

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

English has become an important language in the age of globalization. It is a medium of communication among people throughout the world. In Indonesia, students learn English as a foreign language (EFL). They are taught four skills of English: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The national goal of teaching English in Indonesia is to develop the students' ability in communication both in oral or written form. Of all the four skills, writing has become more important in the era of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Writing as one of the language skills must be taught in English classes especially Senior High School students. Through the teaching and learning of writing the students are expected to be able to produce a text well. This is in line with the objective of writing instruction in Senior High School, to develop the students' writing skill in order they can write into English effectively and accurately.

At the level of Senior High school, generally it has two majors, Natural Science major (IPA) and Social Science major (IPS). The students of the two majors have different cognitive process in doing something. Cognitive process is something happening in the students' mind. However, there is an evidence or tendency that the IPA students are smarter than the IPS students. Most of people or even the teachers themselves belief that the students of Natural Science (IPA) are better especially in writing than the

students of Social Science (IPS) do. They propose that the IPA students will have best quality in writing argumentative text than the IPS students do. We could see that the problem did not lie in the cognitive abilities of the Natural Science (IPA) students are better than Social Science (IPS) students have. However, it is caused of the different way of their cognitive process of processing something. The ways they express their ideas is not similar and depend on their characteristics.

According to Stenbergh in Zabu & Davia (2004) the students who study in Natural science tend to think logically and based on the fact. He also categorized students who study in Natural Science (IPA) major into conservative. In this category, they like adhering to existing rules and procedures, minimize changes, avoid ambiguous situations as far as possible, and prefer familiarity in life and work.

Actually, the students of Natural Science (IPA) major have such a way of thinking because their activities during learning in the classroom are engaging in investigations and activities that would allow them to develop deep conceptual understandings of scientific ideas and of the process of inquiry.

They also read the work of others as their progress through an investigation to help them make sense of their own findings. In addition, because investigations are generally complex, the students of Natural Science often act like scientists; must record data points, observations, and initial analyses in writing. It is reflected through their activity in the laboratory, doing experiments and other subjects that required them to think critically.

Meanwhile, according to Scharfersmen in Synder and Mark (2008), students who study in Social Science major are accustomed to explain something based on social phenomena. It is in line with Stenberg in Zabu (2004) that proposed the students who study in Social Science major tend to memorize and recall information. Related to the learning of thinking styles, Stenberg in Zabu (2004) also categorized students who study in social major into liberal. In this category, they like surpassing existing rules and procedures and attempt to maximize changes. In addition, they also seek or are at least comfortable with ambiguous situations, and accept to certain degree unfamiliarity in life and work.

Actually, the students of Social Science (IPS) major have such a way of thinking because their activities or the subjects during learning in the classroom are engaging them in memorizing and arguing toward the social phenomena that existing in the social life. They also consider of others' opinion or ideas as they progress through a discussion and they respect the differences as it is accepted by the society. The students of Social Science act like politician who generally good in arguing in spoken and therefore want to communicate their ideas to other people directly. Finally, students of social studies programs construct a knowledge base and attitudes from academic disciplines as specialized ways of viewing reality. They begin from a specific perspective and apply unique processes for knowing to the study of reality.

The ability to comprehend arguments is a fundamental aspect of human decision making and social interaction. It is also an ability that we

expect the educational system to impart to students during their schooling. There is a national expectation that students become able to comprehend and think critically within a domain. On the other hand, argumentative text is kind of text in which the process of making what writers or speakers think clear to themselves and to others are organized systematically. As proposed by Nippold, Ward-Lonergan, & Fanning in Chase (2011), argumentative text requires the writer to embrace a particular point of view and try to convince the readers in order to have the same perspective. The writers also have to arise the problems and attempt to map language onto his or her own thoughts and feelings as well as the expectations of the reader. It is in line with Saito's opinion (2010) that the production of argumentative text is a reflection of cognitive process of problem solving. Intraprawat in Saito (2010) stated that in order to make an argument in argumentative text, the writers need to express their point of view on a controversial issue or claim, support it with evidence including facts or their own opinions in order to convince the readers.

As the previous research conducted by Halpern (2004) about the cognitive process taxonomy based on the sex differences, the writer is interested to do a research based on SMA majors, the students of Natural Science major (IPA) and Social Science major (IPS) in writing argumentative text. It is assumed that the students from both the two majors have their own way in expressing their ideas in argumentative text as the students from the two majors have their own characteristics. Their cognitive process will be

reflected in their argumentative text and at last, we should realize that every student has same opportunity and no major is better than another major.

1.2 Research Problems

In relation to the background, the problems are formulated as the following:

1. How do students' cognitive processes happen in writing argumentative text?
2. Why does the process happen the way it is?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

Related to the problems, the objectives of the study are:

1. To explain the cognitive processes of students in writing argumentative text.
2. To elaborate the reasons why a cognitive process happens in writing argumentative text.

1.4 The Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is the cognitive processes' theory; cognitive processes based on the students major which consist of Natural Science major (IPA) and Social Science major (IPS). Cognitive processes' theory is related with the act or process of knowing in the broadest sense; especially an

intellectual process by which knowledge is gained from perception or ideas. The theory of writing is elaborated with the theory of argumentative text. Thus, this study focused on the proving whether majors effectively affected cognitive processes of the students in writing an argumentative text.

1.5 The Significances of the Study

The findings of the study are expected to be useful for theoretical and practical aspects. Theoretically, the research finding is expected to enrich the theories of writing strategies, specifically in writing genre text.

Practically, since this study focused on students of different majors, Natural Science Major (IPA) and Social Science Major (IPS) and their cognitive process in writing genre text, this study hopefully will help the SMA students both IPA and IPS majors to construct an effective argumentative text by using their individual writing processes in appropriate context of genre. Besides, the teacher should concern of these differences; they can help learners of the both majors in different ways in writing a text by concentrating on learners' characteristics and provide successful learning situations.