

STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING THEIR THESIS IN ENGLISH AT ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM JAMBI UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the difficulties that the students face in writing their thesis in English at English Education Study Program, Jambi University. The data were taken from both students and supervisors' perspectives. This study employed descriptive qualitative method. Researchers distributed some questionnaires and did several interviews. The participants were students who were writing their thesis and those who have just finished their thesis examination. Some lecturers who supervised the students were also interviewed in order to find out the possible solutions for minimizing the difficulties. The findings showed that there are various types of difficulties that the students face in writing their thesis. No official guide on how to write a thesis in English was considered as the main cause. Lecturers recommended to write one.

Keywords: *Writing's Difficulties, Thesis Writing, Writing Guide*

Writing a thesis is a compulsory subject for most undergraduate study program in Indonesia. This subject takes six credits at English Education Study Program Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Jambi University. As a final project, it usually takes more than six months for most of the students to finish it. Some students even spend one until three years to finish their thesis. There are many reasons for this situation. Some students have difficulties in managing their time because at the same time they have part time job. Others have problems with understanding research methodology and unhealthy relationship with their supervisors.

One of the reasons is the problem that the students face in writing the thesis. Writing thesis in English has many aspects to be considered. It is a very complex process. Students need to consider the topic, sources, and understanding of the research methodology. Moreover, the ability of writing in English has become the main cause of problem in finishing the thesis. Most students consider writing as the most difficult skill to be mastered (Emilia, 2010).

Since the first semester, students at English Education Study Program, Jambi University have studied at least six subjects related to writing which focused on how to write sentences, paragraphs, essays, and academic writings. However, they still face many problems in expressing their ideas into a thesis. Besides psychological factors, understanding of how to write a thesis in English is considered as the main cause (Emilia, 2010).

Based on the researchers' experience in supervising their students, most students admitted that they had found difficulties in starting their thesis and the steps that they had to follow. They did not know exactly what to write in every chapter. As a result, they usually read the previous theses and tried to follow what they had read. The problem is that they were not sure whether they had followed the right samples or not.

A number of studies have been conducted on this topic. Zuriati (2017) reported that most students had problems in writing every chapter in their thesis. They complained about writing techniques, grammar, and the content of each chapter in their thesis. Furthermore, Matra & Fajar (2009) added that one of the main causes of the problems was the lecturers who supervised the students did not do their job appropriately. On the other hand, Emilia (2010) concluded that the ability of students in writing a thesis in English was very poor because of the writing habit that the students had.

The current study is trying to analyze the difficulties that student face in writing a thesis and look for the potential solution to those difficulties. This study is also expected to have a kind of solution for the students in facing their difficulties.

Method

This research was conducted at the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Jambi University. The participants of the research were 14 students who have just finished and 10 students who were still in the process of their thesis writing. Researchers distributed a questionnaire and did several interviews. All of the data were analyzed to find out the main difficulties in writing thesis and the causes. The next step was interviewing the lecturers to find out the possible solutions for the students' problems in writing a thesis.

The researcher employed a questionnaire which consisted of five main parts of a thesis. Each part consisted of several statements. Participants were asked to mark number 1 (very difficult), 2 (difficult), 3 (not too difficult), 4 (easy), or 5 (has no problem) to each statement which was applied to them.

Chapter I: Introduction

1. Understanding the organization of chapter I
2. Determining a research problem
3. Writing background of the study
4. Writing limitation of the study
5. Writing research questions
6. Writing purposes of the study
7. Writing significance of the study
8. Writing definition of the key terms

Chapter II: Review of the Related Literature

1. Understanding the organization of chapter II
2. Writing theoretical framework
3. Writing previous studies

Chapter III: Research Method

1. Understanding the organization of chapter III
2. Writing research design
3. Writing site and time of the research
4. Writing research instruments
5. Writing population and sample
6. Writing techniques of data collection
7. Writing techniques of data analysis

Chapter IV: Findings and Discussion

1. Understanding the organization of chapter IV
2. Writing findings
3. Writing discussion

Chapter V: Conclusion and Suggestions

1. Understanding the organization of chapter V
2. Writing conclusion
3. Writing suggestions

In interview session, participants were asked the other problems that they faced in writing thesis other than in the questionnaire. They were also asked what kind of help that they needed in writing a thesis in English. Researchers also asked some lecturers who supervised the students on the potential solution to the problems.

Results and Discussion

Data from questionnaires showed that all of the participants found difficulties in understanding the nature of each chapter. In writing chapter I 50 % participants found that the most difficult thing was to determine research problem. The next problem was to formulate research

questions and how to write background of the study. While the other parts of chapter I was considered not so difficult.

In writing chapter II, about 63% participants found difficulties in developing and writing theoretical review of the research. In writing chapter III, 50% participants concerned on how to write data analysis after collecting the data. In writing chapter IV, 75% participants found problems on how to write findings and discussion. Only in chapter V all participants did not find any difficulties.

In interview, the researchers found several themes that participants had in common. When the participants were asked about the most important thing in writing a thesis, the answer was the official guide in writing a thesis. They complained about unclear guide in writing the thesis especially the understanding of chapter organization.

"I often get confused every time I write the organization of the thesis. There were some different point of view among my supervisors and the examiners. I am not sure who I should follow. We were never shown the official guideline on how to write a thesis."(S1)

"I usually follow the organization from the previous theses but still considered not true."(S2)

"I believe all of the students need an official book or module on how to write a thesis correctly."(S3)

The second most important thing for the students in writing a thesis was how to write the findings and discussions and the differences between the two headings. Students also found difficulties in writing an abstract. They believed that they needed a guideline about the content of the abstract and how to write it correctly.

"For me, the most difficult part was chapter IV findings and discussion. I just didn't know what to do with my data. Where did I start? So I just did trial and errors. I relied on my first supervisor."(S4)

"I think all of us need a lot of examples on how to write every chapter correctly especially chapter IV, the hardest chapter for me. So we can learn from the examples. In my opinion, writing a thesis is very complex and complicated."(S5)

Interview session with five lecturers concluded that students needed more practice and writing habit to make their writing ability increased. The lecturers also believed that the English Education study program need an official module or book on how to write a thesis in English.

Conclusion

After analyzing the data, it can be concluded that the students found problems on finding the correct organization of the thesis, and how to write several parts of the thesis. They believed that they needed an official guideline from the English Education Study Program, Jambi University. Some students also suggested to have the guideline before they write their thesis. The role of supervisors are also very significant in helping the students to find out the helpful resources for their thesis.

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