

ABSTRACT

Argumentative writing is demanding for EFL senior high school students because it requires them to generate, organize, elaborate, and evaluate ideas while expressing them in English. In the Indonesian EFL context, students have ideas but experience difficulties transforming them into coherent texts. However, limited research has examined how EFL students manage cognitive and linguistic processes together. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate how EFL senior high school students construct ideas into argumentative writing and identify the cognitive and linguistic challenges they encounter.

This qualitative study involved 38 twelfth-grade students, with nine purposively selected for interviews representing different achievement levels. Data were collected through lesson plans, four classroom observations, a questionnaire, interviews, and writing products, and analyzed thematically using NVivo and triangulation. Findings for RQ1 showed that students constructed ideas through a recursive process involving genre knowledge, planning, translating, and reviewing. Students generated and organized ideas by activating prior knowledge and experience, using peer discussion, and receiving teacher support before transforming ideas into English; reviewing involved rereading, feedback, revising, and editing. Findings for RQ2 revealed cognitive challenges in generating ideas, organizing arguments, and elaborating supporting ideas, accompanied by linguistic challenges in grammar, vocabulary, sentence construction, mechanics, and expressing ideas clearly.

The study concludes that argumentative writing is a recursive process involving cognitive, linguistic, metacognitive, and social resources. Teachers are recommended to provide gradual scaffolding for idea generation, argument organization, elaboration, and reviewing, supported by peer interaction and language support. Future researchers should examine these processes in broader contexts and over extended periods.

Keywords: *cognitive processes, argumentative writing, EFL students, Flower and Hayes, planning, translating, reviewing*