



**COGNITIVE PROBLEMS OF EFL STUDENTS IN WRITING
ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY**

SKRIPSI

BY

MUHAMMAD FAHRUDDIN

NPM. 21901073086



**UNIVERSITY OF ISLAM MALANG
FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION
ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

2024

ABSTRACT

Fahrudin. 2023. *Cognitive Problems of EFL Students in Writing Argumentative Essay*. Skripsi, English Education Department Faculty of Teacher and Training Education Islamic Universitas Islam Malang. Advisor I: Dr. Dwi Fita Heriyawati, M.Pd. Advisor II: Diah Retno Widowati, S.Pd., M.Pd.

Keywords: Cognitive Problems, Argumentative Essay.

In the English Teacher Training and Education Study Program at the University of Islam Malang (UNISMA), every student must have and master writing skills. One of the writing skills that students must have is writing paragraphs and essays in English well and correctly. In the latest research according to Suhartoyo et al. (2020) it was revealed that all student participants agreed that argumentative essays were a problem because they discussed various components that had to be discussed. The problems vary from introduction, statement, development, contradiction/rebuttal, conclusion, organization, grammar, vocabulary use, and mechanics.

Qualitative descriptive methods were used in this research. This research uses a qualitative case study approach, to examine writing errors made by 4th semester English students, and this research was conducted at University of Islam Malang. There were 5 participants who were randomly selected from 4th-semester students majoring in English education and asked to be interviewed sequentially.

The analysis results show that they give different types of answers. They expressed that in writing argumentative essays, opposing points of view, structure, and mechanics were challenging because they were not used to writing argumentative essays so they needed to get used to it and learn more about the subject matter of the essay they were going to write.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The research's background materials are presented in this chapter. This chapter includes an introduction to the background of the study, research problem, the objective of the research, significance of the research, scope or delimitations, and definitions of key terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

In the English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Islam Malang, every student must have and master writing skills. One of the writing skills students must have is writing paragraphs and essays in English well and correctly. Better abilities in writing paragraphs and essays will improve their abilities in writing other forms of writing, such as scientific writing (argumentative essays), academic writing (academic essays), or other types of texts in English. However, it has been proven that some students cannot write correctly Toba and Noor (2019). Every skill has challenges, such as writing because students do not have a good vocabulary, ideas, and grammar. An argumentative essay is a type of writing that aims to influence the reader's opinion. An argumentative essay is a type of essay that uses writing to convey ideas, arguments, and thoughts. This is in line with Barbee (2015) stating that an argumentative essay is a written opinion in which the author expresses his opinion with evidence.

In a recent study according to Suhartoyo et al. (2020), it was revealed that all participating students agreed that argumentative essays were a problem because they discussed various components that had to be discussed. The problems vary from introduction, statement, development, contradiction/rebuttal, conclusion, organization, grammar, use of vocabulary, and mechanics. The most dominating problems were introduction, conclusion, and grammar. In addition, when they faced difficulties writing argumentative essays, all participants preferred social strategies, such as getting feedback and getting sources from other people or the internet.

Studies that have discussed argumentative essays, Ariyanti and Fitriana (2017) said that EFL students face difficulties writing essays due to several factors, including grammatical aspects, coherence, and the term cohesion. When students start writing sentences, grammar is very important. They cannot construct sentences well or have meaning. Cohesion and coherence are the relationships between the ideas contained in each paragraph. The use of cohesive devices in a text not only allows writers to explain their ideas better but also makes the text easier to understand for readers. Meanwhile, coherence is consistency of structure and perspective, which means the article must focus on one theme. Paragraph organization, diction, and spelling errors are the second aspect. This is important because some students write essays that are long and unreadable. The next problem is diction because some students have difficulty choosing the right words for certain sentences. He pointed out that students studying EFL face many difficulties when writing essays.

In a study of problems regarding Indonesian EFL learners in writing argumentative essays according to Rahmatunisa (2014). The results showed three writing problems: psychological problems, linguistic problems, and cognitive problems. Cognitive problems relate to the way we organize our thoughts, use punctuation, address topics, follow topics, and follow directions. The results of data analysis show that the most dominant EFL students experiencing writing problems are the use of punctuation marks. This is because writing not only expresses ideas but also organizes words. Data collected from interviews shows several difficulties that students face when writing argumentative essays. Most of them agree that organizing paragraphs must be well organized and difficult.

Then, twenty-one undergraduate students enrolled in the survey, and six of them were invited to the interview portion, according to Bulqiyah, et al., (2021). Based on this research, the problems faced by students in essay writing courses can be divided into three categories: affective problems, which are caused by the attitudes of teachers and students during the teaching and learning process, cognitive problems, namely problems in language transfer and writing processes, and linguistic problems, namely problems of lexico-grammar, vocabulary, and essay structure.

In addition, research findings Sundari and Febriyanti (2021) show that writing argumentative essays is a difficult task and a difficult skill. In general, EFL students feel they face several problems at the writing level, such as a lack of knowledge, vocabulary, and practice. In addition, because they are not used to

writing argumentative essays, they find starting it very difficult. then, EFL students stated that providing counterarguments was complicated.

The conclusion from the research of the experts above is that writing in a foreign language is different from writing in your mother tongue. Students can write easily when they have to write in their mother tongue, but they will face difficulties when they have to write in a foreign language. Based on the experiences of the researchers above, EFL students face many challenges. Some challenges include topics and developing appropriate use of language in essays. Talking about a topic can be problematic if the writer does not have in-depth knowledge of the topic. The structure and flow of an essay will be difficult if you have difficulty developing the topic. As a result, it will be a disorganized essay, and some ideas may not be connected logically. whereas Language errors may appear during essay writing, which may be difficult for the reader to understand, as a result of a lack of written knowledge and practice.

This research is different from previous researchers because the researchers assessed students' argumentative essay assignments without providing a theme, so students had the freedom to write argumentative essays. This research aims to determine the problems EFL students face when writing argumentative essays. Researchers will conduct interviews with students and assess their assignments in writing argumentative essays. Then researchers will find students' problems.

Based on the above, the researcher aimed to identify and explain the various cognitive problems that students face when writing argumentative essays.

Apart from that, researchers also want to know how students face these challenges. By analyzing cognitive problems, this research will help teachers and students identify emerging cognitive problems.

1.2 Research Problem

The two aforementioned gaps are addressed in this qualitative study using the following research questions:

- 1) What types of cognitive problems do students experience in writing argumentative essays?
- 2) How do they overcome the cognitive problems they face in writing argumentative essays?

1.3 Objective of The Research

The following are the goals of this study, which are based on the above research problem:

1. To understand and document the types of cognitive problems faced by students when writing argumentative essays.
2. To investigate the strategies or steps they took to overcome these problems.

By achieving this goal, it is hoped that students will be able to understand cognitive problems related to argumentative essays so that students can understand their abilities in writing argumentative essays, gain a better understanding, and be able to correct problems when writing argumentative essays correctly.

1.4 Significance of The Research

It is anticipated that the research's findings will be beneficial in that they will offer theoretical and practical contributions.

In theory, this research can be used as a source of information for someone researching cognitive problems in argumentative essays, to identify student errors in writing argumentative essays, and to find out cognitive problems created by students.

From a practical standpoint, this work may help future researchers in similar or different directions. The findings offer a summary of data about EFL students generally and English lecturers specifically in higher education, who will establish a conducive environment to encourage students to be able to compose argumentative essays when implementing English-based learning. Additionally, the paradigm of English teaching and learning will shift from a knowledge-based subject to a practice-based subject when instructors or lecturers concentrate on helping students improve their writing abilities. This will lead to an improved English learning experience. In summary, it can help design more effective learning approaches and provide appropriate support to students in developing argumentative writing skills.

1.5 Scope and Delimitation of the Research

The researcher only concentrated on cognitive problems with EFL students' argumentative essay writing because of the research background. Punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and organization are cognitive issues in writing Tasya (2022). Students in the fourth semester of one of Malang's private

universities are the participants. To gather data, the researcher worked with five students. Furthermore, the cognitive issues of the students will be examined through their documents. It is evident from the examination of the researcher's documents how the researcher will conduct interviews after making adjustments based on the findings of the student documents.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

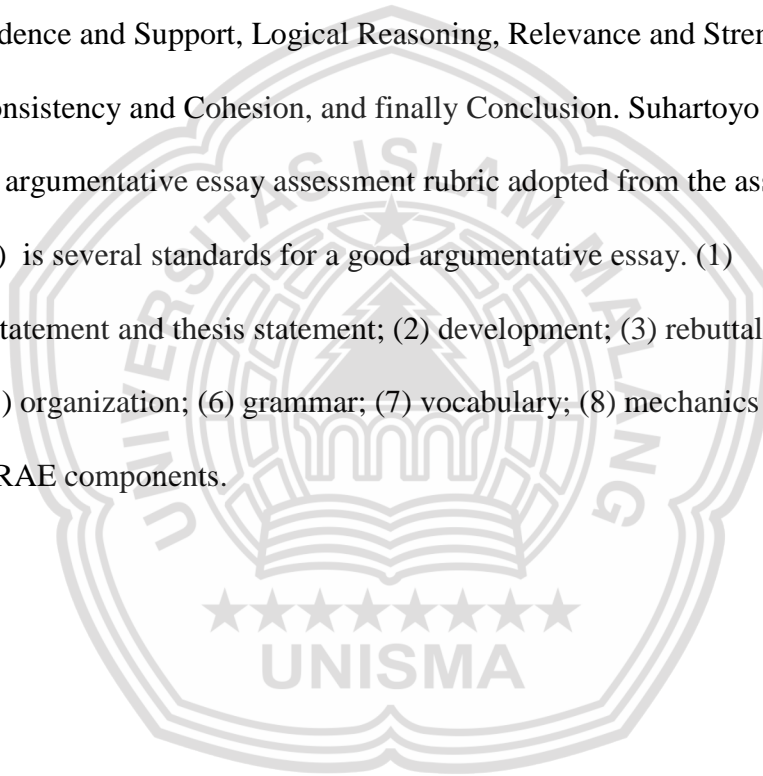
To prevent misconceptions, the researcher defines the following important terms:

1.6.1 Cognitive Problems

When writing an argumentative essay, the writer may face cognitive problems. This includes many things, such as understanding the thesis, making logical conclusions, and organizing information well. Examples of cognitive problems that may occur when writing an argumentative essay include unclear understanding of the thesis, limited ability to use argumentative logic, limited ability to use evidence analysis, inability to consider opposing opinions, and difficulty organizing information in a structured and cohesive manner in writing an argumentative essay. An essay, and a lack of audience awareness. The conclusion is that the essay should summarize and strengthen the argument effectively. Understanding and overcoming these cognitive issues is important for improving the quality of argumentative essays. Additionally, clearer, more persuasive, and more organized writing results from writers discovering and overcoming these cognitive obstacles.

1.6.2 Argumentative Essay Writing

Writing an argumentative essay is a type of writing whose topic can be debated, or what in English is called a debatable issue. Writers are expected to write an essay outlining their thoughts, feelings, and stance on the matter. To write an argumentative essay (AE), the writer has to consider many things. Some things to consider are Theme or Topic, Thesis or Argument Statement, Essay Structure, Evidence and Support, Logical Reasoning, Relevance and Strength of Argument, Consistency and Cohesion, and finally Conclusion. Suhartoyo (2017), stated that the argumentative essay assessment rubric adopted from the assessment rubric (SRAE) is several standards for a good argumentative essay. (1) Introductory statement and thesis statement; (2) development; (3) rebuttal; (4) conclusion; (5) organization; (6) grammar; (7) vocabulary; (8) mechanics are specifically SRAE components.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusions and recommendations are included in this chapter. This is the last step in the writing process, where the writer restates the main point or message for the reader to have a better understanding.

5.1 Conclusion

As a result, this study concludes that fourth semester students continue to face several cognitive challenges associated with writing argumentative essays. Each error is given a score as a result of the document review, and the total value of all errors is also obtained. The score of each student in the cognitive problems faced by students is P4 got the highest score with a score of 84 and 86.5, P5 got a score of 81 and 80, P2 got a score of 77.5 and 84, P3 got a score of 68.5 and 75 .5, then the lowest scores were obtained by P1 students with scores of 66.5 and 68.5. This shows that some students still do not understand writing related to argumentative essays.

There are several reasons why students face difficulties. First, the difficulty in providing a clear and structured essay objective. Second, there is difficulty in finding data that suits the essay topic. Third, difficulty in providing conclusions in connecting the points that have been discussed. Fourth, difficulty in understanding argumentative essays. Fifth, difficulty in providing strong and effective arguments. Sixth, difficulties in writing mechanics such as grammar and

punctuation. Thus, the results of student essay corrections and interviews produce the same findings and reinforce each other.

This study has shown that students are still having a number of difficulties when it comes to writing argumentative essays. According to the interviews, every student has a unique approach to resolving issues. Students need to use more of their strategies as a result when writing argumentative essays.

5.2 Suggestion

The researcher would like to make a few recommendations based on the results that have been previously described in order to improve our ability to write argumentative essays in the future. To start writing, learn the basic concepts of argumentative essays. Understand that an argumentative essay aims to express a strong opinion or argument on a topic with convincing reasons and supported by evidence. Before starting to write, make a plan or basic outline of the essay first, then determine the introduction, main argument, and conclusion of the essay. Make sure the evidence is relevant and logical to support the argument of the essay, so each paragraph must have one main argument that is logically connected.

This study focuses on cognitive difficulties in writing argumentative essays and exclusively employs qualitative methodologies. Thus, by employing different kinds of essays or problems, future researchers can build on these discoveries and bolster them with alternative research techniques. Furthermore, because this study was restricted to students, future research may look into

strategies for assisting students in overcoming obstacles related to writing argumentative essays in the future.





REFERENCES

- Alfaki, I. M. (2015). University Students' English Writing Problems: Diagnosis and Remedy. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 3(3), 40-52
- Alvarez, T. (2001). Textos Expositivo-Explicativos y Argumentativos
- Andriani, L., Syihabuddin, S., Sastromiharjo, A., & Anshori, D. (2023). The Influence of Writing and Cognitive Processes on Students' Ability to Write Narrative Texts. *Diglosia: Journal of Language, Literature and Teaching Studies*, 6(2), 275-288.
- Ariyanti, A., & Fitriana, R. (2017). EFL Students' Difficulties and Needs in Essay Writing. *Atlantis Press: International Conference on Teacher Training and Education 2017 (ICTTE 2017)* (pp. 32-42).
- Armada, E. D. T., Drajadi, N. A., & Sumardi, S. (2022). Mentors' Experiences in Providing Effective Feedback during a Professional Development Programme for EFL Teachers. *DWIJA CENDEKIA: Journal of Pedagogical Research*, 6(3), 569-576.
- Aslamiah, S. (2020). English Language Learning Difficulties in Educational Perspective. *PrimEarly: Journal of Primary Education and Early Childhood Studies*, 3(2), 134-146.
- Azami, M. I., & Sholihah, (2021). F. A. Contrastive Analysis on Syntactic Word Order of Indonesian and English Academic Writing.
- Bulqiyah, Suhaimah, Moh Mahbub, and Dyah Ayu Nugraheni. (2021). Investigating Writing completion in Essay Writing: College Students' Perspectives. *Journal of English Language Teaching Education*, 4(1), : 61-73.
- Celce-Murcia, M., & Olshtain, E. (2002). *Discourse and Context in Language*.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research (4th ed.)*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

- Chala, P. A. & Chapeton, C. M. C. (2013). The Act of Writing as a Situated Social Practice: Going Beyond the Linguistic and the Textual. *Colomb. Appl. Linguist. J.* 15(1), 25-42.
- Ferretti, R. P., Andrews-Weckerly, S., & Lewis, W. E. (2007). *Improving the Argumentative Writing of Students with Learning Disabilities: Descriptive and Normative Considerations*. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 23(3), 267-285.
- Ghanbari, N., & Salari, M. (2022). Problematizing Argumentative Writing in an Iranian EFL Undergraduate Context. *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol.13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.862400>
- Hadley, A. O., & Reiken, E. (1993). *Teaching Language in Context, and Teaching. Language in Context--Workbook*. Heinle & Heinle Publishers, International Thomson Publishing Book Distribution Center, 7625 Empire Drive, Florence, KY 41042.
- Hasanah, M., Alaydrus, Y., & Umamah, A. (2023). An Analysis Grammatical Error In Argumentative Essay Of The Fourth Semester Students Of English Education Department Of Universitas Islam Malang. *Jurnal Penelitian, Pendidikan, dan Pembelajaran*, 18(21).
- Kaur, S. (2015). Teaching Strategies used by Thai EFL Lecturers to Teach Argumentative Writing. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 208, 143-156.
- Kuhn, D. (1991). *The Skills of Argument*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Layaalia, I. N. (2015). Students'ability in Writing Argumentative Essay at English Teacher Education Department of the State Islamic University of Sunan Ampel Surabaya (Doctoral dissertation, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya).
- Levine, M. (1998). *Developmental Variation and Learning Disorders. 2nd Edition*. Educators Pub. Service Hardcore.
- Ma, Fengyi, and Yuan Li. (2022). Critical Thinking Ability and Performance in Argumentative Essays of College Students Majoring in Education. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 12(1), : 143-149.

- Moleong, L. J. (2007). Revised Edition of Qualitative Research Methodology. *Bandung: PT Teen Rosdakarya, 103.*
- Oktavia, W., & Yasin, A. (2014). An Analysis of Students' Argumentative Elements and Fallacies in Students' Discussion Essays. *English Language Teaching (ELT)*, 2(3).
- Oshima, A., & Hogue, A. (2006). Writing Academic Writing. *New York : Pearson Education.*
- Putri, A. N., & Komara, C. (2022). Investigating Undergraduate EFL Students' Argumentative Essay: Its Generic Structure and Language Features. *International Undergraduate Conference on English Education (IUCEE)* 1(1)
- Qin, J., & Karabacak, E. (2010). The Analysis of Toulmin Elements in Chinese EFL University Argumentative Writing. *System*, 38(3), 444-456.
- Rachmawati, Suzana & Susanti, Yunik. (2016). The Use of Transitions in the Students Argumentative Essay. *English Education: Journal of English Teaching and Research. (1)*, 10. DOI:[10.29407/jetar.v1i2.482](https://doi.org/10.29407/jetar.v1i2.482)
- Rahmatunisa, W. (2014). Problems Faced by Indonesian EFL Learners in Writing Argumentative Essay. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 3(1), 41-49.
- Setyowati, L., Sukmawa, S., & Latief, M. A. (2017). Solving the Students' Problems in Writing Argumentative Essay Through the Provision of Planning. *Celt: A Journal of Culture, English Language Teaching & Literature*, 17(1), 86-102.
- Setyowati, L. Sukmawan, S., & El-Sulukiyyah, A.A. (2020). *Write Down Your Thought: Essay Writing for EFL Learners*. Sidoarjo: Delta Pijar.
- Suhartoyo, E., Ni'mah, D., & Ismiatun, F. (2020). The Common Mistakes of Undergraduate EFL Students in Writing Argumentative Essays. *Proceedings of English Linguistics and Literature*, 2, 37-46.
- Suhartoyo, E. (2017). The Importance of Critical Thinking Competence : an Investigation of Students' Writing Experiences. *International Seminar on Language, Education, and Culture.*

- Suhartoyo, E., & Ni'mah, D. (2020). Integrating Tma within “Claim And Support” Strategy on Students’ Critical Thinking on Argumentative Essay.
- Suhartoyo, E., & Widodo, G. S. (2023, September). Linking EFL Students' Writing Anxiety to Writing Performance. In *4th International Conference on English Language Teaching (ICON-ELT 2023)* (pp. 16-22). Atlantis Press.
- Sundari, H., & Febriyanti, R. H. (2021). The analysis of Indonesian EFL Argumentative Writing Using Toulmin’s Model: The Structure and Struggles From the Learners. *Scope: Journal of English Language Teaching*, 5(2), 67-78.
- Toba, R., & Noor, W. N. (2019). The Current Issues of Indonesian EFL Students’ Writing Skills: Ability, Problem, and Reason in Writing Comparison and Contrast Essay. *Dinamika Ilmu*, 19(1), 57-73.
- Tasya, M. A. (2022). *Students' Difficulties in Writing an Argumentative Essay* (Bachelor's thesis, Jakarta: FITK UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta).

