EFL STUDENTS' CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

IN WRITING RESEARCH PROPOSAL

SKRIPSI

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ABSTRAK

Magfiroh, Reza. 2023. *Tantangan dan Strategi Siswa EFL dalam Menulis Proposal Penelitian.* Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Universitas Islam Malang. Pembimbing I: Dr. Atik Umamah, S.Pd, M.Pd; Pembimbing II: Ika Hidayanti, S.Pd, M.Pd.

Kata kunci: penulisan akademik, tantangan siswa, strategi siswa, proposal penelitian

Penulisan skripsi merupakan salah satu syarat bagi mahasiswa sarjana di Indonesia untuk memperoleh gelar. Sebelum melakukan penelitian, mahasiswa diwajibkan untuk membuat proposal penelitian. Proses penulisan proposal ini tidaklah mudah, oleh karena itu banyak mahasiswa yang kesulitan untuk menyelesaikan tugas ini. Beberapa penelitian sebelumnya lebih terfokus pada kesulitan siswa dalam aspek linguistik dan tata bahasa, hanya sedikit yang mengkaji aspek lain seperti tantangan dari dalam dan luar, serta strategi mereka dalam menghadapi tantangan tersebut. Jadi, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki tantangan internal dan eksternal dalam menulis proposal penelitian dan strategi menghadapi tantangan mahasiswa EFL di Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di sebuah universitas swasta di Malang.

Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain penelitian studi kasus. Untuk instrumen penelitian, penelitian ini menggunakan wawancara tidak terstruktur dan dokumentasi proposal penelitian untuk mengumpulkan data dengan fokus pada tantangan dan strategi internal dan eksternal. Peneliti mengambil enam siswa EFL yang dipilih dengan sampling kuota. Untuk menganalisis data, peneliti menggunakan enam prosedur analisis tematik oleh Braun dan Clarke (2006). Keenam prosedur tersebut adalah sosialisasi, pembuatan kode awal, pencarian tema, review tema, pendefinisian dan penamaan tema, dan penyusunan laporan.

Temuan menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa EFL menghadapi banyak tantangan dalam menulis proposal penelitian, baik internal maupun eksternal. Tantangan internal terkait dengan kurangnya kepercayaan diri, kurangnya pengetahuan, kurangnya motivasi diri, dan perasaan di bawah tekanan. Sedangkan tantangan eksternal terkait dengan umpan balik/gaya pemaparan dosen, materi, dan dukungan sosial. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa lebih banyak menghadapi tantangan internal daripada tantangan eksternal dalam menulis proposal penelitian. Ditemukan juga strategi atau cara siswa EFL untuk menghadapi tantangan yang mereka hadapi seperti menggunakan alat pengecekan tata bahasa, menggunakan alat terjemahan, melakukan trik untuk menemukan jurnal, dan menggunakan teknik dalam menemukan ide. Berdasarkan temuan tersebut, disarankan agar mahasiswa menggunakan teknik Grammarly, Google Translate, dan menulis dalam menulis proposal penelitian. Dosen juga dianjurkan untuk memiliki gaya mengajar yang mudah dipahami. Selain itu, penelitian selanjutnya disarankan untuk menyelidiki peserta yang lebih besar dan menggunakan metode yang berbeda.

ABSTRACT

Maghfiroh, Reza. 2023. *EFL Students' Challenges and Strategies in Writing Research Proposal. 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: Ika Hidayanti, S.Pd, M.Pd.

Keywords: academic writing, students' challenges, students' strategies, research proposal

Undergraduate thesis writing is one of the requirements for undergraduate students in Indonesia to obtain a degree. Before conducting the research, the students are required to make a research proposal. The process of writing this proposal is not easy: therefore, many students struggle to accomplish this task. Several previous studies are more focused on the student's difficulties in linguistic and grammar aspects, only a few examined other aspects such as challenges from internal and external, and their strategies in dealing with the challenges. So, this study aimed to investigate the internal and external challenges in writing research proposals and the strategies for dealing with the challenges of EFL students in the English Education Department at a private university in Malang.

This study used a qualitative approach, and a case study as the research design. For the research instrument, this study used unstructured interviews and research proposal documentation to collect the data in focusing on internal and external challenges and strategies. The researcher took six EFL students selected by quota sampling. To analyze the data, the researcher used six procedures of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006). The six procedures are familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and composing the report.

The findings showed that EFL students faced many challenges in writing research proposals, both internal and external. The internal challenges are related to lack of self-confidence, lack of knowledge, lack of self-motivation, and feeling under pressure. While the external challenges are related to lecturers' feedback/explaining styles, materials, and social support. The result showed that the students faced more internal challenges than external challenges in writing research proposals. There were also found the EFL students' strategies or ways to deal with the challenges they faced such as using grammar-checking tools, using translation tools, doing tricks to find journals, and using a technique in finding ideas. Based on the findings, it is suggested that the students use Grammarly, Google Translate, and writing techniques in writing the research proposal. The lecturers are also recommended to have a teaching style that is easy to understand. In addition, future research is recommended to investigate the larger participants and use different methods.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher discusses about the background of the study, research questions, research objectives, research significances, scopes and limitations, and definition of key terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

Writing is about how the writers be able to show their ideas and build their thoughts, and make their writing can be the ways to tell the information and communicate with the reader (Kane, 2000). The writing process gives students a structure for writing. The writing process is generally known to consist of four main stages, namely planning, drafting, revising, and editing. And three other stages are imposed externally on students by the teacher namely, responding (sharing), evaluating, and post-writing (Seow, 2002).

Pre-writing is an activity that motivates students to write. It inspires students' minds to start writing. This first step helps students in dealing with problems in finding ideas and assists students in gathering information for writing. There are several activities that students can do at this stage, such as Group Brainstorming, Clustering, Rapid Freewriting, and WH-Question. After successfully gathering ideas for writing, the next step is drafting, which at this stage the writer is not fixated on grammar and structure because the focus of this

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stage is writing fluency, and the students are not preoccupied with the neatness of the draft at this stage. Furthermore, students can review their drafts at the revising stage based on verbal or written feedback provided by teachers or lecturers, or peers. Actually, the feedback given to students is a responding stage which can be done after the drafting stage. This is better done because most responding is only done in the final stage when the teacher or lecturer simultaneously responds and evaluates, and even edits the student's finished text, thereby giving the impression to students that there is nothing more that needs to be done. At the revising stage, students look back at what they wrote to determine the effectiveness of their writing in giving meaning to the reader.

The last stage is editing where at this stage students can tidy up their drafts for evaluation. The focus in the editing stage is editing grammar, spelling, punctuation, diction, sentence structure, quotations, and the like. In addition, there are two other stages carried out by the teacher to students, namely Evaluating (assessments that can be analytical or holistic, and have evaluation criteria that have previously been notified to students) and Post-Writing (activities to introduce student writing as an important and useful thing that activities can be in the form of publishing, sharing, reading aloud, transforming texts for stage performances, or merely displaying texts on notice-boards).

There are four main types of writing, namely descriptive, persuasive, narrative, and expository (Jeffrey, 2016). Each of these four writing types has a distinct aim, and they all require different types of writing skills. First, descriptive writing is writing that aims to help the reader visualize characters, events, places,

or all these things at once in detail, and may be able to use metaphors or other literary devices to describe it through the five senses (touch, sight, hearing, smell, and taste). Descriptive writing could be found in Poetry, Journal/diary writing, Descriptions of Nature, Fictional novels or plays, biographies, memoirs, etc. Second, persuasive writing is writing that is used to convince readers of the content produced, and persuasive writing includes the author's opinion, providing justification and evidence to support their claims. This type of writing is used in Cover letters, Op-Eds and Editorial newspaper articles, Reviews of items, Letters of complaint, Advertisements, Letters of recommendation, etc.

Third, narrative writing has the goal of sharing information in the context of a story, either real or imaginary, in chronological order which must include characters, conflicts, and settings. This is usually used on Oral histories, Novels/Novellas, Poetry (especially epic sagas or poems), Short Stories, Anecdotes, etc. Fourth, expository writing is writing based on exposition of facts that is used to explain certain ideas or topics. The content used in expository writing must be factual and not influenced by opinion, and supported by strong evidence as a cited source such as additional statistical or scientific data. Expository writing is typically used in Textbooks, How-to articles, Recipes, News stories (not editorials or Op-Eds), Business, technical, scientific writing, and academic material or academic writing.

Writing is one of the most difficult challenges faced by the students (Murray & Moore, 2006), especially for university level. One of the obligations of undergraduate students in Indonesia is to write the academic writing in the form

of research paper (thesis) to obtain the undergraduate's degree (Mutofa, 2019).
Before writing a research paper, students are required to start with writing a
research proposal. Research proposal is also one of academic writing. The
research proposal is intended to consider the efficiency of time, money, and effort
in rejecting the research proposal outright. However, many students have
difficulty in writing their proposals and they are late in submitting their papers
(Nasution, 1995). Moreover, there will be more challenges for EFL students in
writing their proposal and research paper, because English is not the mother
tongue of the EFL students (Azizah & Budiman, 2017). Many scholars consider
that the biggest challenges for EFL students is in academic writing (Bacha, 2012;
Mohan & Lo, 1985; Rabab'ah, 2003).

Student challenges are influenced by the internal and external factors
(Syah, 2001). The internal factors come from the student themselves related to the
students' cognitive ability, such as students' psychology, and linguistic. While,
the external factors come from the student's environment related to the setting of
the place where the student study, such as advisor support, family and friends
support, and surroundings. In addition, there are other reasons that affect the
quality of student learning, such as motivation and support from family, student
behavior that is affected by previous educational experiences, boredom, and
uncomfortable classroom conditions (Harmer, 2013). This shows that the
challenges faced by students are not only related to mastery and understanding of
the subject matter, but also related to psychological problems.

In earlier study, Peng (2018) revealed that students start to have trouble in research writing even from the very beginning of the research process, such as topic selection and research proposal preparation, not to mention the subsequent more complicated steps like literature review. It means that even in the first step of writing a thesis, students already faced challenges in writing a proposal. Acheampong (2021) concludes in his study that the difficulties of students in writing research proposals are due to a lack of research materials, time, communication with supervisors, and supervisors' hostile attitude. Sulaiman and Muhajir (2019) in their research concluded that the students' difficulties were related to aspects of grammar, scientific writing style/rules, vocabulary, spelling, coherence, writing arrangement, and punctuation.

The previous study also indicated that the students difficulties in writing research proposal are in describing data analysis, finding relevant references, lack of vocabulary, and writing theoretical and framework Fields (Prasetyaningrum et al., 2021). The study also conducted by Al-Badi (2015) showed that the common mistakes of the students are finding the relevant topic or sources and the lack of the knowledge of the conventions of academic writing, and also the expectations of the institution. In addition, Rastri et al. (2023) also showed in their research that the linguistic factors got the highest score (75.49%) which highly affected students in writing research proposal.

There are many strategies that students can do to face these challenges. Sasaki (2000) in his research on EFL students found 10 writing strategies namely, Planning, Retrieving, Generating Ideas, Verbalizing, Translating, Rereading,

Evaluating and others such as Resting, Questioning and Impossible to Categorize. Meanwhile, a more recent study also found that there were 10 writing strategies used by EFL students which included, Mechanics of Writing, Relating the Topic to Past Experience and Knowledge, Talk-Writing, Free Writing, Outlining, Listing, Using Online Materials, Seeking Help, Taking Readers into Consideration, and Text Organizations (Abas & Aziz, 2018). However, every student has different strategies to overcome their challenges based on their abilities.

Based on the aforementioned explanation, the previous studies are more focused on students' difficulties in linguistic and grammar aspects, only a few examined other aspects such as challenges (from internal and external factors), and their strategies in dealing with the challenges. To fill in the gap, this study investigated the students' challenges in writing their research proposal both from internal and external factors. Additionally, many previous studies used quantitative research design, so this study used qualitative research design, and interview to collect the data. So that this research can be more focused on the internal and external factors that affected the students in writing the research proposal, and finding the strategies to overcome the students' challenges in writing the research proposal.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background above, the researcher formulates the research questions as follows:

1. What challenges do the students face in writing research proposal?

2. How do they deal with their challenges in writing research proposal?

1.3 Research Objectives

Based on the research questions above, the researcher intended to find out the objectives:

1. To investigate the EFL students' challenges in writing the research proposal.

2. To investigate how the EFL students' deal with their challenges in writing the research proposal.

1.4 Research Significances

The results of this study are expected to find out what challenges faced by EFL students in writing their research proposals and the students' strategies to overcome the challenges. The lecturers and the students would get more benefits from this study. This study is expected to be the references for lecturers and supervisors in English department in improving the teaching process, especially those related to the preparation of writing good research proposals in English. Besides that, it can also be useful for students to find ways to avoid the challenges in writing research proposal and find the strategies to overcome the challenges.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this research is writing a research proposal for students in the university. This research focuses on what are the internal and external challenges faced by the 8th semester students in writing their research proposal, and how they deal with their problems in writing the research proposal.

The limitation of this study is the sample size is small with only taking six students from three classes. This small sample size of participants causes the results to be less generalizable. Moreover, the interview was conducted online during the semester break that probably caused misunderstanding due to lack of visual cues.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding about some basic concepts of this study, there are some explanations that can help the reader to understand the key terms used in this study:

1. Research proposal refers to document that contains an outline plan for research project. The research proposal contains detailed information about the research to be carried out, from the topic, background in selecting the topic, research objectives, and details of the research methodology to be carried out. The research proposal should include three chapters of introduction, literature review, and methodology.

2. Challenge refers to problems or difficulties faced by the EFL students in writing their research proposals, both from internal and external factors. The internal factors can come from within the students themselves related to physical and psychological. While, the internal factors can come from outside the students themselves, including the family environment, learning environment, and society.

3. Strategy is defined as the ways or plans that students do in dealing with the problems in writing research proposal. For example, the students used grammar tools to deal with their challenges related to the difficulty in using the correct grammar.
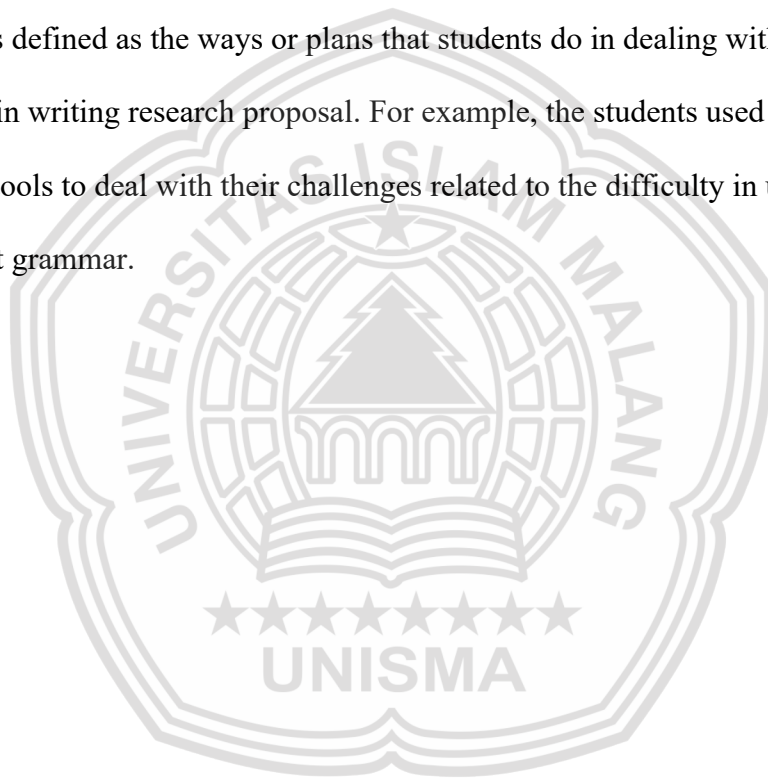
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The previous chapters have analyzed the data and discussed research findings on the EFL students' challenges in writing research proposals and strategies. This chapter serves as a summary of the overall findings and provides some suggestions.

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the purpose of the study, it can be concluded that the EFL students faced many internal and external challenges in writing research proposal. In the internal challenges, there were four categories: lack of self-confidence, lack of knowledge, lack of self-motivation, and feeling under pressure. While, there were three categories of lecturers' feedback, lack of materials, and lack of family and friend support in the external challenges. From the results, it found that more internal challenges were faced by EFL students for a total of nine challenges in students with the highest scores, and a total of 16 challenges in students with the lowest scores. While in the external challenges, there are four challenges in students with the highest scores and five in students with the lowest scores. It also shows that students with the lowest scores faced more challenges than students with the highest scores.

This study also found five main strategies used by students to face the challenges in writing research proposals. The first is using tools such as Google Translate and Grammarly to overcome the lack of confidence. Second, ask for social support to increase the lack of self-motivation in students. Third, using a freewriting strategy to find and develop their ideas. Fourth, manage the time to reduce feeling under time pressure. And the last strategy is reading a lot of references to make it easier for students in finding relevant references, and ideas.

5.2 Suggestions

The researcher would like to provide suggestions to students, lecturers and future researchers who are expected to help reduce the challenges or difficulties faced by students in writing research proposals.

1. In writing research proposals, students must be able to increase their self-confidence and increase their knowledge related to writing a good research proposal. In this case students can use tools such as Google Translate and Grammarly, and use freewriting strategies. In addition, students must also be able to motivate themselves and manage their time well in finishing the research proposal.

2. Lecturers have a very important role in increasing students' understanding in order to be able to write a good research proposal. Therefore, it is expected that lecturers have a teaching style that is easy to understand, so that the students can get good knowledge and understanding of the materials.

3. This research has many shortcomings, and therefore further research is needed. Future researchers are expected to be able to research the challenges faced by students in writing research proposals using different methods with larger participants. If possible, to research for many universities.

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