

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

In today's globalized world, English is a vital tool for bridging cultural differences and facilitating cross-cultural exchanges. Language use in communication can be divided into two distinct modes. Those are languages that can be spoken and written. A speech, discussion, clarification of information, and other forms of oral communication are all examples of using spoken language. In the meantime, written language refers to the act of putting information down on paper and presenting it that way.

There are four main language skills that students need to master in order to learn and teach English: listening, speaking, reading, writing. The ability to write, despite it being the last on the list, is just as critical as the others. Learning to write in a foreign language is still a challenge for many people. Writing in a second language is one of the most difficult components of learning a second language (Hyland, 2003).

Writing is one of the most significant abilities a student of a second language should learn since a good language teacher's ability to instruct students in writing is crucial (Hyland, 2003). Furthermore, teaching writing skills is not an easy task because students must not only pay attention to punctuation and capital letters but also how to develop their thoughts, and how to urge them to write.

Students of English as a foreign language (EFL) should be proficient writers. "FL writing is more dependent on the level of linguistic expertise and fluency (i.e. speed of processing words and sentences) than L1 writing." Thought and information are expressed in the written word through writing. According to Hyland (2003), the art of writing is a way for people to express their own innermost thoughts and feelings about a subject, and taking writing classes demonstrates this ability. According to said Harmer (2004), writers must be able to make precise arrangements in the correct composition, and this ability must be explicitly learned.

Tasya, M.A. (2022) mentioned that students faced challenges in content,

organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics when writing argumentative essays. The most prominent difficulty identified was in ensuring proper mechanics. These challenges impacted the clarity and overall quality of their essays. Addressing these issues can help enhance students' argumentative writing skills.

The findings of this study, which focuses on writing, indicate certain EFL writing phenomena. To begin, while writing in their target language, an EFL student often struggles to convey their thoughts clearly. Second, the EFL student has difficulties in the area of vocabulary since they lack a strong vocabulary base. In addition, students often commit grammatical errors in their written work. It is not uncommon for students to encounter these issues when writing. The most logical explanation is that they are either not taught grammar well or they lack the motivation to do it. Third, the paragraphs are poorly organized. Fourth, the errors in mechanics usually occur because of students' lack of accuracy.

This study is conducted to know the participants' primary difficulties of their writing challenges, the factors influencing these difficulties, and the strategies they utilize to overcome them when writing argumentative essays. The participants are students majoring in English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) in Widya Mandala Catholic University who are on their fourth semester. They took Reading and Writing for EPT as one of their subjects for this semester. This study is carried out using qualitative method.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of the study, the research question can be formulated as follows:

- What are the difficulties experienced by students in writing argumentative essays?
- What are the factors that cause students to have difficulties in writing argumentative essays?
- What are the students' strategies in dealing with their difficulties in writing argumentative essays?

1.3 Research Objectives

Based on those problem statements, the objectives of the research are to explore the following issues:

- To identify students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays
- To find out the factors that cause students to have difficulties in writing argumentative essays
- To discover students' strategies in overcoming their difficulties in writing argumentative essays.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the theories of writing, writing skills, difficulties in writing, stages of writing, and purposes of writing. Writers must be able to make precise arrangements in the correct composition, and this ability must be explicitly learned, said Harmer (2004). To put it another way, writing is an art form (Syatriana, 2018). In the past, people could only converse with one another via written means rather than in person. No matter what topic you choose to write about, the most important component of any article is knowing who is going to be reading it and what the post's goals are. Writing allows us to express our thoughts and feelings, whether they be in an imagined or real state. As a result, we can write something that is based on our own personal experiences, whether they are amusing or heartbreaking.

Non-native speakers of English who want to use English as a supplementary language are known as EFLs. It is common for EFL material to be prepared for learners who are either learning English in their home country or taking a short course in an English-speaking nation.

Besides listening, speaking, and reading, writing is one of the language skills that must be learned by English learners. They must be able to convey their thoughts in writing in order to develop their ideas and pique the interest of their readers. To share their knowledge and experience with others, individuals can also use writing. To put it another way, writing serves as a medium of exchange

between author and audience (Harmentita, 2013)

1.5 The significance of the study

This study is expected to make a significant contribution to teachers, lecturers, and other researchers, particularly in argumentative writing.

1. English language lecturers who teach argumentative essay:

This study aims to expand teachers' and lecturers' insights concerning students' writing difficulties, with a specific focus on argumentative essays. As a result, educators can play a crucial role in helping students overcome these challenges by refining their teaching methods and providing targeted guidance on constructing persuasive arguments and logical reasoning.

2. Other Researchers:

In the field of writing, this study is poised to serve as a fundamental reference for other researchers, offering valuable insights into the intricacies of argumentative writing. As a consequence, subsequent studies influenced by this research are expected to make noteworthy contributions to the broader education landscape, further advancing the understanding and application of persuasive writing techniques.

1.6 Scope and limitations of the study

The primary limitation of this study is its scope, as it focuses solely on describing the experiences of two fourth-semester English Department students who took the Reading and Writing for EPT course. While their insights into their difficulties, the contributing factors, and their strategies for overcoming challenges in writing argumentative essays are valuable, the small sample size restricts the generalizability of the findings. To draw more robust conclusions and gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic, a larger and

more diverse group of students from various backgrounds would be required. Expanding the participant pool could provide richer insights and help establish more widely applicable recommendations for educators and researchers in the field of writing. This study has a limitation which is the absence of evidence regarding the cause of difficulties in writing an argumentative essay.

1.7 Definition of key terms

- Writing

Writing is a medium of exchange between author and audience (Harmentita, 2013). Writing is the use of language and other forms of indirect communication to communicate ideas and emotions from the writer to the viewer in a textual medium (Armawati, 2017). In this study, writing refers to the act of putting one's ideas onto paper in the form of an essay that can be read and understood by another person.

Writing skill

According to Armawati (2017), Writing skill is one of the processes a person engages in requires not only the ability to think creatively, including the ability to discard any information that isn't essential, but also the ability to write correctly and appropriately. Writing skill is the capacity to put one's thoughts and feelings into symbols that can be read by another and understood by them based on Yovie and Ramadayanti (2019).

Writing difficulties

As per Ramadhan's definition in 2019, an argumentative essay is a type of writing where the author presents and advocates for a specific idea, aiming to convince readers to embrace the writer's perspective.

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1.8 Organization of the Thesis

- Chapter 1 is the introduction. It consists of background study, research questions, research objectives, Theoretical Framework, significance of study, scope and limitation, definition of key terms, and organization of the thesis.
- Chapter II is a review of related literature and previous research. It consists of writing definitions, writing skills, components of writing, purposes of writing, stages in writing, and difficulties in writing.
- Chapter III is research methods. This step will discuss the research design, site and context, participants, data sources, instruments, data collection procedure, and trustworthiness and triangulation.