

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the researcher presents the introduction that consists of: (1) Research Background; (2) Problems Identification; (3) Research Questions; (4) Research Objectives; (5) Research Limitations; (6) Research Significances; and (7) Definition of Key Terms.

### **1.1 Research Background**

Writing is a tool of communication used to convey ideas or information to readers in written form. As stated by Saputra et al. (2021), writing is a means of communication in written form aimed at sharing and conveying ideas or information to readers. By writing, people can communicate with each other. They can give ideas or information through written texts to other people at different times and places. It means that writing has an important role in our personal lives. However, in an academic setting, writing is more than just a tool of communication (Fajaryani et al., 2021). Writing is one of the productive skills that must be mastered by students in educational institutions. It is because, based on the educational curriculum, students are required to produce certain written texts as their tasks or exams. Therefore, they must master the writing skill so that they can produce well-written texts in order to complete the tasks or the exams. Moreover, the skill to produce written texts is important for students' academic success (Fajaryani et al., 2021). If students master the writing skill, they will be able to produce well-written texts so that they can get good grades or pass subjects. It means that writing skills can also determine students' academic success in educational institution.

In the Indonesian context, writing is the most important English skill for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at the university level (Ozfidan & Mitchell, 2020; Bulqiyah et al., 2021). It is because almost every task must be completed by students in the form of written text or academic writing, such as papers, articles, reports, essays, theses, and so on (Setyowati et al., 2020). One of the academic writings that students commonly write is an essay (Bulqiyah et al., 2021). It is a piece of writing that contains several paragraphs discussing a topic (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). Students are usually asked to write several types of essays, including an argumentative essay, which is a type of essay that allows students to agree or disagree about a topic or issue and use reasons to support their opinions (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). In writing an argumentative essay, students have to choose a position on an issue and give arguments supported by evidence to persuade and convince others. Moreover, it also requires students to think critically when conveying ideas or arguments and pay attention to the use of language. Thus, this kind of essay is important for students to express opinions based on their points of view and develop their critical thinking.

However, writing an argumentative essay is considered difficult for some students. As stated by Fajaryani et al. (2021), writing is the most difficult skill, especially for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. It is because writing involves various complex processes that require a range of skills. In writing, students must be able to organize ideas coherently so that they can be easily understood by readers. At the same time, they must be able to use vocabulary and grammar correctly. Some students may find it easy to write in their mother tongue or first language, but it becomes more difficult when they write in English, which

is a foreign language. As stated by Zhu (2001, as cited in Rahmatunisa, 2014), writing is the most complex activity in language class, and it becomes more difficult in a foreign language class. Moreover, argumentative writing is also the most difficult genre for some English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at the university level (Rahmatunisa, 2014; Ozfidan & Mitchell, 2020; Setyowati et al., 2020). It is because argumentative writing demands a high level of critical thinking. Students must analyze complex issues, evaluate evidence, and make persuasive arguments based on logic and reasoning. This requires the ability to think critically and assess the strengths and weaknesses of different viewpoints.

Therefore, some students may face problems that can hinder them from producing good argumentative essays (Le et al., 2022). According to Byrne (1988), problems in writing are divided into cognitive problems, linguistic problems, and psychological problems. Cognitive problems are problems related to cognitive processes involved in generating, organizing, and expressing ideas through written language. Besides, linguistic problems are problems related to language that involve grammar and vocabulary. Meanwhile, psychological problems are problems related to mental states, such as emotions, beliefs, or desires, that influence an individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. On the other hand, some previous studies indicated that problems in argumentative writing can be related to elements of an argumentative essay that include grammar, vocabulary, organization or structure, thesis statements, counterclaims, refutations, evidence, and academic source integration (Peloghitis, 2017; Ozfidan & Mitchell, 2020). These problems cannot be separated from argumentative writing and can affect students' writing abilities.

To overcome these problems, students can use certain strategies. They refer to methods, techniques, or approaches employed by writers to address obstacles, difficulties, or challenges encountered during the writing process. These strategies are designed to help writers improve their writing skills, enhance their ability to communicate effectively, and overcome obstacles to producing clear, coherent, and engaging written text. Correspondingly, Fajaryani et al. (2021) adapted the O'Malley and Chamot (1990) theory, which divided strategies to overcome challenges in argumentative writing into cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies. Cognitive strategies are strategies that involve cognitive processes. In addition, metacognitive strategies are strategies that involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Meanwhile, social strategies are strategies that involve social interaction.

Furthermore, a number of previous studies related to problems and strategies in argumentative writing were also conducted by researchers. Some of them focused on problems faced EFL students in writing an argumentative essay based on the theory of Byrne (1988), who categorized the problems in writing into cognitive, linguistic, and psychological aspects (Rahmatunisa, 2014; Setyowati et al., 2020; Saputra et al., 2021). Meanwhile, a quantitative study conducted by Ozfidan and Mitchell (2020) focused on differences between male and female students' difficulties in writing an argumentative essay. In addition, Peloghitis (2017) and Fajaryani et al. (2021) did studies related to the writing strategies used by students to accomplish an argumentative writing task. Different from these previous studies, this study focused on EFL students' problems in writing an argumentative essay and their strategies to overcome them by using the Byrne

(1988) theory and the O'Malley and Chamot (1990) theory as lenses. Besides, the participants, time, and place between previous studies and this study were also different. Hence, it is important to conduct this study because every person in every generation in every place may have different problems and strategies to overcome problems in writing an argumentative essay. Moreover, a study on investigating students' problems and strategies in writing an argumentative essay in Indonesia, especially in Jambi City, is still limited.

Therefore, to fill research gaps in this field, the researcher is interested in investigating problems in argumentative writing, explaining strategies to overcome the problems at the English Education Study Program of Jambi University, and conduct research entitled **“EFL STUDENTS’ PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES IN WRITING AN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY”**. Through this study, it is hoped that information from previous studies can be added and updated so that it can be useful for several parties, such as students, lecturers, and future researchers.

## **1.2 Problems Identification**

Based on the research background above, the researcher has summarized the problems in this research, as follows:

1. EFL students at the university level are required to write an argumentative essay to complete the tasks or the exam. However, it is considered difficult for some students.
2. Problems in writing an argumentative essay can hinder students from producing a good argumentative essay.

3. Most previous studies focused more on problems faced by students in writing an argumentative essay than strategies to overcome the problems.
4. Every person in every generation in every place may have different problems and strategies in writing an argumentative essay.
5. A study on investigating students' problems and strategies in writing an argumentative essay in Indonesia, especially in Jambi City, is still limited.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

Based on the problems' identification above, the research questions are formulated, as follows:

1. What are the problems faced by EFL students at the English Education Study Program of Jambi University in writing an argumentative essay?
2. What are the strategies used by EFL students at the English Education Study Program of Jambi University to overcome problems in writing an argumentative essay?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

Based on the research questions above, the main objectives of this research are, as follows:

1. To investigate problems faced by EFL students at the English Education Study Program of Jambi University in writing an argumentative essay.
2. To explain strategies used by EFL students at the English Education Study Program of Jambi University to overcome problems in writing an argumentative essay.

## **1.5 Research Significances**

### **1.5.1 Theoretical Significance**

This research is expected to provide an understanding of problems faced by students in writing argumentative essays, and their strategies to overcome the problems. Besides, this research is expected to contribute to the enrichment of related literature by providing new perspectives as well as references.

### **1.5.2 Practical Significance**

#### **1.5.2.1 For students**

This research can be used to help students identify their problems when writing argumentative essays. The result of this research is also expected to provide information for other students so that they can know the problems in writing argumentative essays and the strategies to overcome them.

#### **1.5.2.2 For lecturers**

This research can provide information for lecturers about the students' problems in writing argumentative essays, and their strategies to overcome them so that they can pay more attention to students who have problems in writing argumentative essays, and also find the right strategies to help them.

#### **1.5.2.3 For future researchers**

This research can provide information for future researchers who will conduct further research in this field. The result of this research can be used as a reference or comparison regarding students' problems in writing argumentative essays and their strategies to overcome them.

## **1.6 Definition of Key Terms**

### **1.6.1 Writing**

Writing is the activity of writing books, articles, etc. (Oxford Learners Dictionaries, n.d.). It means that writing is an activity of producing words or sentences in written form to express ideas or thoughts that involves a process of creating ideas, organizing the ideas, and editing or revising the drafts.

### **1.6.2 Argumentative Essay**

An argumentative essay is one of essay types in academic writing. It is an essay that requires students to express their opinions based on one position by providing logical reasons and strong arguments supported by evidence in order to persuade or convince the readers.

### **1.6.3 EFL Students**

EFL is an abbreviation for English as a Foreign Language. It refers to the study of English by non-native speakers in countries where English is not the official language. Thus, EFL students are the students who study English in countries where English is not the official language.

### **1.6.4 Problem**

A problem is something that is difficult to deal with or to understand (Oxford Learners Dictionaries, n.d.). In this research, a problem is defined as something that is difficult for EFL students in writing an argumentative essay. It can also refer to obstacles, difficulties, or challenges that hinder students from producing good argumentative essays.



### **1.6.5 Strategy**

A strategy is a plan of action that is intended to achieve a particular purpose (Oxford Learners Dictionaries, n.d.). It includes the procedures or steps used to achieve the goals. In this research, a strategy is defined as a plan of action that includes the procedures or steps used to reach the solutions or overcome the problems in writing an argumentative essay. In other words, it explains how EFL students overcome their problems when they write an argumentative essay.