

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of The Research

Among the four language skills, writing occupies a unique and demanding place because it requires not only linguistic accuracy but also the ability to organize and express ideas clearly and coherently. Writing in a foreign language is often considered the most challenging skill for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, as it requires the active generation of language through appropriate vocabulary selection, grammatical control, and discourse organization. According to Harmer, writing is a productive language skill used to express ideas, feelings, and information in written form. Meanwhile, Richard and Renandya (2002) state that writing is one of the most difficult skills for EFL learners because it involves complex cognitive and linguistic processes. Furthermore, Hyland (2003) emphasizes that writing is both a cognitive and social activity, requiring learners to construct meaning effectively rather than merely producing grammatically correct sentences.

Based on the theories above, Richards and Renandya (2002) and Hyland (2003) conclude that, in the EFL context, writing is not merely a linguistic skill but a complex process involving cognitive and social dimensions simultaneously. Learners are required not only to master grammar and vocabulary but also to organize ideas, construct meaning, and adapt their writing for communicative purposes and audiences. Therefore, difficulties in writing arise not only from linguistic limitations but also from challenges in managing thinking processes and social interaction in producing effective and meaningful texts.

Additional, in the Indonesian educational context, the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* highlights learner-centered instruction and the development of essential competencies, including literacy and higher-order thinking skills. Writing is viewed not only as a means of communication but also as a tool for fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). At the senior high school level, students are expected to produce various text types, such as descriptive, narrative, and argumentative texts, which reflect both linguistic accuracy and coherent organization of ideas. Among these genres, argumentative writing poses particular challenges due to its requirement for logical reasoning,

evidence-based claims, and coherent argument structure.

In many Indonesian senior high schools, EFL students experience considerable difficulty when composing argumentative texts in English. This challenge has been widely reported in previous studies. For instance, Jaya (2025) found that Indonesian EFL students struggle with argumentative writing due to the complexity of linguistic, structural, and cognitive demands. Similarly, Juhana et al. (2023) found that students have difficulty understanding argumentative text structures, language use, and cognitive processes. Furthermore, Nakrowi et al. (2023) reported that students produced argumentative texts with weak argument structures and insufficient argument substance, indicating difficulties in developing logical and well-supported arguments.

Furthermore, this challenge is especially evident in contexts where students primarily use Indonesian for daily communication and have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. As a result, when students are required to write in English, they often struggle to articulate, develop, and organize their ideas effectively. These difficulties suggest that students' problems with argumentative writing extend beyond surface-level language errors and involve deeper issues in the construction and organization of ideas. This condition is also reflected in the context of a state senior high school. Preliminary observations indicate that many students encounter persistent challenges in writing argumentative texts, including limited ability to explore ideas, difficulty expressing personal viewpoints, and difficulty developing initial thoughts into well-structured written arguments. Although students often have relevant ideas about the given topics, they struggle to elaborate on and organize them into coherent English paragraphs.

In addition, limited vocabulary and insufficient mastery of grammatical structures further constrain their ability to produce cohesive, accurate texts. Consequently, students' written work frequently demonstrates weak argument development, fragmented ideas, and linguistic inaccuracies. Based on classroom observations during regular writing activities, students often required extensive guidance from the teacher before developing a complete argumentative paragraph.

From a cognitive perspective, these writing challenges can be explained through Flowers and Hayes (1981) Cognitive Theory, which conceptualizes writing as

a recursive process involving planning, translating ideas into language, and reviewing. These interrelated processes enable writers to generate, organize, and evaluate ideas throughout the writing process. When students are unable to manage these cognitive processes effectively, their ideas are often poorly or incoherently represented in writing. He suggests that writing challenges are not merely linguistic but are closely related to students' ability to regulate their cognitive processes during writing.

However, mastery of cognitive processes alone is not sufficient to produce effective argumentative writing. Learners must also develop metacognitive awareness, which enables them to consciously monitor and evaluate their writing performance. The theory of metacognition by Flavell (1979) emphasizes that effective writing involves learners' awareness of and regulation of their own thinking processes, including planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Students with strong metacognitive awareness are better able to identify weaknesses in their writing and revise their ideas systematically, resulting in more coherent and well-developed texts. Nevertheless, writing instruction in many Indonesian classrooms continues to prioritize grammatical accuracy over the development of metacognitive skills, limiting students' opportunities to engage in self-planning, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation (Bandura, 1994).

Previous studies indicate that EFL learners often struggle to integrate cognitive processes with linguistic control, which significantly affects their ability to produce coherent, well-structured arguments. Writing requires the coordination of cognitive resources, such as idea generation and organization, with linguistic encoding processes (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Kormos, 2012). Furthermore, research by Yang et al. (2023) demonstrates that cognitive control plays a crucial role in regulating language production, highlighting the importance of this integration in successful writing performance. In the context of argumentative writing at a state senior high school, the cognitive and metacognitive processes described in these theories are reflected in the way students construct and support their arguments in writing. Classroom observations indicate that many students begin writing without sufficient planning, resulting in texts that lack a clear thesis and a logical progression of ideas, suggesting limited control over the planning process as described in Flower

and Hayes (1981) Theory.

Furthermore, students often struggle with the translating process, as limited vocabulary and grammatical control hinder their ability to translate ideas into accurate and persuasive English sentences. Although students may have opinions on the given topics, their arguments are frequently presented in a fragmented manner, with weak connections between claims and supporting evidence. In addition, the reviewing process is commonly underdeveloped, as many students view writing as a one-time task and submit their work with minimal revision. This tendency reflects low metacognitive awareness, particularly in monitoring the clarity of arguments and evaluating the strength of evidence, which ultimately affects the coherence and quality of their argumentative writing.

Despite extensive theoretical frameworks on cognitive writing processes and empirical studies in second-language writing, there is limited research on how EFL senior high school students manage cognitive, metacognitive, and linguistic processes simultaneously when composing argumentative texts, particularly in Indonesian classroom contexts. Therefore, this study focuses on filling the gap by examining how EFL students in senior high school construct and integrate cognitive and linguistic processes in argumentative writing. In particular, the study focuses on how students plan, translate, and review ideas, as well as on how linguistic factors, such as vocabulary, grammar, and coherence, shape the quality of their argumentative texts.

## **1.2 Research Question**

To gain a deeper understanding of how students construct and communicate ideas in argumentative writing, it is important to examine the cognitive processes that shape their writing performance. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate:

1. How do EFL students construct ideas into an argumentative text?
2. What cognitive and linguistic challenges do EFL senior high school students encounter when constructing their ideas into an argumentative text?

## **1.3 Purposes of the Study**

To address the study's main research questions and provide a comprehensive understanding of students' writing process, this research is guided by the following purposes:

1. To explain how EFL students construct ideas through generating, organizing, and reviewing processes in argumentative writing.
2. To report the cognitive and linguistic challenges EFL senior high school students face in constructing ideas in argumentative writing.

#### **1.4 Significance of The Research**

This study is significant because it provides new insights into the cognitive processes underlying EFL students' argumentative writing. Understanding how students process and manage these processes as they construct their ideas into argumentative texts is essential for developing effective pedagogical strategies for writing instruction.

##### **1.4.1 Theoretical Significance**

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of writing theories by integrating cognitive process Theory, metacognitive awareness, and linguistic perspectives to explain how EFL learners construct arguments in written form. It also deepens understanding of the interplay between cognition and language use in second-language writing.

##### **1.4.2 Practical Significance**

In practice, the findings are expected to assist teachers and curriculum developers in designing instructional strategies that promote students' metacognitive engagement, reasoning abilities, and linguistic proficiency. Moreover, the study may help students become more autonomous and reflective writers, able to organize their thoughts logically and communicate arguments effectively. Additionally, this research can inform curriculum improvement and instructional design aligned with *Kurikulum Merdeka*, particularly in fostering higher-order thinking skills, critical literacy, creativity in learning, and learner autonomy. Ultimately, it supports sustainable enhancement of English writing pedagogy in Indonesian educational contexts.

In the future, this study can serve as a foundation for further research on cognitive and metacognitive processes in EFL argumentative writing, including studies in digital learning contexts or longitudinal investigations of students' writing development. The findings may also contribute to the development of more process-oriented writing assessments that emphasize reasoning and critical thinking rather

than focusing solely on final products.

### **1.5 Contributions of The Study**

Based on the identified research gap and the significance of the study, this research provides several contributions:

#### **1.5.1 Theoretical Contribution**

This study advances theoretical understanding of how cognition shapes EFL students' argumentative writing. It extends Flower and Hayes's (1981) cognitive process model by incorporating metacognitive regulation and linguistic cohesion as integral components of effective written argumentation.

#### **1.5.2 Empirical Contribution**

Through qualitative exploration, the research provides empirical evidence of students' actual processes of generating, organizing, and reviewing ideas in Indonesian EFL classrooms. The findings enrich existing data on students' writing processes, difficulties, and strategies in transferring ideas coherently into written form.

#### **1.5.3 Practical Contribution**

The study offers pedagogical implications for English teachers, suggesting the integration of cognitive processes and metacognitive strategies, along with explicit language support, to enhance instruction in argumentative writing. It encourages teachers to help learners become more self-regulated and cognitively aware during writing tasks.

#### **1.5.4 Contextual Contribution**

This research provides contextual insights from Indonesian senior high school students, contributing local perspectives to the global discussion on cognitive process challenges in EFL writing. It highlights educational and sociocultural factors unique to the Indonesian context that shape students' writing development.