

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

During the preliminary observation conducted in the tenth-grade English classroom at SMAN 1 Ponorogo, the researcher found that many students experienced difficulties during writing activities. When students were assigned to write a text, many of them hesitated before starting and spent a considerable amount of time thinking about what to write. Some students frequently asked the teacher for examples or confirmation before beginning their work, while others preferred to wait for ideas from their classmates rather than expressing their own. Classroom interaction was also relatively limited because only a few students actively participated in discussions, whereas most students tended to remain passive throughout the learning process. These classroom situations indicated that students encountered various challenges in expressing and developing their ideas during writing activities.

Further classroom observation revealed that the students' difficulties were not merely related to grammatical accuracy or vocabulary mastery. Many students struggled to generate original ideas, organize information logically, elaborate supporting details, and construct coherent paragraphs. As a result, the texts produced by the students often contained limited ideas, weak organization, and insufficient supporting information. Throughout the writing activities, students tended to rely on teacher guidance before continuing their work, suggesting that they lacked confidence in developing their own ideas independently. In addition, classroom activities mainly

focused on completing writing tasks and applying language rules, providing limited opportunities for students to actively discuss ideas, analyze information, evaluate different perspectives, or develop more meaningful written texts.

The classroom observations were further supported by the results of the initial writing test conducted before the implementation of the action. The test results showed that many students still experienced difficulties in developing content, organizing text structure systematically, and expressing ideas coherently. Several students produced short paragraphs with repetitive ideas and limited elaboration, making their writing less communicative and less meaningful. These findings indicate that students require instructional support that not only improves their writing performance but also assists them in developing ideas more effectively throughout the writing process.

The problems identified during the preliminary observation suggest that writing instruction requires more than teaching grammatical structures and vocabulary. Writing is one of the essential productive skills in English language learning because it enables students to communicate ideas, construct knowledge, and express information effectively in both academic and everyday contexts. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL), writing is widely recognized as a complex cognitive process that involves generating ideas, organizing information logically, and conveying meaning coherently (Kormos, 2023; Siekmann et al., 2022). Therefore, successful writing instruction should facilitate not only students' language development but also the cognitive processes required to construct meaningful written texts.

Developing a well-organized piece of writing requires students to employ higher-order thinking skills throughout the writing process. Students need to analyze

information, evaluate ideas, determine logical relationships among concepts, and create meaningful texts based on their own understanding rather than simply reproducing information. These cognitive processes correspond to Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), particularly the abilities to analyze, evaluate, and create as described in the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy. Accordingly, integrating HOTS into writing instruction provides students with opportunities to develop arguments, solve problems, and construct original ideas while composing texts (Erdiana & Panjaitan, 2023). Previous studies have also demonstrated that the implementation of HOTS in EFL writing instruction contributes positively to students' critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and writing performance (Elabdali, 2021; Yin et al., 2023; Zou et al., 2023).

The classroom problems identified during the preliminary observation are consistent with findings reported in previous studies. Several researchers have found that many EFL students experience difficulties in generating ideas, organizing texts, elaborating supporting information, and applying higher-order thinking skills during writing activities (Elabdali, 2021; Kadmiry, 2021; Rohanah et al., 2025). These difficulties are often associated with instructional practices that emphasize linguistic accuracy and teacher-centered learning rather than encouraging students to actively construct knowledge and develop ideas through meaningful learning activities (Hartati et al., 2021; Rustipa et al., 2022). Consequently, students have limited opportunities to engage in critical thinking processes that support effective writing.

Considering the classroom problems identified during the preliminary observation and supported by previous studies, an instructional approach that actively engages

students in developing ideas and higher-order thinking skills is required. In this study, Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) instruction was selected because it encourages students to analyze information, evaluate ideas critically, and construct meaningful written texts throughout the writing process. To facilitate the implementation of HOTS instruction, two complementary instructional strategies were integrated, namely the Guiding Question Technique and Small Group Discussion (SGD). Guiding questions function as instructional scaffolding that guides students to analyze information, justify their responses, and organize ideas before writing (Chin, 2007). Meanwhile, Small Group Discussion provides opportunities for students to exchange ideas, evaluate different perspectives, and collaboratively construct knowledge prior to composing individual texts. Previous studies have shown that collaborative discussions during the pre-writing stage help students generate ideas, improve text organization, and enhance the quality of their writing (Heidari Darani et al., 2023; Li & Zhang, 2022).

Based on the classroom problems identified through the preliminary observation and the initial writing test, this Classroom Action Research (CAR) was conducted to improve the writing skills of the tenth-grade students at SMAN 1 Ponorogo through the implementation of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) instruction integrated with the Guiding Question Technique and Small Group Discussion. Through these instructional actions, students are expected to become more actively involved in generating ideas, participating in collaborative discussions, engaging in higher-order thinking processes, and producing more coherent and meaningful written texts. Furthermore, the findings of this study are expected to provide practical insights for

English teachers regarding the implementation of HOTS-oriented writing instruction in secondary school classrooms.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Based on the background of the study above, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How is HOTS instruction implemented in the teaching of writing skills?
2. To what extent does the use of HOTS instruction improve students' writing skills?

By addressing these questions, this study hopes to provide valuable insights for educators and contribute to the enhancement of writing pedagogy through the integration of higher order thinking strategies.

1.3 Purpose of Study

Based on the statement of problem above, this research aims to explore:

1. To describe the implementation of Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) instruction in the teaching of writing skills.
2. To investigate the extent to which HOTS instruction improves students' writing skills.

Ultimately, the findings of this study are intended to contribute to the development of more effective writing instruction approaches that promote deeper cognitive engagement and better academic outcomes for students.

1.4 Benefits of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to provide several benefits, as follows:

a. For the School:

This study can serve as a reference for schools to develop and support the implementation of HOTS-based instruction in English writing classes. It may help schools improve their curriculum by promoting more student-centered and critical thinking-oriented approaches.

b. For the Teachers:

The study can provide insights and practical ideas for English teachers on how to implement HOTS instruction effectively in teaching writing. It may help teachers enhance their teaching strategies to develop students' critical and analytical thinking skills through writing activities.

c. For the Researcher:

This research allows the researcher to gain deeper understanding and experience in applying HOTS in the context of English writing instruction. It also contributes to the researcher's academic development and may serve as a foundation for future studies related to education and language teaching.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

This study focuses on improving students' writing skills through the implementation of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) instruction integrated with the Guiding Question Technique and Small Group Discussion (SGD). It was conducted as a Classroom Action Research (CAR) involving the tenth-grade students of SMAN 1 Ponorogo. The instructional activities were carried out through fractured tale writing tasks designed to engage students in analyzing information, evaluating ideas, and

creating meaningful written texts. The study focused on improving students' writing skills as reflected in the aspects of content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. To evaluate both the teaching and learning process and the students' writing performance, the researcher collected data through classroom observations, writing tests, field notes, interviews, and questionnaires throughout the research cycles.

This study was limited to one class of tenth-grade students at SMAN 1 Ponorogo and was conducted within two cycles of Classroom Action Research. The instructional actions were confined to the implementation of HOTS instruction through the integration of the Guiding Question Technique and Small Group Discussion during writing lessons. Consequently, the findings are limited to the context of the participating class and should not be generalized to different educational settings or student populations. Furthermore, this study was intended to improve the teaching and learning process in the selected classroom rather than to compare instructional methods or establish causal relationships between variables. Therefore, other factors that may influence students' writing achievement, such as students' prior English proficiency, learning motivation, family background, and individual learning experiences, were beyond the scope of this study.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS):	The ability to use reasoning and introspection to use values, knowledge, and skills to solve issues, make decisions, innovate, and produce successful results is known as HOTS (Hainora Hamzah et al., 2022)
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Writing Skills: Writing is essential for communicating our ideas, opinions, and thoughts to others about having ideas to put on paper and effectively assembling them (Ghafar & Mohamedamin, 2022)

HOTS Instruction: Teacher's instruction refers to the methods and strategies employed by educators to foster the development of Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in the classroom (Kencana, 2023).

