

Cognitive anxiety refers to the mental changes that occur when someone feels anxious. This type of anxiety is related to psychological components such as worry, fear, and the anxiety itself. Meanwhile, somatic anxiety is related to the physical responses that arise when an individual experiences anxiety, such as panic, sweating, trembling, or an increased heart rate. According to Cheng (2002), cognitive anxiety encompasses the mental dimensions of the anxious experience, such as the emergence of negative expectations, a tendency to obsess over performance, and concerns about the judgments of others. Furthermore, avoidance behavior, namely the behavioral aspect of anxiety, is when individuals tend to avoid certain activities, such as writing. This behavior is also known as “escape anxiety,” which is an action taken by students to avoid writing assignments that are perceived as stressful or frustrating.

Prior to calculating the overall results, reverse scoring was necessary for some items (1, 4, 17, 18, and 22). The following parameters were used as classification criteria to ascertain the anxiety levels. Low anxiety is indicated by a mean less than 50 (Low, $M < 50$). Moderate anxiety is defined as having a mean between 50 and 60 (Moderate, $M=50-65$). Anxiety is high (High, $M > 65$) if the mean is greater than 65.

The results of the Reliability testing indicate that each SLWAI subscale has good internal consistency. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient values for the three subscales: Somatic Anxiety,

Avoidance Behavior, and Cognitive Anxiety, were in the range of 0.82–0.88. These values indicate that the three subscales have good internal consistency. Furthermore, test-retest reliability results showed satisfactory coefficients: 0.82 for Somatic Anxiety, 0.83 for Avoidance Behavior, and 0.81 for Cognitive Anxiety, confirming the instrument’s stability and consistency over time.

The second instrument was employed to answer the research question, “How does anxiety evolve in individuals? The interview questions were:

- a. What personal experiences and life events contribute to changes in anxiety levels over time?
- b. How do social and environmental contexts influence the progression or alleviation of anxiety?
- c. What coping strategies do individuals employ to manage anxiety?

The data collection procedures were as follows:

1. First, the SLWAI questionnaire was distributed in September 2022 when they were in the Essay Writing Course.
2. Second, the SLWAI questionnaire was distributed in 2023 when they were in the Extended Essay Writing Course
3. Third, the SLWAI questionnaire was distributed in 2025 when they were writing their undergraduate thesis

4. Fourth, the interview was conducted face-to-face with the selected participants.

Data Analysis

Utilizing SPSS 20 for the statistical program, the results of the questionnaires were analyzed using ANOVA to investigate the difference in students' writing anxiety. Finally, the interview data were analyzed using content analysis, as proposed by Elo et al. (2014), which includes three main stages: preparation, organization, and reporting. In the preparation stage, researchers collected and reviewed relevant data, then determined the units of analysis to be used. The organization stage was conducted inductively through coding, categorizing, and abstracting. The reporting stage then aimed to present findings based on the categories formed.

■ RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Is there any significant difference in students' writing anxiety over time?

The table shows the mean levels of three types of anxiety. Cognitive anxiety had a mean score of 3.12, indicating a moderate level of anxiety related to negative thoughts, worries, or fears. Somatic anxiety had the highest mean score of 3.55, indicating that physical responses such as tension, restlessness, or increased heart rate were more dominant than other types of anxiety. Meanwhile, avoidance behavior had a mean score of 3.01, indicating a moderate tendency to avoid certain situations, but lower than cognitive and somatic anxiety.

Table 6. Type of writing anxiety

Type	Mean
Cognitive Anxiety	03.18
Somatic Anxiety	03.51
Avoidance Behavior	03.05

Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean score of students' writing anxiety levels over time.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
WA 2022	74.36	8.895	33
WA 2023	71.82	11.106	33
WA 2025	69.03	11.823	33

The data shows a downward trend in writing anxiety levels from 2022 to 2025. Anxiety scores decreased gradually from 72.36 in 2022 to 69.82 in 2023, and then again to 67.03 in 2025. Based on the criteria used to determine the level of writing anxiety. This total decrease of 5.33 points indicates a consistent improvement in students' affective aspects related to writing activities. The data shows that the score of writing anxiety was above 65, meaning that even though their anxiety decreases, their anxiety level is still high over time. This downward linear trend may indicate increased student confidence and adaptability in academic writing assignments, possibly influenced by improvements in learning strategies, the use of assistive technology, or more supportive assessment approaches during this period.

Boxplot analysis shows a consistent downward shift in the median from 2022 to 2025, indicating a collective decrease in anxiety scores among most students. This decrease is accompanied by a widening of the interquartile range (IQR), as seen from the increasing length of the boxes each year. This phenomenon indicates that the data distribution is becoming increasingly heterogeneous. While initially, student anxiety levels tended to be uniform (homogeneous) in 2022, in 2025, a wide divergence or gap occurred, with psychological conditions varying significantly between individuals.

The data distribution also shows a widening downward range, as seen in the lower whisker, which extends to 45 in 2025. This reflects a group of students experiencing a drastic decline in scores compared to the initial period.

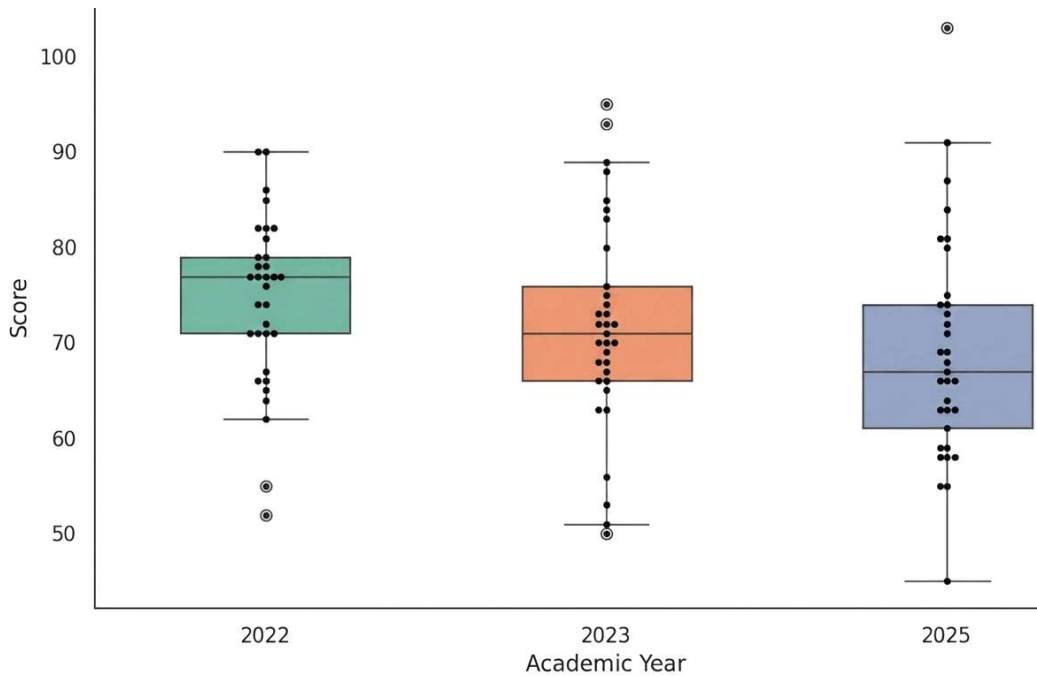


Figure 1. Score distribution

Furthermore, the emergence of an extreme outlier in 2025 with a score of 103 represents a significant anomaly; this point indicates the presence of individuals with resilience or score

stability that contrasts sharply with the group’s general downward trend. Overall, this boxplot depicts a transition from a stable group condition to one filled with increasing inequality and stress.

Table 8. Mauchly’s test of sphericity for writing anxiety scores over time

Effect	Mauchly’s W	Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Sphericity Assumed?
Time	0.992	0.244	2	0.885	Yes

To confirm the assumption of sphericity, Mauchly’s Test of Sphericity was performed. The results showed that the assumption was met: $W(2) = 0.992, p = 0.885$. Using sphericity values, a repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to examine the difference in anxiety levels over time.

anxiety is not stable over time, but rather experiences significant changes within the period of measurement. In other words, time (year) has a significant effect on the changes in students’ writing anxiety.

Table 9. Tests of within-subjects effects

Source	df	F	Sig.
Time	2	3.880	.026

The result of a repeated-measures ANOVA, with sphericity values indicating a violation, showed a significant difference in writing anxiety across 2022, 2023, and 2025, $F(1)=3.880, p<.005$. These findings showed that the level of

Table 10. Pairwise comparisons

Comparison	Mean Difference	Sig.
2022 vs 2023	2.55	0.177
2023 vs 2025	2.79	0.171
2022 vs 2025	5.33	0.009

The results of the pairwise comparison test indicated that the mean difference in students’ anxiety levels was 2.55 ($p = .177$) from 2022 to

2023. Meanwhile, the mean difference was 2.79 ($p = 0.171$) from 2023 to 2025. These results indicate no significant difference in anxiety levels between 2022-2023 and 2023-2025. The most significant decrease occurred from 2022 to 2025, with a mean difference of 5.33 ($p < 0.009$). These findings suggest that writing anxiety decreased from 2022 to 2025.

How does anxiety evolve in individuals?

The next stage of analyzing the data obtained from the interview. The interview was with three students who had different anxiety situations from the beginning to the end of the study, and whose anxiety was stable.

What personal experiences and life events contribute to changes in anxiety levels over time?

Linguistic Competence and Practice

Changes in writing anxiety were influenced by the development and continuity of language practice. P1 admitted to being unprepared at the beginning because, "*I never practiced English when I started college, I felt insecure,*" while P3 actually felt more confident because of a strong foundation: "*I already have a basic understanding of English... so when I started college, I was more confident.*" However, as writing practice decreased, P3 stated, "Writing was just a formality in class... so I didn't practice much," indicating that competence must be consistently maintained to prevent anxiety from escalating.

Self-Efficacy and Experiences of Success

Self-efficacy develops through positive academic experiences and recognition of ability. P1 stated that after receiving appreciation from a lecturer, "*He said that my writing in chapters 1, 2, and 3 was well-organized, I became more confident,*" and this increased further after "*I got a GPA of 4 in Taiwan.*" This indicates that concrete successes strengthen perceptions of

competence and significantly reduce writing anxiety.

Fear of Starting and Emotional Regulation

In the initial stages, anxiety manifested in the form of overthinking and fear of starting. P2 described this clearly: "*I was afraid to start... Is this right? Is this wrong? So every time I wanted to do something, I was immediately nervous.*" However, when she enjoyed the topic and felt in control of the process, she felt "*it became like normal,*" indicating improved emotional regulation over time.

Social Support (Lecturers and Peers)

Social support proved to be a buffering factor for anxiety. P2 stated, "*It helps when we work together... maybe if we work alone, we get nervous,*" indicating that collaboration reduces emotional distress. Furthermore, the perception of supportive lecturers, "*my lecturers are nice and friendly,*" helped create a sense of security and reduce the fear of negative evaluation.

Changes in the Environmental Context

Changes in the learning environment also influenced the dynamics of anxiety. P2 attributed initial anxiety to the pandemic situation: "*When we first started, it was COVID... it was online, so I didn't know what my peers were like.*" Meanwhile, P3 indicated that the shift from an intensive Islamic boarding school environment, "*almost every day using English,*" to limited practice on campus contributed to a change in confidence in writing.

How do social and environmental contexts influence the progression or alleviation of anxiety?

The development of students' writing anxiety in this study indicates that social and environmental factors play a significant role. Longitudinal data show that anxiety is not fixed, but rather changes dynamically according to the quality of social

interactions, academic support, and students' personal and family circumstances.

Social isolation and limited interaction increase anxiety

Limited social interaction has been shown to exacerbate writing anxiety, especially when students lack opportunities for questions and discussions. P1 experienced isolation during two months of quarantine, leading to a fear of interaction: "*Those two months in quarantine... ended up not being able to socialize with people. I ended up being afraid to meet people.*" As a result, she admitted, "*even if I wanted to ask questions, I didn't understand, I was afraid.*" A similar sentiment was expressed by P3, who lacked a close circle: "*I don't have... a circle... no one to ask questions either.*" This lack of social support made the academic process feel more individualized and vulnerable to anxiety.

Peer support and discussion as protective factors

Conversely, the presence of friends and academic discussions reduced anxiety and increased self-confidence. P1 stated that her anxiety decreased when she received help from friends: "*When I have difficulties, my friends were also willing to help... finally, my writing improved.*" P3 also described a positive initial phase when active interactions occurred: "*I kept meeting friends, and there were discussions on campus... I enjoyed it.*" This indicates that social support serves as a buffer against academic anxiety.

The Role of Lecturers in Triggering or Calming Anxiety

The character and responses of lecturers directly influence the fluctuations in anxiety. P2 stated, "*If the lecturer is nice, I'm fine... but if the lecturer is not nice, my anxiety also increases.*" Conversely, lecturer appreciation can be a significant reinforcement, as P1 experienced

during the international credit transfer program in Taiwan: "*The lecturer there also still appreciates me... It means my writing is good.*" This indicates that academic authority plays a significant role in shaping students' perceptions of self-competence.

Family and Economic Pressure as External Factors

Family and economic factors also influence the dynamics of writing anxiety. P1 explained the complexity of her pressures: "*My own circumstances, yes. Social ones. Family ones. Economic ones too... I had no motivation at all.*" She also had to work full-time: "*I was too focused on work... I left in the morning, came home in the afternoon, and then worked again at night.*" Meanwhile, P3 felt strong encouragement from her parents: "*Let's work on my thesis again. Graduate quickly and come home.*" For P2, her mother's encouragement actually served as a positive trigger: "*If I'm not being pushed like that, I won't move.*" This shows that family pressure can function as both a stressor and a motivator depending on the individual context.

Workload and Motivation Fluctuations

High academic workloads and personal circumstances cause anxiety to fluctuate. P1 described this dynamic explicitly: "*At the beginning, the ups and downs were much more... lately, there have actually been a lot of ups and downs.*" She also added about the intensity of assignments: "*There are a lot, every week.*" This shows that writing anxiety develops dynamically along with changes in workload, psychological state, and social context.

What coping strategies do individuals employ to manage anxiety, and how do these change over time?

Longitudinal data show that individuals use a variety of strategies to manage writing anxiety, tailored to their needs and the context they face.

Over time, these strategies evolve from a reliance on external support to more independent and reflective self-regulation.

Cognitive-Academic Strategy: Reading and Checking Writing

To reduce writing anxiety, P1 uses a competency-based strategy by reading numerous references and double-checking. He stated, "I read... a lot of journals," and also asks his father for help to ensure the accuracy of his language, "I ask my father to check... the grammar and to see if the wording is correct or not." This strategy demonstrates that in the initial stages, anxiety management focuses on accuracy and a sense of security regarding the quality of writing.

Relaxation Strategy through Work Activities

Over time, P1 developed an emotion regulation strategy through enjoyable and meaningful work activities. He explained, "Now that I work with animals, my anxiety is lower... I use that to relax at work." Furthermore, engaging an English tutor also increases feelings of competence, so that work becomes not just a distraction, but also a source of self-empowerment.

Spiritual Strategies for Emotional Regulation

For P2, spiritual coping is the primary strategy for managing anxiety. He stated briefly but firmly, "For me, I pray... and ask my mother for prayers... it instantly calms me down." This strategy demonstrates that emotional calm is achieved through religious faith and family support, especially in performative situations like micro-teaching.

Self-Regulation Strategies: Journaling and Task Breakdown

P3 demonstrated the development of more reflective and structured self-regulation strategies.

He used journaling and breaking down tasks into smaller chunks, "For this five minutes, I'll write one point first... then when I have more free time, I'll expand on that." This strategy helped reduce the psychological burden by breaking down large tasks into more realistic, manageable targets.

Self-Talk Strategies and Emotional Delay

Furthermore, P3 used internal dialogue to manage anxiety, particularly in speaking. He said, "Cha, I'll put the nervousness off for later. Let's go all out for now... let's just talk." This form of self-talk demonstrates the ability to suppress negative emotional responses so they don't hinder academic performance.

Prioritizing Personal Comfort

Interestingly, P3's strategy also reflects a well-being-based approach. He realized that pushing himself was counterproductive, so he chose a comfortable pace: "I prioritize my own comfort over writing in a rush and then writing poorly." This demonstrates a shift from a pressure-based approach to a self-compassion-based approach. The description above is illustrated in the thematic map below.

The figure illustrates the framework for the development of writing anxiety, which is influenced by two main groups of factors: personal and social factors. Personal factors include linguistic competence, self-efficacy and achievement, negative emotions, and self-regulation skills, while social factors include the role of teachers, peer support, and family and economic pressures. To overcome this anxiety, various coping strategies are offered, including cognitive-academic strategies through reading and checking writing; relaxation strategies through work activities; spiritual strategies for emotional regulation; self-regulation strategies such as journaling and task solving; and self-talk and emotional delay strategies. This framework demonstrates that writing anxiety is

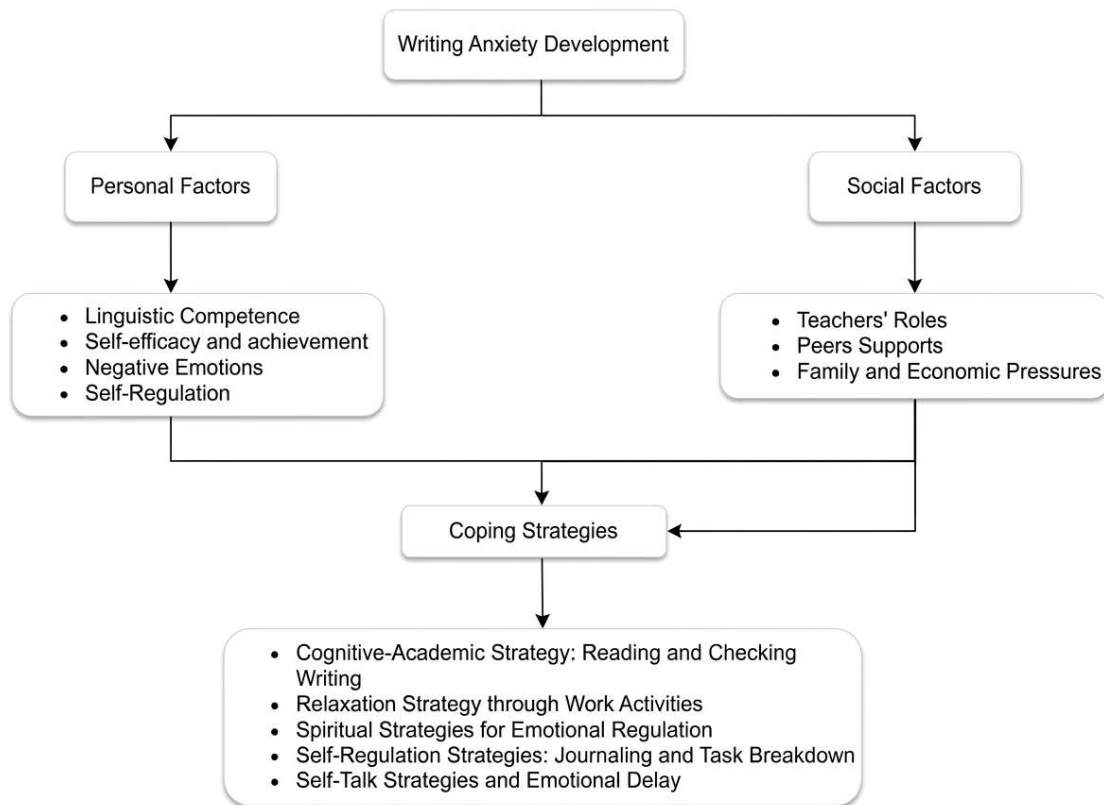


Figure 2. Thematic map

multidimensional and requires a comprehensive treatment approach.

This study had a quite small sample size. One of the challenges of conducting a longitudinal study is ensuring that all participants are involved in the entire data collection process. This study was conducted over 3 years, which may have hindered participants' ability to participate. With this small number of participants, consequently, the results of this study could not be generalized for a large population. It further supports the main purpose of the study to look at how writing anxiety changes over time. Based on the data analysis, the level of anxiety decreases over time from 74.36 in 2022 to 69.03 in 2025. This fact is supported by the P1, who stated that after receiving appreciation from a lecturer, "He said that my writing in chapters 1, 2, and 3 was well-organized, I became more confident," and this increased further after "I got a GPA of 4 in

Taiwan." This is supported by P3's statement that "When I have difficulties, my friends were also willing to help... finally, my writing improved." P3 also described a positive initial phase when active interactions occurred, "I kept meeting friends, and there were discussions on campus... I enjoyed it." This indicates that social support serves as a buffer against academic anxiety.

This evidence suggests that there is a significant difference in writing anxiety over time. It aligns with the previous longitudinal quasi-experimental study conducted in China (Huang et al., 2025). They reported that writing anxiety in EFL content gradually decreased over time as they had adequate learning experience. Chinese university students' writing anxiety significantly decreased after being taught using the Production-Oriented Approach over 15 weeks. In addition, Iranian EFL students enrolled in a 4-month

IELTS writing course are reported to decrease during the first two measurements (from the beginning [T1] to the end of the first month [T2] of writing courses) and then stabilize until the end of the semester (T4) (Kruk et al., 2024). These results support the findings of the current study that writing anxiety level is fluctuating or malleable.

A closer look at the students' anxiety levels remains stable within the research time. In 2022, the mean score was 74.36 (high); in 2023, 71.82 (high); and in 2025, 69.03 (high). These findings, in conjunction with the previous study, indicate that EFL students at the sophomore and junior levels experienced high levels of writing anxiety (Kurniasih et al., 2023a). This phenomenon can be explained by Horwitz et al.'s (1986) theory of Foreign Language Anxiety, which views language anxiety as a situation-specific construct that tends to be relatively stable in formal learning contexts. Within this framework, evaluative demands such as writing assignments and theses can maintain anxiety even when students are at a more advanced level of study. This finding also aligns with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), which posits that anxiety serves as an affective filter that can persistently hinder language learning when academic pressure remains high. Furthermore, Alpert & Haber's (1960) concept of facilitating and debilitating anxiety helps explain that persistent anxiety may not be fully resolved but can also act as a performance driver. Thus, these longitudinal findings suggest that anxiety in advanced EFL contexts is not simply an initial phenomenon of learning, but rather a persistent and dynamic condition throughout students' academic journey.

The finding that significant differences emerged only between 2022 and 2025 suggests that changes in English language anxiety are cumulative rather than linear. This aligns with the view that foreign language anxiety is a dynamic construct influenced by context and learning experiences (Gregersen, 2020; Horwitz et al.,

1986; Qian et al., 2025). In this study, the anxiety changes occurring over shorter time intervals may not be large enough to achieve statistical significance individually. Therefore, the results of this study indicate that changes in language anxiety are better understood as a gradual, cumulative process that only becomes significant over time.

Another qualitative result also highlighted that the level of anxiety is fluctuating depending on the nature of the writing task. Similarly, Kostić Bobanović (2016) reported that academic level significantly influenced Croatian EFL students' writing apprehension. Furthermore, he also found that upper-year students showed lower anxiety than freshmen. This evidence is influenced by more exposure to academic writing tasks, linguistic self-confidence, and better coping strategies for managing complex writing demands in a foreign language. Additionally, students who perceived their instructors as strict reported feeling anxious before starting the tasks, but this anxiety reduced during task performance validate our findings. Moreover, linguistic problems, time pressure, the pressure to be perfect, and the fear of teachers' negative evaluation were discovered to be the leading causes of writing anxiety. (Quvanch & Si Na, 2022)

Regarding a student with increasing anxiety when writing their undergraduate thesis, it is influenced by some factors such as lack of writing practice, few friends to practice with, and family factors. Furthermore, the findings also reported that she did not have a problem writing their undergraduate thesis. It is in line with the work of Al Fraidan (2025) that students experienced significantly greater anxiety when working on indirect tasks (editing) compared to direct writing tasks (essays or letters). In this case, writing an undergraduate thesis refers to a direct writing task.

In addition, the significant difference in writing anxiety between the beginning and the end of university studies can be explained by the

development of metacognitive awareness and adaptation to academic expectations. EFL students typically experience higher anxiety levels during their early years due to limited vocabulary, grammatical challenges, and performance pressure. Over time, as they acquire more effective learning strategies and gain extensive writing practice, their anxiety tends to diminish. Supporting this, Kruk et al. (2024) found that writing anxiety followed a piecewise trajectory, decreasing significantly from the initial stage (T1) to the mid-stage (T2) and then stabilizing in later stages. These findings collectively suggest that academic experience and supportive learning environments play crucial roles in reducing EFL students' writing anxiety from the beginning to the end of their university studies. Students have implemented some strategies to overcome their anxiety. Seeking help from parents, working while studying, and journaling are believed to be the best strategies to lower their anxiety. In addition, all three interviewees agree that technology offers benefits that help them check, find ideas, and find solutions to any matters, including non-academic ones. Students have also used some teaching affective strategies to build their motivation during their studies, such as self-talk and spiritual coping, to relieve their stress. Those strategies have been implemented and proven effective, and those strategies were perceived positively by students in the previous studies (Kurniasih et al., 2023b; Santri et al., 2022)

■ CONCLUSION

This study explored the EFL students' writing anxiety during their study. The data was collected at different times in 2022, 2023, and 2025. The main challenge in conducting this longitudinal research was maintaining the students' commitment to participate in the study. Of the 78 students who participated in 2022, only 33 completed the full data collection process in 2025. Consequently, the study's findings could not be generalized to other contexts. However,

the main purpose is to look closely at the participants' level of writing anxiety and to understand the changes in anxiety within a certain time interval (short and long). This study offers critical insight into writing anxiety, particularly regarding the changes in writing anxiety over time. The findings showed that writing anxiety significantly changed from the beginning to the end of the study. This occurs due to low English writing ability and online learning. Gradually, the writing anxiety decreased through offline class experiences, interactions with friends, frequent writing activities, and international academic experiences. For students with stable writing anxiety, some similar situations affected the writing anxiety, such as external factors (writing lecturer and friends), the writing topic, and support from family. A student who experienced an increase in writing anxiety claimed that at first, she felt that she had good English competencies, but gradually she faced problems due to a lack of writing practice, few friends to practice with, and the demand from parents to finish her studies on time. Even though the findings showed that students' writing anxiety decreases over time, their anxiety level remains high. The future studies should explore the strategies to decrease students' anxiety levels. In addition, future studies may also compare the level of anxiety in both EFL and ESL contexts.

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■ DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI USAGE IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the drafting of this manuscript, the author(s) utilized ChatGPT. The purpose of refining/sentence, structure/translating text.

Following the use of this tool, the author(s) reviewed and revised the content as necessary and accept full responsibility for the final content of the article.

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