

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

The ability to write in English is one of the productive skills that requires the integration of cognitive, linguistic, and rhetorical aspects simultaneously. Writing involves generating ideas, organizing them logically, applying appropriate grammatical structures, selecting contextually appropriate vocabulary, and observing mechanical conventions such as spelling. In vocational high school, particularly at the Grade X level, writing competence holds particular relevance because students are expected to produce functional and professional texts, including job application letters, reports, and procedural documents. Teaching by Principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy, writing is a complex process that includes the stages of pre-writing, concept development, revision, and editing, which require the active involvement of students in constructing meaning. Thus, writing skills are not just the final product in the form of text, but a learning process that requires interactive and meaningful teaching strategies [1].

The results of the 2022 Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) show that Indonesia's reading literacy score is well below the OECD average [2]. Although the assessment focuses on reading, reading and writing skills are cognitively interrelated because both require the ability to understand, organize, and express ideas coherently. These conditions indicate that students' writing performance is not uniform and may be associated not only with cognitive aspects, including psychological factors such as learning motivation, which can have an impact on the intensity and quality of their engagement in the writing process. At the classroom level, several empirical studies confirm that Indonesian EFL students frequently experience difficulties in generating ideas, organizing paragraphs, and maintaining motivation during writing tasks [3]. Writing anxiety and low intrinsic motivation are repeatedly identified as important challenge becomes more complex due to the predominance of practice-oriented curricula, which sometimes place limited emphasis on extended written production in English.

In response to these challenges, students' motivation constitutes an important psychological factor associated with writing performance. Writing requires persistence, sustained effort, and willingness to revise; learners' motivational levels. Empirical research has reported a significant positive correlation between writing motivation and writing skills, indicating that students with higher motivation tend to demonstrate stronger writing performance [4] Conceptually, motivation directs the intensity and consistency of learners' engagement in academic tasks. When students perceive writing as burdensome or irrelevant, their participation may decline, potentially affecting the quality of their written output. In addition to motivational factors, instructional media may also be associated with students' engagement in writing activities.

This issue is particularly urgent at SMKN 1 Mojoanyar. As a vocational high school, its English curriculum prioritizes writing proficiency, given that graduates are expected to produce reports, job application letters, and other workplace documents shortly after graduation. Based on initial observations conducted by the researcher during the Field Experience Practice (PPL) at SMKN 1 Mojoanyar, several challenges were identified. Internet access within the school environment was found to be unstable, and English instruction for Grade X students, particularly in writing activities, was still dominated by the use of printed textbooks and the whiteboard, while interactive instructional media were rarely integrated into classroom practice. As a result, classroom instruction remained largely conventional and textbook-based, with limited use of visual or interactive support. These classroom conditions may contribute to low student engagement in writing activities. The observations indicated that students tended to become easily bored when writing instruction relied solely on reading and writing tasks without the support of interactive media. Consequently, many Grade X students had not yet achieved the expected level of writing proficiency. In addition, students' overall interest in learning English, particularly in writing, remained relatively low. Given the practice-oriented nature of vocational education, this condition raises serious concern. If writing instruction continues to be minimally engaging and lacks appropriate instructional support, graduates may not be adequately prepared to meet the documentation demands of the

workplace. This gap between the intended curriculum and current classroom practice underscores the urgency of conducting this research.

Addressing this classroom condition requires an instructional approach that can actively engage students while supporting their writing development. Active learning theory emphasizes that students construct knowledge more effectively when they are cognitively and physically involved in the learning process. Hands-on interactive media provide visual and manipulative elements that can facilitate idea organization and meaning construction. Happy Puzzle Hands-On Media represents an interactive instructional approach in which students physically assemble puzzle pieces that form meaningful images. Happy Puzzle Hands-On Media, as a form of image-based puzzle activity, requires students to assemble visual components that subsequently function as prompts for writing. Through visual stimulus and physical interaction, it is assumed that such media may activate idea generation and students' participation in writing tasks. Previous studies have explored puzzle-based media in writing instruction, particularly at elementary and junior high school levels, mostly employing experimental designs to examine learning outcomes[5] . However, these studies primarily focused on improvement effects rather than vocational education contexts.

In contemporary educational contexts marked by digital transformation and shifting student attention patterns, interactive and student-centered learning approaches have become increasingly relevant in English language classrooms. In this context, students' perception of Happy Puzzle Hands-on Media may be statistically associated with their motivation and writing performance. Therefore, examining these variables within a correlation framework is important to understand whether meaningful relationships exist among them in the vocational high school context. Therefore, this study aims to examine the correlation among students' perception of Happy Puzzle Hands-on Media, students' motivation, and writing skills of Grade X students at SMKN 1 Mojoanyar.

However, although previous studies have separately examined interactive media and motivation in relation to writing skills, research that simultaneously investigates the correlation among students' perception of Happy Puzzle Hands-on Media, students' motivation, and writing skills in a vocational high school setting remains limited,

particularly in Grade X contexts. This gap highlights the need for a correlational study examining these three variables within SMKN 1 Mojoanyar.

## **1.2 Formulation of The Problem**

Are there any significant correlations among Happy Puzzle Hands-on Media, students' motivation, and writing skills?

## **1.3 The Purpose of the Study**

With the research problem, the purpose of this study is to investigate whether there is a significant correlation among Happy Puzzle Hands-on Media, students' motivation, and writing skills of Grade X students at SMKN 1 Mojoanyar. The objective is limited to identifying the statistical relationship among these three variables and does not aim to determine causal effects or instructional impact.

## **1.4 The Significance of the Study**

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of EFL writing research by providing empirical evidence regarding the relationship between hands-on instructional media and writing performance. It also enriches the literature on students' motivation by examining its correlation with writing skills within the same vocational high school context. By integrating instructional media and motivational variables in a single correlational framework, this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that jointly are associated with EFL writing performance in vocational education settings.

Practically, this study provides English teachers with information about how students' perception of Happy Puzzle Hands-on Media and their motivation are statistically related to writing performance. Instead of assessing the media's effectiveness as an instructional tool, the research sheds light on how students' positive engagement with interactive media correlates with their writing outcomes. These findings can assist teachers in considering student engagement and motivation when choosing writing activities in Vocational EFL classrooms.

In addition, the results can serve as empirical evidence and a methodological reference for future correlational or experimental research examining instructional media, motivation, and writing skills in similar educational settings.

### **1.5 Limitations of the study**

Writing skills were the only dependent variable in this study, which was restricted to Grade X students at SMKN 1 Mojoanyar. An analytical assessment rubric comprising topic, organization, vocabulary, language used, and mechanics was used to evaluate writing skills. The use of Happy Puzzle Hands-on Media and student motivation were the independent variables, and both were assessed using a questionnaire. To ascertain the statistical link between the independent factors and writing skills, both partially and concurrently, data analysis was conducted using Multiple Linear Regression. As a result, these conclusions are restricted to the analysis of correlations in the given sample and cannot be used outside of this setting.

### **1.6 Operational Definition of Terms**

There are several terms involved in this study to avoid misunderstanding of the concepts used in this study. The terms are defined as follows:

#### **1. Students' motivation**

Motivation in second learning is viewed as a dynamic process that initiates, directs, and sustains learners' engagement in academic activities. explains that motivation involves learners' goals, self-perceptions, and emotional engagement that are associated with the intensity and persistence of learning behavior in contexts. In addition, the Self-Determination theory states that intrinsic motivation develops when learners experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the learning environment

Further confirms that motivational regulation strategies significantly predict writing performance among EFL learners. This suggests that motivation plays a central role in sustaining effort, revising drafts, and improving text quality.

In this research, students' motivation refers to learners' internal drive, persistence, and engagement in writing activities, as measured by the total score obtained from a structured motivation questionnaire.

#### **2. Writing Skills**

Writing skills are sophisticated linguistic and cognitive talents that include coherence, word use, organization, idea development, and correct grammar. Writing is a rhetorical and socially situated activity where authors must arrange thoughts logically according to their goal and target audience. Additionally,

writing proficiency is a result of the integration of three interrelated processes: planning, where writers translate their ideas into written language, and reviewing, where writers assess and improve the final product.

In this study, writing skills refer to students' ability to produce English paragraphs, measured through a writing test scored using an analytic rubric covering content (30 points), organization (20 points), vocabulary (20 points), language used (25 points), and mechanics (5 points).

### **3. Happy Puzzle Hands-on Media**

Hands-on learning media refer to instructional tools that involve students' physical interaction to enhance cognitive engagement. Meaningful learning occurs when students actively process visual and verbal information through interactive experiences. This aligns with constructivist principles emphasizing knowledge construction through manipulation and exploration.

Demonstrate that puzzle-based and manipulative learning media significantly enhance engagement and idea generation in writing tasks.

In this research, happy puzzle hands-on media is operationally defined as the total score obtained from a structured Likert-scale questionnaire administered after students participate in the puzzle-based writing activity. Higher scores indicate more positive perceptions toward the media.