

**Emotional Dynamics in EFL Writing: The Interplay of Proficiency, Enjoyment, and Boredom**

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**Abstract**

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Foreign language writing can be a challenging and emotionally complex experience for learners. In fact, the literature has shown that learners' emotions significantly influence foreign language acquisition. Despite the acknowledged influence of emotions in language learning, research specifically examining the interplay between proficiency, enjoyment, and boredom in EFL writing contexts, particularly among Indonesian university students, remains scarce. This correlational study investigated the interrelations between language proficiency, foreign language writing enjoyment (FLWE), and foreign language writing boredom (FLWB) among university students in Indonesia. The Oxford Quick Placement Test (QPT) was utilized to assess the participants' proficiency level, while FLWE and FLWB scales were used to measure emotional dimensions. The findings revealed moderate positive correlations between proficiency and FLWE ( $r = .48, p < .01$ ) and moderate negative correlations between proficiency and FLWB ( $r = -.58, p < .001$ ). Additionally, a significant inverse relationship between FLWE and FLWB ( $r = -.53, p = .001$ ) was identified. These findings suggest that higher proficiency fosters greater enjoyment and reduces boredom in writing activities. Implications for educators include scaffolding tasks to match proficiency levels and fostering positive learning environments to enhance engagement.

**Kata Kunci:**

*Kesenangan dalam menulis bahasa asing, Kebosanan dalam menulis bahasa asing, Kefasihan, Emosi*

**Abstrak**

Menulis dalam bahasa asing dapat menjadi pengalaman yang menantang sekaligus kompleks secara emosional bagi pembelajar. Literatur menunjukkan bahwa emosi pembelajar memiliki pengaruh signifikan terhadap penguasaan bahasa asing. Meskipun pengaruh emosi dalam pembelajaran bahasa telah diakui, penelitian yang secara khusus

meneliti keterkaitan antara kemampuan, kesenangan, dan kebosanan dalam konteks menulis bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) di kalangan mahasiswa Indonesia masih jarang dilakukan. Penelitian korelasional ini mengkaji hubungan antara kemampuan berbahasa, kesenangan dalam menulis bahasa asing (Foreign Language Writing Enjoyment atau FLWE), dan kebosanan dalam menulis bahasa asing (Foreign Language Writing Boredom atau FLWB) di kalangan mahasiswa Indonesia. *Oxford Quick Placement Test* (QPT) digunakan untuk mengukur tingkat kefasihan peserta, sementara skala FLWE dan FLWB digunakan untuk mengukur dimensi emosional. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan korelasi positif sedang antara kemahiran dan FLWE ( $r = .48, p < .01$ ) serta korelasi negatif sedang antara kemahiran dan FLWB ( $r = -.58, p < .001$ ). Selain itu, ditemukan hubungan terbalik yang signifikan antara FLWE dan FLWB ( $r = -.53, p = .001$ ). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa tingkat kemahiran yang lebih tinggi mendorong rasa senang yang lebih besar dan mengurangi kebosanan dalam aktivitas menulis. Implikasi bagi pendidik meliputi penyesuaian tugas agar sesuai dengan tingkat kefasihan dan menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang positif untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The acquisition of a foreign or second language is influenced by a combination of cognitive and psychological factors. Cognitive factors such as language aptitude and working memory have been shown to play crucial roles in language learning outcomes (Li, 2019; Teng, 2023). Psychological factors, particularly emotions like anxiety, have also been widely studied. For instance, Teimouri et al. (2019) confirmed through a meta-analysis the detrimental effects of anxiety on language learning.

While anxiety has traditionally been the focal point of emotion research in language learning—especially through the foundational work of Horwitz et al. (1986) and their influential Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) measure—recent research has expanded to investigate other emotional dimensions. Over the past decade studies have increasingly explored the roles of

enjoyment and boredom in various language-learning contexts (e.g. Almutlaq, 2024; Botes et al., 2020; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Li & Han, 2024; Tsang & Dewaele, 2024; Zhang et al., 2022).

Research on enjoyment and boredom in foreign language learning has yielded valuable insights. For example, Dewaele et al. (2024) identified enjoyment as a significant predictor of oral language proficiency. Similarly, Wang and Li (2022) demonstrated that enjoyment positively—and boredom negatively—affects self-regulated learning. Their findings suggest that learners with high levels of enjoyment are more likely to engage in independent study than those with lower levels of enjoyment, thereby enhancing their likelihood of successfully completing online courses. Moreover, Li and Xing (2024) found that boredom adversely impacts learners' overall achievement in foreign language courses.

Despite the growing body of research on the influence of enjoyment and boredom in foreign language learning, studies specifically examining the impact of these emotions on foreign language writing classes remain scarce. To the best of our knowledge, only a few studies have addressed this topic. Among them, Ardi et al. (2024) focused on postgraduate students in Indonesia, while Li and Wei (2023) investigated junior high school students in China.

This lack of research is concerning, given the importance of writing skills, particularly for university students. Writing plays a critical role in academia by enabling students and scholars to comprehend complex topics, present arguments effectively, and adhere to the norms and practices of specific disciplines, making writing essential for knowledge creation and professional growth (Hyland, 2013). University students should develop English writing skills and strategies tailored to their academic disciplines to enhance critical thinking, logical reasoning, and the ability to produce meaningful content.

To address this gap in the literature, the current study investigates how proficiency, enjoyment, and boredom are interrelated in a university-level writing class in an EFL setting. Proficiency was included in this study for two reasons. First, it has been overlooked in previous studies conducted in similar EFL

contexts (Ardi et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023). Second, a prior study that examined proficiency (Botes et al., 2020) relied on self-assessed proficiency, which diminishes the reliability and rigor of the measure.

Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) What are the profiles of foreign language writing enjoyment (FLWE) and foreign language writing boredom (FLWB) levels among university students at a private university in Indonesia?; (2) To what extent does language proficiency contribute to foreign language writing enjoyment (FLWE) and foreign language writing boredom (FLWB)?

## **METHOD**

This research employed a descriptive quantitative approach to investigate the correlations between English proficiency, foreign language writing enjoyment (FLWE) and foreign language writing boredom (FLWB) among university students. The study involved 36 students from two intact classes, consisting of 16 males and 20 females, aged between 18 and 22 years, with an average age of 19.1 years. The participants were students majoring in Accounting, Architecture, Law, and Product Design. They were all enrolled in a required writing and composition course, focusing on developing skills in writing different genres, such as descriptive, narrative, and argumentative essays.

To assess the participants' proficiency levels, we used the paper-based version of the Oxford Quick Placement Test (QPT). The QPT was selected because it is designed to evaluate general proficiency across diverse learner types, is straightforward to administer, aligns with CEFR levels, and has been extensively validated (Geranpayeh, 2003). The test consists of 60 multiple-choice questions and can be completed in 30 minutes. The participants completed the test during the first session of the course.

To measure foreign language writing enjoyment (FLWE) and foreign language writing boredom (FLWB), we adopted the FLWE and FLWB scales from Li et al. (2023). FLWE consists of 9 items and FLWB consists of 5 items.

All items in the FLWE and FLWB scales followed a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “1” (“strongly disagree”) to “5” (“strongly agree”).

The data were subsequently analyzed with IBM® SPSS version 26. We employed bootstrapping, a reliable statistical method, to generate both descriptive and inferential statistics. Bootstrapping is characterized as a "Monte Carlo resampling method" that replicates sampling distributions generally only feasible with larger sample sizes. This approach produces "more stable and statistically accurate" results because it is robust against non-normal distributions and low statistical power (Plonsky et al., 2014). Following the guidelines provided by LaFlair et al. (2015), this study applied bootstrapping with the following settings: simple random sampling, 10,000 resampling iterations, and the computation of bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) 95% confidence intervals (CI).

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

As shown below, Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the findings.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Min.	Max.	<i>M</i>	BCa 95% CI for <i>M</i>		<i>SD</i>
				LL	UL	
QPT	13	57	35.44	31.08	39.83	13.05
FLWE	23	45	36.50	34.69	38.19	5.21
FLWB	5	16	11.19	10.11	12.22	3.35

Note: *N* = 36; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

The descriptive statistics reveal several noteworthy points. Firstly, the participants achieved an average score of 35.44 on the QPT, placing them in the lower intermediate proficiency group, equivalent to the B1 level on the CEFR scale (Geranpayeh, 2003). Secondly, the participants generally reported enjoying writing, as reflected by their relatively high average FLWE score of 36.50 out of 45. Finally, the participants exhibited a relatively low level of boredom, with an average FLWB score of 11.19 out of 25.

Table 2 presents the associations between the participants proficiency, enjoyment, and boredom in their writing course.

**Table 2. Correlation Matrix between Proficiency, Enjoyment, and Boredom with BCa 95% Confidence Interval (CI)**

Variable	1	2	3
1. QPT	-		
2. FLWE	.48**[.19, .70]	-	
3. FLWB	-.58**[-.78, -.33]	-.53**[-.73, -.28]	-

Note: \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 2 reveals a moderate positive correlation between proficiency and writing enjoyment,  $(34) = .48 [ .19, .70], p = .003$ . This finding suggests that as proficiency increases, writing enjoyment also tends to increase among the participants. The effect size ( $R^2 = .23$ ) indicates that approximately 23% of the variance in writing enjoyment can be attributed to proficiency levels. While the effect size is moderate, it underscores a meaningful relationship, suggesting that higher proficiency is associated with greater enjoyment in writing. This finding corroborates previous studies by Botes et al. (2020) and Wang et al. (2023). This result is not surprising, as it is reasonable to expect that learners with higher proficiency levels experience greater control and freedom in their language use, which ultimately enhances their enjoyment of writing.

Our findings reveal a moderate negative correlation between proficiency and writing boredom,  $(34) = -0.58$ , with a 95% BCa confidence interval ranging from  $[-0.78, -0.33], p < .001$ . This suggests that as proficiency increases, writing boredom decreases among participants. The effect size ( $R^2 = 0.33$ ) indicates that approximately 33% of the variance in writing boredom can be attributed to differences in proficiency levels. This relationship underscores the potential role of proficiency in shaping learners' emotional experiences during writing. Notably, this finding aligns with results of Botes et al. (2020), which emphasize that increased proficiency enhances confidence and enjoyment. Learners with higher proficiency levels may find writing tasks less monotonous or challenging due to their enhanced linguistic resources and skills, which allow them to enjoy and engage more effectively with the task. On the other hand, learners with lower proficiency levels may struggle more, leading to frustration or boredom during writing activities. These findings highlight the importance of supporting

proficiency development to foster more positive emotional experiences in language learning.

Finally, our analysis reveals that there is a moderate negative correlation between FLWE and FLWB,  $r(34) = -0.53 [-.73, -.28]$ ,  $p = .001$ . This suggests that as enjoyment increases, boredom tends to decrease, and vice versa. The effect size ( $R^2 = .28$ ) indicates that approximately 28% of the variance in writing boredom can be attributed to differences in writing enjoyment. This finding corroborates findings from previous studies (Dewaele et al., 2023; Li, 2022; Tsang & Dewaele, 2024; Zhao & Wang, 2023), underscoring the interconnected nature of positive and negative emotional experiences in language learning. Learners who experience higher levels of enjoyment during writing tasks are likely to feel less boredom, possibly because their intrinsic motivation and engagement are heightened.

Conversely, learners with low levels of enjoyment may find writing tasks tedious or overly challenging, leading to heightened boredom. This adverse emotional reaction may stem from various factors, including disinterest in the subject matter, insufficient proficiency, or external demands. The negative correlation between enjoyment and boredom underscores the significance of cultivating a supportive and stimulating learning environment that encourages positive emotions and reduces negative ones.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study examined the relationships among language proficiency, foreign language writing enjoyment (FLWE), and foreign language writing boredom (FLWB) in a university-level writing class within an EFL context. The findings revealed that higher proficiency levels were associated with increased writing enjoyment and decreased boredom. Moreover, the inverse relationship between FLWE and FLWB underscores the interconnected nature of these emotions in shaping students' experiences during writing activities.

The findings have several practical implications for language educators and curriculum developers. First, educators should aim to design writing activities that

align with students' proficiency levels to maximize enjoyment and minimize boredom. For instance, scaffolding writing tasks by gradually increasing complexity can help learners gain confidence and sustain engagement. Second, creating a positive and supportive classroom environment that fosters enjoyment—through techniques such as incorporating collaborative writing projects, offering choice in writing topics, and providing constructive feedback—can further enhance students' emotional experiences. Additionally, boredom-reduction strategies, such as varying instructional methods and integrating digital tools for writing practice, may be beneficial in mitigating negative emotions.

This study, while offering valuable insights, has certain limitations. The sample size was relatively modest, consisting of only 36 participants from a single private university in Indonesia, which may limit the extent to which the findings can be generalized to broader contexts. Additionally, the study's cross-sectional design does not allow for the determination of causal relationships between proficiency, enjoyment, and boredom.

Future research should utilize a larger sample size and include participants from multiple universities across Indonesia. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into how proficiency, enjoyment, and boredom evolve over time, as well as the long-term effects of interventions designed to enhance enjoyment and reduce boredom. Furthermore, it would be worthwhile to investigate how individual differences influence emotions such as emotion and boredom, and how different writing instruction approaches affects learners' emotional experiences. Finally, incorporating mixed-methods approaches, such as qualitative interviews and classroom observations, could also uncover deeper insights into factors influencing students' emotional experiences.

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