

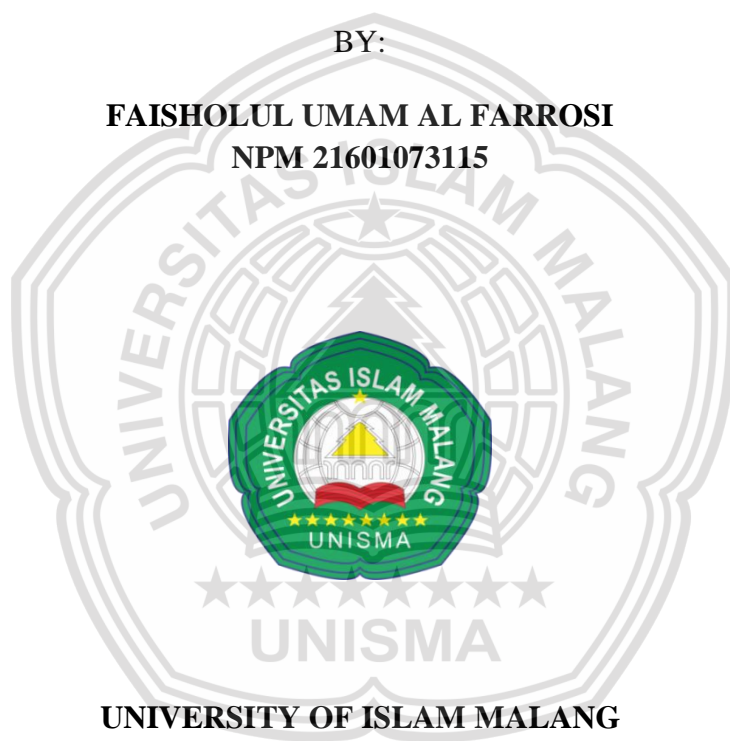


**EXPLORING STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING UNDERGRADUATE THESIS
AND THE FACTORS OF THE DIFFICULTIES**

SKRIPSI

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FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION

ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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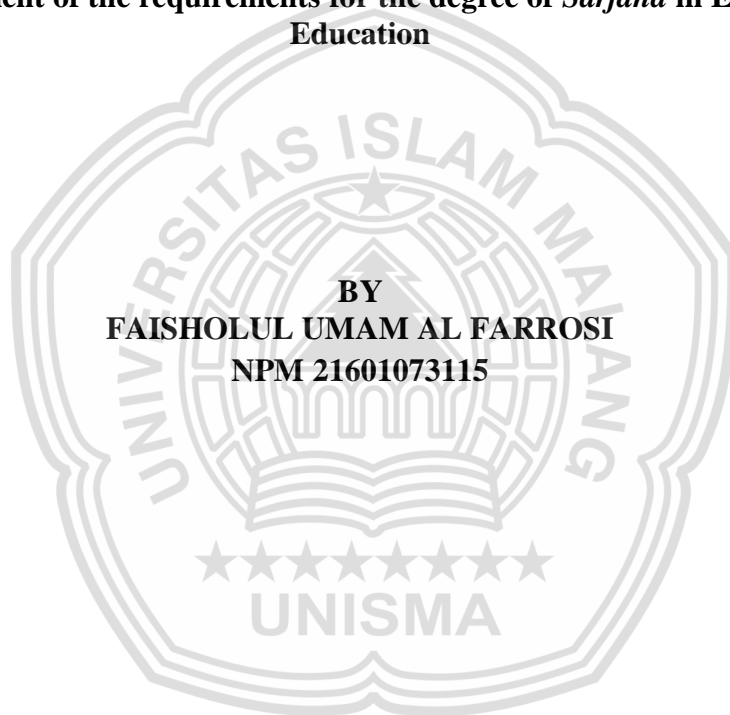
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ABSTRACT

Al-Farrosi, Faisholul Umam. 2023. *Exploring Students' Difficulties In Writing Undergraduate Thesis And The Factors of The Difficulties*. Skripsi, English Education Department Faculty of Teacher Training and Education University of Islam Malang. Advisor I : Dr. Atik Umamah, S.Pd, M.Pd., Advisor II : Fitri Awaliyatush Sholihah, S.Pd., M.Pd.

Keywords: Academic writing, difficulties, undergraduate thesis.

The significant role of academic writing and research in higher education is its contribution as the largest sources of scientific information. There are various kinds of academic writing, as for undergraduate university students, a thesis is one of the most important task to finish their education program and contribute their knowledge. However, writing an undergraduate thesis tend to be challenging task, as it requires a good understanding of the topic and good writing skills. Therefore, the researcher aims to focus on researching the difficulties in undergraduate thesis and the factors of the difficulties.

This research is conducted using descriptive qualitative research design with 5 students undergoing the task of writing undergraduate thesis as the research participants. The study implemented using interview guide adapted from Cheung (2013) consisting of six questions. The data collected using the semi-structured interview through WhatsApp voice note due to social distancing protocol in the midst of COVID-19. The data analyzed by using qualitative data analysis based on Creswell (2009) which includes data selection, grouping, and organization, generating a description, discussion and drawing conclusion.

The result of the study reveals that the student encounters several problems including difficulties in qualitative data analysis caused by lack of information and course about qualitative data analysis, finding relevant literatures caused by lack of availability of related literature, laziness due to revision and different perspective between the advisors, as well as difficulties in specific chapter. In terms of non-linguistic difficulties, the students mostly struggle in content organization, while, linguistic problems occurs in the writing process includes lexical and structure problem but it's proven to be less problematic.

ABSTRAK

Al-Farrosi, Faisholul Umam. 2023. Eksplorasi Kesulitan Mahasiswa dalam Menulis Skripsi Sarjana dan Faktor-faktor Kesulitan Tersebut. Skripsi, Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Fakultas Pendidikan dan Ilmu Keguruan Universitas Islam Malang. Pembimbing I: Dr. Atik Umamah, S.Pd, M.Pd., Pembimbing II: Fitri Awaliyatush Sholihah, S.Pd., M.Pd.

Kata Kunci: Penulisan akademik, kesulitan, skripsi sarjana.

Peran penting penulisan akademik dan penelitian dalam pendidikan tinggi adalah kontribusinya sebagai sumber informasi ilmiah terbesar. Terdapat berbagai jenis penulisan akademik, dan bagi mahasiswa universitas tingkat sarjana, skripsi merupakan salah satu tugas terpenting untuk menyelesaikan program pendidikan mereka dan memberikan kontribusi dalam pengetahuan mereka. Namun, menulis skripsi sarjana cenderung menjadi tugas yang menantang, karena membutuhkan pemahaman yang baik tentang topik dan keterampilan menulis yang baik. Oleh karena itu, peneliti bertujuan untuk fokus dalam meneliti kesulitan dalam menulis skripsi sarjana dan faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan kesulitan tersebut.

Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif deskriptif dengan melibatkan 5 mahasiswa yang sedang menjalani tugas menulis skripsi sarjana sebagai partisipan penelitian. Studi ini menggunakan pedoman wawancara yang diadaptasi dari Cheung (2013) yang terdiri dari enam pertanyaan. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan wawancara semi-terstruktur melalui catatan suara WhatsApp karena protokol jarak sosial di tengah pandemi COVID-19. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis data kualitatif berdasarkan Creswell (2009) yang mencakup pemilihan data, pengelompokan, dan pengorganisasian data, pembuatan deskripsi, diskusi, dan penarikan kesimpulan.

Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa mahasiswa menghadapi beberapa masalah, termasuk kesulitan dalam analisis data kualitatif yang disebabkan oleh kurangnya informasi dan mata kuliah tentang analisis data kualitatif, kesulitan dalam mencari literatur yang relevan yang disebabkan oleh kurangnya ketersediaan literatur terkait, rasa malas akibat revisi dan perspektif yang berbeda antara pembimbing, serta kesulitan dalam bab-bab khusus. Dalam hal kesulitan non-linguistik, mahasiswa kebanyakan mengalami kesulitan dalam organisasi konten, sedangkan masalah linguistik terjadi dalam proses penulisan termasuk masalah leksikal dan struktur tetapi terbukti kurang bermasalah.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research background, the problem of the research, the purposes of the study, scope and limitation, and the definition of key terms as the introduction of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Academic writing and research have a significant role in higher education as one of the largest sources of scientific information. Every student at higher education such as universities or colleges has to contribute their scientific work as the form of their academic dedication and quality. Therefore, it is mandatory for university students to write a thesis as the qualification in to complete their education a bachelor degree. Academic writing presents research and study organized by researchers at the higher education level by presenting the result of their research findings and discussion in the form of scientific writing. It is critical to present writers' arguments in a logical order and to reach conclusions. Scientific writing is the coherent arrangement of written phrases inside paragraphs as a reflection of the writer's ideas (Al-Badi, 2015). Burke (2010) asserted that one notable characteristic of academic writing is comprehensible not only for the certain individual but also understandable from the perspective of society. Mubarak (2017) added that academic or scientific writing represents structured research done and used by higher education scholars. In writing, it is necessary for the author to have a good understanding of the topic, as writing is used to find out the quality of students and to know what students have understood and learned about a particular academic subject (Mutwarasibo, 2013). The researcher relates and supports their finding with references from other authors of the same field of study in the discussion to gain a strong conclusion of the study. According to Khazaal, (2019) writers

always interact with each other's texts, and so there will be frequent references to the ideas, thinking, or research of other authors writing in this field. In using reference in academic writing, the researcher should be able to attain the originality of their works by giving acknowledgment and cite the author of the reference properly. Hayland (2002) stated that "Academic writing is not just about conveying an ideational 'content'"; it is also about the representation of self. The authors achieve credibility by portraying an image of authority, demonstrating confidence in their judgements, and committing to their views (Khazaal, 2019).

There are various kinds of academic writing ranging from simple short article, essay, and report to more complex such as thesis and dissertation. In the case of undergraduate university students, a thesis is one of the most important as the final assignment to finish their education program and contribute their knowledge and dedication to science and knowledge development. A thesis is a piece of writing that gives information about the result of a particular topic that written scientifically as academic writing (Puspita 2019). Thesis writing is a very important and essential skill for the undergraduate scholar to enhance their career and experience further. However, writing a thesis appears to be a challenging task for university students, as it requires a good understanding of the topic and good writing skills. According to Al-Khairy (2013), major problems in academic writing comprise inappropriate use of vocabulary, grammatical errors, irregular verbs, punctuation, and spelling. This task is even more challenging for those who write using a foreign language. Chou (2011) stated that other causes of difficulties in scientific writing include L1 distraction, insufficiency of ideas, and imprecise work directions.

Writing skill appears to be very significant, but rather challenging academic skills for university students to learn especially in the writing of scientific writing. Mubarak (2017) pointed that the difficulties in English academic writing seem to be a common case of EFL learners as they

have to be acquainted with the writing process, components, and elements such as a convention, objective to utilize the language precisely and accurately in a foreign language. Ismail (2011) implies that English writing allows possibilities for students to think critically and inspire them to learn certain components of academic writing like utilizing effective expressions of words and choosing the right vocabulary.

Several studies reported a variety of difficulties related to academic writing in a foreign language. Moreover, a study conducted by Cheung (2013) indicated that most problems are caused by language-related difficulties such as inappropriate stance, grammar, and choice of words. Another study by Nasser (2019) also reveals that low English proficiency might also hinder academic writing, students' errors related to difficulties in the use of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and handwriting diagnosed from Iraqi EFL students' writing composition. More recent study by Lestari 2020 revealed that the students' difficulties in writing a thesis are related to English proficiencies; time management; deciding research methodology, attitude, and the difficulties due to co-advisor relationship.

In terms of lacking knowledge in academic writing, Al Mukdad (2019) revealed that students' difficulties in academic writing are caused by a lack of knowledge to distinguish between academic and common type English writing. Furthermore, a study conducted by Belkhir & Benyelles (2017) shows that EFL learners have difficulties regarding coherence and cohesion in academic writing due to the lack of reading, insufficient language transfer and practice in writing. Moreover, Sariyanto (2020) found that difficulties of writing an undergraduate thesis are caused by a lack of knowledge about thesis components, the process of consultation, psychological factors, and economic factors.

This study takes into consideration the gap found in previous studies. The researcher found that the previous studies (e.g. Cheung, 2013; Al Mukdad, 2019; Nasser, 2019 and Belkir & Benyelles 2017) mainly focus in analyzing the students' perception towards issues in simple academic writing such as essays and reports. And some is found to be conducted using close-ended questions that might limit students to express difficulties they encounter directly. There are studies that focuses on the undergraduate thesis, for instance, Lestari; and Sariyanto et al (2020) but uses questionnaire and Likert scale that might not cover the students' real experience. Moreover, none of them conduct the study to find the factors causing the difficulties of thesis writing. In this case, the current study focuses on researching the difficulties in undergraduate thesis and the factors of the difficulties descriptively via semi-structured interviews.

1.2 Research Problems

Based on the issues of academic writing found in the research background, the researcher formulates the research question as follows:

1. What kind of difficulties that are encountered by students in writing undergraduate thesis?
2. What kind of factors cause students' difficulties in writing undergraduate thesis?

1.3 Purpose of the Research

According to the research questions above, the researcher formulates the purpose of the research as follows:

1. To explore the students' difficulties encountered in the writing of an English thesis.
2. To identify factors causing the difficulties in the writing of an English thesis.

1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The research focused on students in the late semester undergoing undergraduate thesis writing, and the research processes is limited to online research due to social distancing. The study is limited on undergraduate thesis writing, not research article or journal. Another limitation is the number of participants as most students writing undergraduate thesis have busy, and some that have been contacted by the researcher are already finished their thesis and no longer viable for this research, the researcher aims to study on 5 students which is sufficient for qualitative study. Moreover, the instrument is limited only to the interview and does not include questionnaire because the researcher is not certain whether the students in specific semester all have taken undergraduate thesis as some classes might have students who have not taken undergraduate thesis,

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study provides beneficial scientific contribution to the study of academic writing. The significance of the study is divided into theoretical and practical significance.

1.5.1 Theoretical Benefit

Theoretically, the result of this research can contribute to the knowledge and information about the difficulties and factors causing difficulties in academic writing.

1.5.2 Practical Benefit

The result of the study can give the reader practical information about the writing process and the potential difficulties in the writing process.

A. For university students

This study contributes the university students with beneficial information about thesis writing and potential difficulties and its causing factors that might be encountered in the writing of an English thesis

B. For Supervisor

This study provides information about possible difficulties encountered by students based on their experience in writing a thesis in English to encourage academic writing instructors to find a solution regarding to thesis writing difficulties and enhance their performance in teaching academic writing.

C. For researcher:

This research provides valuable insight and suggestions in conducting research about thesis writing and open more opportunities to study more deeper about difficulties in academic writing.

1.6 Definition of the Key Terms

This section explains the definition of the key terms used in this research to avoid misunderstanding.

Undergraduate thesis refers to a form of academic writing that is written in an organized way from introduction, literature review, method, result, and conclusion to presents authors' research or study. This kind of document is submitted as a qualification of the bachelor degree.

Difficulties in thesis writing refers to barrier and limitations hampering certain of thesis writing process including linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties.

Factor causing thesis writing Difficulties refers to particular aspects that cause difficulties in thesis writing including internal, and external factors as well as linguistic factors.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the findings and discussion, there are two conclusion to answer the research problems about difficulties in writing undergraduate thesis and its causing factors.

5.1 Conclusion

The result of the study reveals that the student encounters several problems in the writing of their undergraduate thesis including difficulties in qualitative data analysis which is the most frequent difficulties, the difficulties in finding relevant literatures, laziness due to revision and different perspective between the advisors. About the difficulties in specific chapter, the data shows that the most frequent problems are encountered in chapter three and four. Moreover, in the writing process there are linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties, In terms of non-linguistic difficulties, the students mostly struggle in content organization, meanwhile, linguistic problems in writing process includes lexical/vocab and structure problem but it's proven to be less problematic.

In terms of factors causing difficulties in writing undergraduate thesis, the problem of finding relevant information is caused by lack of availability of related literature with qualitative setting similar to students' research. Regarding difficulties in analyzing qualitative data, it is caused by lack of information and course about qualitative data analysis during their study at the university. Moreover, in terms of laziness when seeing many revisions, it is caused by lacking supervision clarity as the feedback that advisor provides contains no clue on how to revise. The problem regarding different perspective of two advisors is caused by inconsistency of feedback and the reluctance of the student to communicate that issues. And finally, the external factors of students are mostly related to social relationship with friends and supervision with the lecturers.

5.2 Suggestion

Based on the conclusion of this study, the researcher provides some suggestion for the university student, the lecturer and the next researcher.

For the students studying at the university, it is suggested to learn more information about scientific writing such as undergraduate thesis from various sources as there are abundant information regarding scientific writing such as literature review, method and data analysis in the internet and not rely too much on one source of learning or wait to be provided with information.

For the lecturer, it is suggested to provide more attention on what the students need in undergraduate thesis to be better at guiding students in writing undergraduate thesis. Moreover, it is also suggested to provide clue on what to revise instead of just instruct the students to revise. It is also important for the lecturer as advisor to avoid conflicting information with the other lecturers to prevent inconsistencies of information for the students.

For the next researcher aims to study related topics, it is suggested to conduct further research regarding other aspects that is not included in this study such as time completion, relationship with the lecturers and supervision in online setting. For those who aims to conduct interview-based research it is suggested to include questionnaire before conducting interview as it will help the researcher to focus more on detailed information.

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