

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

In response to the rapid transformation of education in the 21st century, there is an increasing demand for learning approaches that not only enhance students' academic achievement but also develop their critical, creative, and reflective thinking skills. Education systems across the globe are currently experiencing substantial reforms with a view to adapting to technological advances and global challenges. In this context, it becomes essential to examine how innovative pedagogical approaches can be integrated into classroom practices, particularly in English language learning. The present chapter thus delineates the background, research phenomena, focus and significance of the study concerning the integration of the deep learning approach in English writing instruction at the high school level.

### 1.1. Background of The Research

In the 21st century, global transformations have taken place, such as rapid technological advancements, changing social conditions, and various complex challenges, particularly in the world of education, where teachers envisage or demand the production of graduates who are not only cognitively intelligent but also capable of critical, creative, and adaptive thinking. Furthermore, this rapid progress has prompted countries worldwide to adopt frameworks that also promote communication, technological integration, and outreach in the 21st century (Bachtiar & Prihantini 2025). Consequently, there is a context and importance attached to 21st-century skills, which refer to a set of competencies enabling individuals to participate effectively in a knowledge- and technology-based society. This is reinforced by international organisations such as UNESCO and the OECD, which emphasise the importance of education focused on the development of social, emotional, and digital skills (Hasibuan et al., 2024). Consequently, the global challenges associated with the use of deep learning approaches in English writing instruction are often hindered by the

dominance of traditional teaching methods such as rote learning, resource constraints, and a lack of teacher training to transition to inquiry-based learning. Furthermore, challenges such as limited access to authentic data corpora, slow student adaptation, and the need for long-term longitudinal studies hinder effective integration within EFL (English as a Foreign Language). These barriers also include foreign language anxiety and the influence of the mother tongue, which disrupts deep processing (Oktavianus & Rido, 2025). These international issues can certainly serve as important references for improving the quality of education in Indonesia.

These international issues can certainly serve as an important reference for improving the quality of education in Indonesia. Consequently, the government has adopted a new approach to the curriculum in Indonesia, requiring educators and stakeholders to effectively integrate this approach into classroom learning by updating their teaching methods through training. However, according to interview data and field observations indicate that during the learning process, the majority of teachers fail to utilise the most effective teaching approaches and media, resulting in students struggling to understand and master the material, which ultimately hinders their academic performance, particularly in writing English. Furthermore, with the rapid technological advancements of the 21st century, students can easily access AI to complete their English writing assignments. Consequently, it is difficult to verify the authenticity of students' writing. Therefore, a transformation of teaching practices in Indonesia is urgently needed, with a focus on the student or a student-centred approach. The pedagogical approach, which was previously teacher-centred, is now student-centred, enabling students to contribute more actively, think critically, and be more creative, whilst avoiding cheating.

As a form of contribution and response to these learning needs, the Indonesian government introduced a highly innovative learning framework, which can create mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning in the classroom

(Feriyanto, et al., 2024). In addition, the learning framework has also been seen to be successful in learning, as seen in developed countries that use the framework in learning, such as Finland, Singapore, and Canada (Kaloko, 2025). This innovative learning framework is known as deep learning, where by introducing this deep learning approach, the government hopes to improve education in Indonesia, and be able to compete in the educational realm with other developed countries, such as Finland, Singapore, and Canada.

Deep learning itself has been around since 1992, first formulated by Paul Ramsden. Deep learning emphasizes conceptual understanding, knowledge integration, and the ability to apply concepts in various contexts, Ramsden as cited in Rusdiana (2024). The deep learning approach is highly suitable for integration into Indonesian learning, particularly in English writing. This is because most teachers in Indonesia still emphasize textbook content or traditional learning. By integrating a deep learning approach into learning, students are expected to be more active, creative, and critical thinkers.

Several previous studies have discussed the integration of a deep learning approach into English language learning, including writing skills. However, most studies have focused on analyzing the implementation of the Indonesian curriculum in English learning. There is still no research on the deep learning approach in general within the Indonesian curriculum (Solikhah & Budiharso, 2019; Pajarwati et al., 2021; Isadaud et al., 2022). Furthermore, most research has been conducted outside the Indonesian context (Liu, 2023; Chen et al., 2024; Bal & Qiao, 2025). The deep learning approach itself emphasizes a student-centered learning process, fostering critical, reflective, and conceptual thinking skills so that students can connect knowledge to real-life contexts.

Meanwhile, research in Indonesia related to improving English writing skills still focuses largely on the use of technology or ICT-based learning as

learning media, rather than on the in-depth thinking processes that are characteristic of deep learning (Kaharuddin, 2021; Utami et al., 2025; Asminarseh et al., 2025). In fact, the application of deep learning in Indonesia only officially began in 2025, so research examining its application is still relatively new, especially at the high school level. On the other hand, several previous studies that used a deep learning approach in English learning only discussed its general application, without emphasizing specific skills such as English writing, and were generally conducted at the university level (Shi & Jiang, 2022; Saqlain, 2023). Based on this, this study aims to fill this gap by focusing on integrating a deep learning approach in the context of English writing learning at the high school level. High school was chosen because at this stage, students are at a crucial stage for developing critical, creative, and collaborative thinking skills, making it a strategic level for implementing deep learning-based learning that aligns with the principles of the Independent Curriculum and 21st-century learning objectives.

Based on previous research, there are several gaps that can be noted in this study, both in terms of research focus, location, school level, and media or approach used. First, most previous research, especially in Indonesia, only focuses on English language learning from the curriculum and pedagogical approach. There is no research discussing the integration of the deep learning approach as part of the national curriculum policy. As previously explained, previous research only focused on analyzing the implementation of the curriculum in Indonesia in English learning, such as the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum, which emphasize communicative and task-based approaches (Solikhah et al., 2019; Pajarwati et al., 2021; Isadaud et al., 2022). This deep learning approach will be very helpful and in line with the curriculum concept in Indonesia, namely the Independent Curriculum, where learning is student-centered, so that students can actively develop their creativity, solve problems through critical thinking, and always be able to collaborate well. Therefore, this

study will examine in more depth the integration of deep learning as part of the curriculum policy in English language teaching in Indonesia, particularly at the senior secondary level.

Second, several international studies have examined the application of deep learning in the context of English writing instruction (Liu, 2023; Chen et al., 2024; Bal & Qiao, 2025), and have shown that a deep learning approach can improve students' conceptual and creative thinking skills. However, because deep learning has only recently been applied in Indonesia to the Merdeka curriculum, namely in the 2025-2026 academic year, Mu'ti as cited in Safitri (2025), it is not widely available in Indonesia, as most research in Indonesia related to English writing instruction still focuses on the use of technology or digital media to improve student writing outcomes (Kaharuddin, 2021; Utami et al., 2025; Ahmad et al., 2024). In the context of English language learning, particularly writing, students desperately need an approach like deep learning, as it can create a meaningful, mindful, and joyful classroom atmosphere. Therefore, due to the lack of previous research on the application of deep learning in teaching English writing skills in the Indonesian educational context, this study will further explore and investigate this issue.

Third and final, the focus of integrated English language learning using deep learning is at the university level (Shi & Jiang, 2022; Saqlain, 2023). This clearly addresses a research gap, as this study used a population or collected data from high schools, focusing on integrating the deep learning approach into the context of English writing. Previous research has focused solely on English language learning. Furthermore, this research also indicates that deep learning is still primarily positioned as a learning model for higher education, where students are already capable of managing complex knowledge and learning autonomously. However, very little research has attempted to adapt this approach to high school students, particularly at the high school level, despite the fact that high school is a

crucial stage in developing students' critical, creative, and collaborative thinking skills. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by examining how the deep learning approach can be effectively integrated into English writing learning at the high school level, particularly in the Cirebon area, Indonesia.

The deep learning approach focuses on conceptual understanding, reflection, knowledge integration, and the ability to apply concepts in various contexts. This can encourage students to be creative, think critically, and collaborate effectively, especially in the context of English writing. Therefore, it is hoped that integrating a deep learning approach into English writing will create mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning for students (Feriyanto et al., 2024).

This study focuses on the high school level because at this stage, students are at the formal cognitive development stage (Piaget, 2000), which enables them to develop critical, creative, and collaborative thinking skills. Therefore, high school can be a strategic level for implementing deep learning-based learning, aligned with the principles of the Independent Curriculum and 21st-century learning objectives.

After reviewing several previous research, it is clear that there is still a lack of research related to the application of the deep learning approach in the context of English writing, particularly at the high school level in Indonesia. Furthermore, in the 21st-century era of education, there are numerous demands in education that need to be improved and adapted to students' needs, such as in facilities and learning quality. Therefore, this research is crucial to demonstrate that the application of deep learning in the context of English writing can help students develop more reflective and meaningful writing skills, and can be a breath of fresh air for the improvement of education in Indonesia.

## **1.2. Identification of The Research Phenomena**

The phenomenon observed in the field is not dissimilar to previous global issues. However, the survey revealed a lack of motivation among students and the widespread use of AI for their writing assignments, which makes it difficult for teachers to verify the authenticity of students' English writing. Furthermore, there is still a lack of adequate facilities, such as a limited number of projectors. Furthermore, on the teachers' side, there are still some long-serving teachers who struggle with digital literacy. Consequently, this renders classroom learning—particularly in English writing—less effective, and the approach to learning that should focus on the student and emphasise mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning is lacking. Consequently, teachers urgently require comprehensive training to enhance or update their teaching methods to better align with students' needs.

Thus, this study will specifically examine the integration of the deep learning approach within the context of English writing instruction at senior high school level in Cirebon, Indonesia. The primary objective of this research is to identify more effective pedagogical strategies and learning processes by integrating the deep learning approach, and to determine the perspectives of students and teachers regarding the integration of deep learning within the context of English writing instruction. Furthermore, to determine the challenges and benefits of integrating the deep learning approach within the context of English writing instruction. Consequently, the learning process is expected to align with the principles of the deep learning approach—namely, learning that is mindful, meaningful, and joyful—so that students can engage in collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking.

## **1.3. Delimitations, Limitations, and Focus of The Research**

This study focuses on two key aspects: the integration of the deep learning approach into the context of English language learning, particularly writing. This clearly indicates that the study will examine how deep learning is

utilised in English writing instruction, as well as the perceptions of students and teachers following the implementation of the deep learning approach in English writing instruction, and the challenges and opportunities involved in applying the deep learning approach to English writing instruction in the classroom.

Furthermore, the research is situated at a senior secondary school in the city of Cirebon. This is because the school has implemented an Independent Curriculum; preliminary studies have found that the deep learning approach has been integrated into English language learning, particularly writing. Moreover, senior secondary school students are at the formal cognitive development stage. Furthermore, this study focuses on students' potential in writing descriptive texts within a learning context that integrates a deep learning approach in the classroom. This is the primary rationale for this research, which centres on the integration of the deep learning approach into the context of English writing instruction.

The duration of this study spans two full months, from December 2025 to January 2026. This research was conducted on students of grades X to XII, with adapted data collection techniques, namely observations focused on grades X and XI, and interviews involving two grade XI students and one English teacher. Due to limited time and resources, this research focused on one context to obtain more in-depth results. In addition, this research emphasizes the integration of an in-depth learning approach in the context of teaching English writing.

#### **1.4. Research Questions**

1. How is Deep Learning implemented to support students' English writing skills?
2. What are the experiences and perceptions of students and teachers in applying the Deep Learning approach to English writing?

3. What challenges and opportunities emerge in applying Deep Learning to English writing instruction?

### **1.5. Aims of The Research**

1. To explore or investigate the use of deep learning approach to support students' English writing skills;
2. To discuss the experiences and perceptions by teachers and students in using deep learning approach;
3. To discuss the challenges and opportunities emerge in applying the Deep Learning approach in English writing.

### **1.6. Significances of The Research**

This research aims to contribute to the development of the government-introduced approach, namely the use of deep learning in the context of English writing instruction in high schools. The use of deep learning in this learning is expected to create a student-centered approach, in accordance with the principles of the Merdeka curriculum, and provide students with opportunities to participate in collaboration, think creatively, and critically. Furthermore, this research is also expected to assist English teachers in Indonesia, as educators, in further improving the quality of English instruction by utilizing deep learning approaches to meet students' needs.

The deep learning approach in the context of English writing instruction in high schools also has the potential to create mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning for students. Therefore, this research will contribute to an understanding of how the deep learning approach can be applied in the context of English writing instruction. Therefore, this research is expected to serve as a reference for teachers, stakeholders, and others. This is because the deep learning approach, which is a new approach used in Indonesia, hopes to see the results of how influential and useful the use of the deep learning approach is in the context of learning, especially in learning to write English in Cirebon, Indonesia.