

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

In today's educational environments, students frequently encounter academic stress, shortened attention spans, and emotional exhaustion. These challenges are particularly evident in senior high schools, where learners are expected to meet complex academic demands while developing emotional and cognitive maturity. One promising pedagogical response is mindful learning, which integrates mindfulness principles into teaching practices to cultivate awareness, focus, and meaningful engagement (Kang & Kim, 2023).

Indonesia's current national curriculum, known as Kurikulum Merdeka, emphasizes the notion of Deep Learning, which encourages meaningful, contextual, and reflective learning experiences. This program aims to improve students' higher-order thinking skills, character development, and self-directed learning abilities. Rather than emphasizing rote memory, Kurikulum Merdeka encourages students to build understanding through investigation, creativity, and reflection, all of which align with the philosophical foundation of mindful learning. As a result, Mindful Learning can serve as a pedagogical embodiment of Deep Learning concepts introduced into the present Indonesian curriculum, combining both cognitive depth and emotional awareness into classroom practice (Benu et al., 2025; Permendikbudriset Indonesia, 2022).

In line with these educational principle, one pedagogical approach that operationalizes deep, reflective learning is Mindful Learning, first proposed by

Langer (1989) extends beyond the idea of mindfulness as a meditative state. It is a cognitive framework that promotes awareness, openness, and flexibility in learning. Langer defines "mindful" learning as the active construction of new understandings through detecting new distinctions, reinterpreting existing knowledge, and adapting viewpoints to new settings. Unlike the conventional method, which is defined by automaticity and repetitive repetition, mindful learning involves learners in active meaning-making, where attention, curiosity, and reflection are constantly exercised. According to Langer and Moldoveanu (2000) define mindful learning as comprising four interconnected characteristics that shape an active and reflective learning experience. The first dimension, sensitivity to novelty, emphasizes learners' ability to approach each learning experience as something new and unique, encouraging continuous curiosity and preventing mechanical repetition. The second dimension, flexibility in perspective, refers to learners' openness to multiple viewpoints and their capacity to reinterpret existing knowledge dynamically. The third, contextual awareness, highlights learners' understanding of how situational and cultural contexts influence meaning-making and knowledge construction. Finally, the fourth dimension, novelty production, describes learners' tendency to generate new categories, ideas, or interpretations through reflection and engagement. Together, these dimensions foster an active state of awareness that transforms learning from a passive reception of information into a creative and self-reflective process. For instance, Fosco et al. (2025) found that mindfulness-based school programs reduce stress and enhance self-regulation and promote overall student well-being. Studies in EFL contexts have shown that mindful practices can boost creativity and improve writing skills.

Within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, mindful learning connects language, awareness, and identity. Writing, as a reflective linguistic act, provides an ideal medium for mindfulness to unfold. When learners engage in writing mindfully, they do more than produce sentences; they reflect on meaning, emotion, and perspective. Studies by Gao (2023), Saputra et. al. (2020) , and Piscayanti (2021) demonstrate that mindful learning can improve students' writing competency, creativity, and emotional regulation. Through reflective journaling, breathing exercises, and contextual awareness, students learn to connect past experiences with current expression, fostering self-understanding and authentic communication. In addition, previous studies have shown that students learning English as a foreign language frequently encounter difficulties in understanding and processing language tasks due to limited vocabulary and challenges in comprehending complex information in English learning activities (Rasmadewi, 2023). These challenges may also affect students' ability to develop ideas and organize their thoughts effectively when engaging in productive skills such as writing.

Despite growing global evidence supporting mindful learning, research in Indonesia remains limited, particularly at the senior high school level. Most previous research has focused on university students (Lin, 2020; Piscayanti, 2021; Wang et al., 2023) or specific cognitive outcomes. However, empirical research investigating its implementation and effect on writing skills in Indonesian Senior high schools remains scarce. Meanwhile, high school students undergoing critical developmental transitions require instructional techniques that promote cognitive and affective growth. Furthermore, local research tends to highlight mindfulness as

a general life skill rather than as an instructional framework integrated into classroom learning.

A Preliminary observation and informal interviews with English teachers at SMA Negeri 4 Singaraja revealed specific existing conditions that underscore the urgency of this study. While the school is widely recognized for its academic reputation and openness to innovative teaching approaches, the daily reality of English writing instruction faces significant pedagogical bottlenecks. Current instructional practices still heavily lean toward product-oriented and teacher-centered methods. Writing activities are frequently reduced to mechanical, rigid drills such as completing fill in the blank grammar exercises, mimicking rigid text templates, and focusing strictly on exam oriented structural correctness. Consequently, students view writing not as medium for authentic expression, but as a high stake, anxiety inducing task. This mechanical routine leaves little to no room for active cognition or personal reflection. When given writing assignments, students frequently experience immediate cognitive blocks or “writer’s block,” struggling to generate baseline ideas, organize their thought logically, or find personal relevance in the topics provided. The absence of a calming, focused classroom atmosphere before starting these productive tasks further exacerbates academic stress and shortens students’ attention spans.

Although a small number of educators at SMA Negeri 4 Singaraja have occasionally attempted to introduce superficial mindfulness practices such as telling students to sit quietly before a lesson, these attempts were not connected to specific language learning goals or to the writing process itself. There is an evident disconnect: teachers recognize the value of a calmer classroom in principle, but

have not combined breathing, reflection, and writing instruction simultaneously into a unified pedagogical framework. These prevailing factors a documented writing-instruction problem, isolated but unstructured mindfulness attempts, and an institutional openness to pedagogical change led the researcher to conclude that introducing Langerian Mindful Learning at SMA Negeri 4 Singaraja is not merely an optional pedagogical innovation, but a critical necessity to transform a restrictive, high-anxiety writing environment into a reflective, authentic, and high performing language learning space.

SMA Negeri 4 Singaraja was therefore not selected at random, it was selected because it is the specific site where the problem described above wae empirically observed and confirmed, and because it offers the institutional conditions needed to test a solution to that problem realistically rather than under artificially ideal conditions.

The novelty of this study lies not only in applying mindful learning at the senior high school level but also in examining both cognitive (writing skills) and affective (self-acceptance) outcomes through a mixed-method design. Unlike previous studies that focused only on university students (Piscayanti, 2021; Wang et al., 2023) This research offers a contextualized understanding of mindful learning among teenagers, an educational stage characterized by emotional variation and identity development. The integration of qualitative observation, reflective journaling, and quasi-experimental testing provides a comprehensive view of how mindfulness principles function in the real classroom setting. This study also offers new insight by being among the first to explore mindful learning at the senior high school level (SMA) in Indonesia. By shifting the focus from university students to

high school learners, this research aims to determine whether mindful learning can enhance not only academic skills, especially writing, but also psychological outcomes such as self-acceptance in younger students.

1.2 Problem Identification

Despite the limited research on mindfulness in education, particularly in Indonesia, initial observations and interviews conducted at SMA N 4 Singaraja indicate that mindful learning has not yet been implemented in high schools. This situation can be attributed to several challenges, including the large number of students in each class, the complexity of implementing mindful learning, and the limited instructional time available. As a result, students may experience difficulties in generating ideas, organizing their thoughts, and expressing personal meaning in writing activities.

1.3 Research Limitation

This study is limited to the context of SMA N 4 Singaraja, focusing only on selected classrooms where mindful learning practices are implemented. Due to contextual differences in class size, teacher readiness, and institutional support, the findings may not generalize to all high schools in Indonesia. The study also relies on qualitative data from observation and interviews, which may reflect subjective interpretations from both participants and the researcher. Time constraints during data collection further limit the scope of the findings.

1.4 Research Question

Based on the problems in this study, the research question is as follows.

1. How is mindful learning implemented in classroom practices at SMA N 4 Singaraja?

2. Is there a significant difference in students' writing skills between students taught with mindful learning and those taught with regular instruction?

1.5 Research Objective

In accordance with the above problems, this research has the following objectives.

1. To explore how mindful learning is implemented in classroom practices at SMA N 4 Singaraja.
2. To examine the differences in students' writing skills between the experimental group (mindful learning) and the control group (regular instruction) in SMA N 4 Singaraja

The main aim of this research is to offer a fresh perspective on mindful learning at the high school level in Buleleng, serving as a reference for future mindful learning studies across Indonesia. Additionally, it seeks to broaden the understanding of mindful learning research, contributing to the creation of novelty within the context of English language learning.

1.6 Research Significance

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

This study contributes to the growing body on mindfulness in education, especially in the Indonesian high school context, where research remains limited. It extends the application of Langer's mindful learning theory by examining how mindfulness principles can be adapted to local classroom settings.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

The findings are expected to provide insights for teachers at SMA N 4 Singaraja and other schools on effective strategies to integrate mindful learning into daily teaching. The study may also inform school administrators and policymakers about the potential benefits of mindful learning in supporting students' academic engagement.

1.6.3 Educational Significance

By highlighting both the benefits and challenges of implementing mindful learning, this research can serve as a reference for teachers and inform future innovations in education in Indonesia.

