UNDERGRADUATE EFL STUDENTS' PROBLEMS IN THESIS WRITING AND SUPERVISION: STUDENTS' AND SUPERVISORS' PERSPECTIVES

THESIS

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FACULTY OF TEACHING TRAINING AND EDUCATION SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY 2024

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Therefore, I deserve to face the court if I am found to have plagiarized this work.

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MOTTO

"Life doesn't stop just because you have *type 1 diabetes*. Remember, the strongest people are not those who show strength in front of the world but those who fight battles others cannot see."

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:

My son, Samudra Nuh Albattani,

for being the light of my life.

Your boundless energy, love, and joy have been my constant source of motivation.

Through every late night and challenging moment, the thought of you kept me going, reminding me of the importance of perseverance, dreams, and love. You are my greatest achievement, and this work is a testament to the future I hope to build for you.

My husband, M. Adam Firliansyah,

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UNDERGRADUATE EFL STUDENTS' PROBLEMS IN THESIS WRITING AND SUPERVISION: STUDENTS' AND SUPERVISORS' PERSPECTIVES

ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research were to find out the main problems in thesis writing and supervision of the undergraduate EFL students and their supervisors' perspectives. This study also aimed to identify the possible solutions from the supervisors to help the students complete their thesis. This study was conducted at one of the state universities in South Sumatra. A descriptive qualitative design was applied in this study which had 70 students writing their theses and six thesis supervisors as the participants. The data were collected by using two questionnaires and an interview. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed by manual calculation to get the percentage result. The interview data were analyzed by using thematic analysis. The findings showed there were problems in thesis writing and supervision as perceived by the students and supervisors. First, based on the students' perspectives, the problems in their thesis writing were concerned with writing knowledge, linguistics, psychology, and health problems, while for thesis supervision, only few students had problems related to availability of their supervisors, supervisors' attributes and supervisors' feedback. Second, based on the supervisors' perspectives, the problems related to the students' writing problem were concerned with the students' knowledge, psychological issues, time availability for thesis supervision, and communication. The thesis supervisors also provided potential solutions for the students. the lecturers (thesis supervisors), and the faculty members.

Keywords: undergraduate EFL students, thesis writing, thesis supervision, problems in thesis writing and supervision, solutions in thesis writing and supervision

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the background, the problems, the objectives, and the significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

In Indonesia, the undergraduate students' thesis or *Skripsi* is one of the requirements to complete their studies. According to Field and Neufville (2021), a thesis is a proposition (an idea, a hypothesis, or a recommendation) that offers an argument that presents a rationale for accepting the proposition made. In addition to essays, projects, and lecture notes, thesis is one of the forms of academic discourse (De Poel & Gasiorek, 2012),

The writing of thesis or *skripsi* period is the most difficult for final year students. It requires students' physical, mental, and financial strength to complete it (Fitria, 2022). Furthermore, steps starting from the title and topic selection, the proposal seminar exam, data collection, and finally the thesis defense, which is also known as the comprehensive exam, must be completed (Rivalina & Setyowati, 2020). When presenting their research findings in front of the examiners comprising of their lecturers, students frequently fear the process (Jay, et al., 2023). The reason for this is that students will be asked a variety of questions in order to assess their understanding of the research they have conducted. It is not surprising that students are nervous and fearful.

Most Indonesian university students write their undergraduate thesis in Bahasa Indonesia unless they are English major students or in a program where writing a thesis in English is a compulsory. Writing thesis in English within the context where English is spoken as a second and foreign language is very challenging. The difficulty lies in the writing process (Fitria, 2022). Lesmana and Ariffin (2020) said that many Indonesian EFL students still struggle to grasp writing ability in English since there are various variations between Bahasa Indonesia and English, such as structural and grammatical words, as well as styles. Furthermore,

Indonesian EFL students should work hard to transfer meaning from Bahasa to English context in order to make the outcome of writing intelligible and make sense when read by others, particularly native speakers (Ariyanti, 2016). The most typical issues that students confront are clarity of meaning, the adoption of grammar and language use variations, and the application of scientific paper writing style (Ariyanti & Fitriana, 2017). The latter is more common in the case of drafting proposals and thesis.

In the process of thesis writing, students communicate with their supervisors. A student is assigned to collaborate with supervisors to conduct high-quality research that will result in a top-notch work. According to Djatmika et al., (2021), thesis supervisors have important roles in guiding students to complete their thesis. There are some factors that influence students' work quality such as the supervisor's supervision style, and how the supervisors interact and respond with their students during the supervision (Djatmika, et al., 2021).

However, the expectation of a smooth-running period and completing the project with the best output is not as simple as one might imagine. Thus, the supervisors' role in guiding the students is very important. If students are having difficulty in writing and finishing their theses, the supervisor should investigate the cause (Shaw & Lawson, 2015). Supervisors should set a number of hours for supervision (Adel, et al., 2023) which aim is to give appropriate condition for success interpretation. On the other hand, students must consider several variables when engaging with their supervisors to complete a successful thesis; management, administrative assistance, technical support, intellectual support, and emotional support are among the elements (Rugg & Petre 2007).

Previous studies regarding thesis writing and supervision problems conducted were from supervisors' and students' perspectives. Students faced several problems during their thesis writing, including problems in choosing a research topic (Alyan, 2022; Truong et al., 2023), finding the reference (Safitri et al., 2021), psychological challenges such as students' motivation (Nurkamto et al., 2023) and supervision issues (Hutabarat, 2023). Challenges and issues regarding thesis supervision also have been identified, such as time constraints (Zaheer &

Munir, 2020), infrequent meetings (Matin & Khan, 2017), supervisory feedback issues (Bastola, 2020; Fitria, 2022), and lack of support from the supervisor (Azmat & Ahmad, 2022).

This present study was a further study of Amalia (2023). Amalia (2023) studied the barriers to undergraduate thesis completion in the English study program at Sriwijaya University. This previous study investigated undergraduate EFL students' perspectives on factors that inhibit them from completing their undergraduate thesis. This study showed that factors that hindered the process of completing students' thesis, such as psychological barriers, references, academic ability, learning approach, thesis advisor guidance, thesis administration system, and others. Amalia (2023) focused on the students' respondents in looking at factors that inhibit the thesis writing process. Additionally, according to the data taken from the alumni data center of Sriwijaya University in the academic year of 2020/2021, the study duration of the English education study program was 4,4 years. The undergraduate program generally has 144 credits, and students can typically take undergraduate education for 8 semesters or be taken for 4 years. Thus, it raises the question of why students finish their studies late. Hence, this study was conducted at Sriwijaya University, specifically in the English Education Study Program of the Faculty of Teachers' Training and Education. While Amalia (2023) investigated students' perceptions of the factors that inhibit them from completing their undergraduate thesis (skripsi), this present study aimed to delve deeper, incorporate an additional perspective from thesis supervisors, and explore thesis supervision aspects with reasons and potential solutions. This research can provide valuable insights for students and lecturers, enabling them to devise innovative strategies for assisting students in completing their thesis.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

- 1. What were the main problems in thesis writing and supervision from the perspectives of the undergraduate EFL students?
- 2. What were the main problems in thesis writing and supervision from the perspectives of the thesis supervisors?

3. What were the possible solutions from the perspectives of the supervisors to help the students cope with problems related to their thesis writing and supervision?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

- 1. To find out the main problems in thesis writing and supervision from the perspectives of the undergraduate EFL students.
- 2. To find out the main problems in thesis writing and supervision from the perspectives of the thesis supervisors.
- 3. To identify the possible solutions from the perspectives of thesis supervisors to help their students cope with problems related to their thesis writing and supervision.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

This study holds considerable significance for several reasons. First, writing a thesis is a fundamental requirement for undergraduate programs in Indonesian universities, and students must complete this task within a four-year timeframe. Understanding the intricacies of this process is vital for academic success. Second, the thesis writing process is often a significant source of stress for students. Gaining insights into their perspectives on the challenges they encounter can provide valuable information that may help alleviate this stress. By identifying these difficulties, we can better support students as they navigate this critical academic milestone. Third, research has indicated that students frequently face various writing challenges during their thesis projects. It is essential to pinpoint these specific obstacles to enable students, supervisors, and universities to develop effective strategies for addressing them. Lastly, fostering collaboration between supervisors and students has been shown to enhance students' confidence and positively influence their attitudes toward research and scientific inquiry. Therefore, exploring ways to maximize this collaboration is crucial for improving the overall thesis experience. In conclusion, this study aims to shed light on the challenges faced by undergraduate EFL students in their thesis writing. By examining both

current issues and those encountered in the past, we can identify preventative measures and propose solutions based on the perspectives of thesis supervisors. This research not only contributes to academic discourse but also seeks to enhance student support systems within Indonesian universities.

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