

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Writing in English is a productive skill that is crucial for learning a foreign language (EFL), particularly when it comes to expressing thoughts in a structured and logical way. According to Prakoso writing is the act of transferring sentiments, ideas, and concepts into symbols in written language in order to subtly communicate with readers. Opinion letters, which are open letters that present the writer's points of view on particular topics in an argumentative fashion, are one kind of writing that successfully develops this ability.¹ Proficiency in language is necessary for this skill, but so are critical thinking, argument organization, and comprehension of persuasive writing structure.

In reality, though, a lot of Indonesian students still struggle to write persuasive opinion letters. These challenges include a lack of drive to write, poor writing organization, and difficulties creating logical arguments. Three types of issues are encountered by EFL students in Indonesia: linguistic, cognitive, and psychological issues, according to research by Rahmatunisain. "*Problems Faced by Indonesian EFL Learners in Writing Argumentative Essay.*" In particular, grammatical structure (**23.2%**), word

¹ Ananda Rival Prakoso et al., "Implementasi Genre Based Approach Untuk Meningkatkan Keterampilan Menulis Explanation Text," Indonesian Gender and Society Journal 2, no. 1 (2021),

format (**30.2%**), word class (**16.3%**), word usage faults (**9.3%**), and article usage (**21%**), accounted for the majority of students' linguistic difficulties.

Furthermore, cognitive issues pertaining to the structure of paragraphs and trouble recalling word classes are also major challenges. Students struggle to develop concepts and comprehend the true shape of the text because of the traditional learning strategy, which lacks contextualized and authentic media.

The ability to write in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is a fundamental productive skill for students' academic and professional success. However, this skill often poses a significant challenge, as identified in the educational context at SMKN 4 Pandeglang. The Principal of SMKN 4 Pandeglang, Dr. Ir. H. Susila, M.M., acknowledged in an initial pre-podcast observation interview on 10 July 2025 that there are real obstacles related to students' writing competence, particularly in terms of articulating ideas coherently and systematically, which is considered to be less than optimal.² Preliminary analysis indicates that one of the main factors contributing to this obstacle is the limited exposure of students to various forms of authentic texts outside of conventional textbooks. This limitation in learning resources hinders students in developing original ideas and understanding the structure of effective persuasive writing. In addition,

² Appendix 9: Transcript of Initial Interview with Dr. Ir. H. Susila, 10 July 2025.

minimal time allocation and a lack of intensive practice are also considered factors that hinder the mastery of this crucial skill.

These findings were confirmed and further clarified by Mr Irfan Sofyan, S.P.d., an eleventh grade English teacher who works closely with the teaching process. Pedagogically, Mr. Sofyan observed that many students faced fundamental difficulties in formulating logical and coherent arguments, particularly in the format of opinion letters. This challenge manifested itself in confusion regarding paragraph organisation and limited lexical choices used by students.³

Furthermore, the most significant obstacle identified was motivation. Limited contextualised writing experience often made it difficult for students to articulate their ideas, which ultimately had a negative impact on their confidence in writing. Based on these findings, it is clear that there is an urgent need to find more engaging teaching strategies and materials to foster student motivation so that they can participate actively and creatively in writing activities. Therefore, this study aims to improve the ability to write opinion letters by using podcasts as a supporting tool.

Digital media, including podcasts, are beginning to be used as a creative learning alternative as technology advances. Podcasts are audio-based media that convey information audibly and genuinely; they frequently include disputes, viewpoints, and real-world problems in a conversational

³ Appendix 10: Transcript of Initial Interview with Mr. Irfan Sofyan, S.Pd 10 July 2025.

manner. Podcasts can offer impetus for writing instruction in the form of argument models, thematic vocabulary, and persuasive ways to voice viewpoints. This gives pupils authentic language exposure and encourages them to express their thoughts through opinion writing.

In previous studies conducted by several researchers on the effectiveness of podcasts in learning, fairly good results were also obtained, although they did not focus in detail on writing opinion letters. Bell,⁴ instance, defines learner-created podcast assignments as contextualized experiential writing projects that encourage students to hone their research abilities in "*Learner-Created Podcasts: Fostering Information Literacies in a Writing Course.*" With the help of digital tools for producing, publishing, and negotiating meaning, these podcast assignments give students a liminal space where they can move beyond the comfortable and structured essay format and into an unstable writing environment with a variety of potential audiences, modalities, forms, and ways to make meaning.

Moreover, Yuste Chaves and de-la Peña A sample of 78 students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) at a high school in Madrid, Spain, was described in the article "The effects of podcasts on the EFL classroom a socially relevant intervention." Students were split into two groups the Control Group and the Experimental Group for the duration of

⁴ Stephanie Bell, "Article Learner-Created Podcasts: Fostering Information Literacies in a Writing Course," *Canadian Journal for Studies in Discourse and Writing/Rédactologie* 29 (2019), <http://journals.sfu.ca/cjsdw>.

the study, which lasted a semester. As part of their courses, the students in the first group engaged with socially relevant podcasts and took part in the experiment, but the students in the second group did not. The results of the study demonstrated that the experimental group's capacity to express convincing opinions differed significantly from that of the control group. First, an improvement in writing skills The experimental group's students displayed.⁵

The results of the study demonstrated that the experimental group's capacity to express convincing opinions differed significantly from that of the control group. First, an improvement in writing skills When compared to the control group, students in the experimental group demonstrated a noticeably higher growth rate in their test results. The experimental group's average score rise was **25%**, compared to only **10%** for the control group. Additionally, listening to podcasts about pertinent social issues has increased the quality of arguments, structure, motivation, and involvement. These podcasts were beneficial in creating a sense of urgency and restlessness and in encouraging students to express their ideas in writing. Chaves-Yuste's study successfully demonstrated that podcasts can be an excellent teaching medium to improve the teaching-learning process of English as a second language.

⁵ Beatriz Chaves-Yuste and Cristina de-la Peña, "Podcasts' Effects on the EFL Classroom: A Socially Relevant Intervention," *Smart Learning Environments* 10, no. 1 (2023),

To place this research in a broader scholarly context and highlight its unique contribution, it is important to analyze relevant previous studies. One significant study is “The effects of podcasts on the EFL classroom: a socially relevant intervention” by Chaves-Yuste and de-la Peña (2023), which seeks to understand the role of podcasts as a learning tool in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). While these two studies have a clear common ground in the main focus of using podcasts in the EFL classroom, there are also fundamental differences that strengthen the position and urgency of the current research.

First, in terms of research methodology, Chaves-Yuste (2023) employs an experimental design (with control and experimental groups) to quantitatively measure causal effects, while this work uses a case study technique aimed at gathering detailed information on how students use podcasts. *Second*, a more focused skill focus. This study specifically focuses on composing opinion letters, whereas Chaves-Yuste (2023) covers a wider range of *"EFL linguistic competence,"* albeit with a concentration on the substance of social inequality issues. *Third*, there were geographical and contextual differences. Unlike Chaves-Yuste's (2023) study, which was carried out at a high school in Madrid, Spain, this study was carried out in SMKN 4 Pandeglang, Indonesia, and involved students with an Indonesian cultural background and educational system. The sample's demographics and the findings' possible generalizability are both impacted by this

contextual variation. *Fourth*, the sample size and features suggested by the design. Compared to Chaves-Yuste's (2023) experimental study, which included 78 students for statistical comparison, this case study tended to involve fewer students for in-depth qualitative data mining. These variations support the study's distinctiveness and particular contribution to enhancing knowledge of the use of podcasts in EFL writing training local context.

The use of digital media, such as podcasts, as an innovation in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) has drawn attention from academic circles. Numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of podcasts in enhancing students' linguistic proficiency. For example, a study by Chaves-Yuste and de-la Peña (2023) titled "*Podcasts' effects on the EFL classroom: a socially relevant intervention*" demonstrates that podcasts that discuss social issues can have a positive impact on students' linguistic proficiency in middle schools in Madrid, Spain, through experimental design.

Despite this, there are some important research findings, chief among them being the understanding of how students might use this media in a context that is conducive to learning in a particular educational setting. The purpose of this study is to analyze the aforementioned data by providing significant insights through a Qualitative study. In contrast to the study by Chaves-Yuste that focuses on quantitatively examining the effects of causal

on more general linguistic competencies, this study specifically examines how students at SMKN 4 Pandeglang, Indonesia, integrate and use podcasts as teaching tools in their process of expressing their opinions.

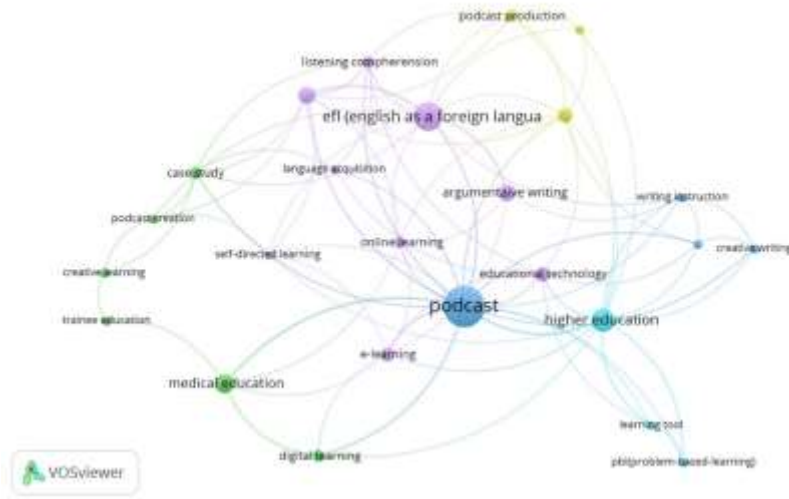


Figure 1.1 VOS Viewer

In this visualisation, the keywords ‘podcast’ (with the largest size and many connecting lines) and ‘EFL (English as a Foreign Language)’ and ‘higher education’ (with large size and central position) emerge as the most dominant and central themes. This indicates that the main focus of the analysed literature is on the use of podcasts as a learning tool or method, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and at the Higher Education level.

The different colours in the visualisation indicate clusters or groups of interrelated research themes. There are at least four main clusters identified:

- Purple Cluster (Top Centre): This cluster focuses on language and specific skills, with keywords such as ‘EFL (English as a Foreign Language),’ ‘listening comprehension,’ and ‘language acquisition.’ This indicates a strong focus on the role of podcasts in improving language skills, particularly in the context of listening.
- Green Cluster (Left): This cluster is more related to guided learning methods, with keywords such as ‘case study,’ ‘podcast creation,’ ‘creative learning,’ and ‘self-directed learning.’ This cluster shows an interest in practical and developmental research, where students create their own podcasts to support independent learning.
- Blue Cluster (Bottom Centre): This cluster covers broader themes of technology and higher education, including ‘podcasts,’ ‘higher education,’ ‘e-learning,’ ‘digital learning,’ and ‘educational technology.’ This cluster shows that podcasts are positioned as part of a larger digital learning ecosystem in higher education institutions.
- Yellow/Beige Cluster (Upper Right): This cluster highlights academic skills, which are linked to ‘argumentative writing’ and ‘writing instruction.’ This shows that there is a number of studies exploring the correlation or implementation of podcasts in supporting the development of argumentative writing skills.

This mapping clearly shows that the use of podcasts has been widely studied in terms of language skills (especially listening) and in the context of higher

education. However, there appears to be a potential gap where the relationship between clusters could be explored in greater depth.

Therefore, this study aims to explore more specifically the implementation of ‘podcast creation’ (Green Cluster) as a learning strategy to improve ‘argumentative writing’ (Yellow Cluster), focusing on its effectiveness in a ‘higher education’ environment (Blue Cluster). This will contribute by linking the aspect of content production by students with the improvement of higher-level writing skills, an intersection of themes that has not been an explicit dominant focus in this visualisation. This mapping clearly shows that the use of podcasts has been widely studied in terms of language skills (especially listening) and in the context of higher education. However, there appears to be a potential gap where the relationship between clusters could be explored in greater depth.

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B. Identification of the Study

Based on the background described above, the problems identified in this study include:

1. Low interest and motivation among students towards writing assignments, particularly opinion letters.
2. Students' difficulty in formulating structured arguments supported by relevant evidence in opinion letters.
3. Teachers' limitations in applying innovative and authentic learning media to teach writing skills in the classroom.
4. The effectiveness of podcasts as a learning tool specifically targeting the improvement of Opinion Letter writing skills in the context of SMKN 4 Pandeglang has not been identified in depth.

C. Statement of the Problem

Based on the identification of the study above, the researcher proposes the following research questions:

1. How is the process of utilizing podcasts as a tool to assist students at SMKN 4 Pandeglang in writing opinion letters?
2. How is the quality of the opinion letters produced by students at SMKN 4 Pandeglang after utilizing podcasts as a writing tool?
3. How are the obstacles faced, and the strategies of English teachers in utilizing podcasts as a tool for writing opinion letters at SMKN 4 Pandeglang?

D. Objective of the Study

In accordance with the problem statement, this research aims to :

1. Describe the process of utilizing podcasts as a tool to assist students at SMKN 4 Pandeglang in writing opinion letters Explore the perception of students of SMKN 4 Pandeglang towards the utilization of podcasts as an opinion writing tool.
2. Describe the quality of the opinion letters produced by students at SMKN 4 Pandeglang after utilizing podcasts as a writing tool
3. Identify the obstacles faced and the strategies employed by English teachers in utilizing podcasts as a tool for writing opinion letters at SMKN 4 Pandeglang.

E. Significances of Study

This study is important for both theory and practice in English language teaching, especially for writing argumentative texts using digital tools.

1. **Theoretically**, the findings will add new knowledge to studies about using audio (like podcasts) for writing. This research can be a guide for future studies in educational technology and English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly on how digital audio helps students develop their argumentative writing skills.
2. **In Practice**, the result of this research are expected to be able to make a good contribution, for students, teachers, future researchers and many more. For Students, using podcasts will expose students to real English,

improve their listening, and help them get used to natural pronunciation and how arguments are built. This can make them write more clearly, think more critically, and feel more confident. For teachers, this study will show teachers how to use podcasts as a fun and effective way to help students write opinion letters. It can help teachers create better writing activities by using real-life audio. For Educational Institutions, the results might encourage schools to use more modern, technology-based ways to teach English, especially writing. This supports the goal of improving students' language skills and preparing them for the future.

F. The Previous Study

To support the focus of this research on the use of podcasts in learning to write opinion letters, several relevant previous studies have been reviewed. Although they have similar themes, there are significant differences in terms of focus, methods, and approaches to the use of podcasts which become the gap of this research. To support the focus of this research on the use of podcasts in learning to write opinion letters, several relevant previous studies have been reviewed. Although they have similar themes, there are significant differences in terms of focus, methods, and approaches to the use of podcasts which become the gap of this research.

First, **Bell's (2019)** research titled "*Learner-Created Podcasts: Fostering Information Literacies in a Writing Course*" was conducted using a project-based qualitative method. In this study, students were asked to create podcasts as part of the writing learning process in an academic class. The main focus of this study was on the development of information literacy and technology-based writing skills. The results showed that students' involvement in creating podcasts encouraged them to think more critically in drafting the script, realize the structure of good writing, choose words carefully, as well as understand their audience. The strength of this study is its ability to show that podcasts are not only an audio medium, but also a means to strengthen awareness of genres and writing structures, especially in academic contexts.⁶ The gaps found by Bell emphasize podcasts as the end product of writing activities, not as a learning input. It does not explain how students can absorb ideas, argument structures, and language styles from podcasts to be transformed into opinion writing, which is precisely the central point in this study.⁷

Second, **Rabie's (2023)** study entitled "*The Effectiveness of Podcasts in Developing the Listening and Speaking Skills of EFL Secondary Stage Students and Motivation*" used a quantitative experimental method with a pre-test and post-test design. The study involved grade 10 students and

⁷ Bell, "Article Learner-Created Podcasts: Fostering Information Literacies in a Writing Course." 2019

aimed to find out the effectiveness of podcasts in developing their listening and speaking skills in English as well as their learning motivation. The results showed that students who were treated using podcasts experienced significant improvements in listening and speaking skills compared to the control group. The strength of this study lies in the strength of empirical evidence that podcasts are able to facilitate more flexible, interactive and motivating learning, especially in receptive aspects such as listening and speaking. However, the gap of this research is that it has not touched the productive dimension of writing. It does not explain how audio exposure can be processed by students into written products such as opinion letters, which actually demand argumentative structures and critical thinking skills. This research does not discuss how students utilize podcasts as a source of ideas or text models for writing.⁸

Third, a study by **Chaves-Yuste and de-la Peña (2023)** entitled *"Podcasts' Effects on the EFL Classroom: A Socially Relevant Intervention"* used a quasi-experimental method and was conducted in secondary schools in Spain. The podcasts used contained social issues according to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially social inequality, and were given to the experimental group to compare the results with the control group. The results showed that although the

⁸ Dalia Ahmed Kamal Rabie, "The Effectiveness of Podcasts in Developing the Listening and Speaking Skills of EFL Secondary Stage Students and Motivation", (٢٠٢٣) no. ١٢٣,

podcasts did not directly improve students' writing skills, there were significant improvements in terms of students' active participation, critical thinking, emotional engagement and social awareness. Podcasts were considered effective as reflection tools and discussion starters in the classroom. The strength of this study is very strong in terms of the social and critical context of the podcast content. This study is very relevant because it uses socially themed podcasts that encourage students to think critically and be active in class discussions. However, the main gap lies in the absence of a focus on writing skills, especially in the context of writing opinion texts in writing.⁹

Thus, this study fills a void in the literature by investigating in depth how podcasts are used by grade XI TKTJ-A Students of SMK 4 Pandeglang as a source of ideas and text structure model in writing opinion letters. This approach not only highlights the writing outcomes, but also the process of internalization of ideas, critical thinking skills, and students' linguistic adaptation to the audio input received. It offers a new perspective in the integration of audio-based technology in teaching argumentative writing at the vocational secondary education level.

⁹ Chaves-Yuste and de-la Peña, "Podcasts' Effects on the EFL Classroom: A Socially Relevant Intervention."

G. Writing Organization

This study uses a writing technique based on scientific paper writing guidebook (FTK UIN SMH Banten). Systematically, it will illuminate five chapters of this paper and each chapter has several points to explain each chapter. The systematic discussion is a follow:

- **Chapter I : Introduction** which consists of the background of the study, formulation of problem, the objectives of study, focus of the research, significances of the study, the previous study, and organization of writing.
- **Chapter II : Literature Review** This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of references theory as a basis for thinking and research.
- **Chapter III : Research Methodology** This chapter discusses how to conduct research which includes; method of research, unit of analysis, research instrument, data collection, and technique of data analysis.
- **Chapter IV Findings and Discussion** The result of collocation used in writing narrative text. The result of Interview and discussion.
- **Chapter V : Conclusion and Recommendations** This chapter discusses the conclusion and suggestion