

**STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING THESIS AT ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM OF MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF BENGKULU**

By:

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**Abstract**

This research aims to: 1) find the students' Difficulties in Writing Thesis at the English Education Study Program of Muhammadiyah University Bengkulu (UMB) Academic Year 2016-2017?; and 2) find the most difficult variable they faced in Writing the theses? The design of this research is a descriptive quantitative research. The instruments that used to collect the data in this study were questionnaire and interview guide. The data were analyzed by following the steps below: 1) checking the students' answer in the questionnaire; 2) classifying the students' answers; 3) calculating the students' score of difficulties in writing thesis; 4) checking the students' answers in interview; and 5) describing the data, and concluding the results. The findings showed that the difficulties that the students faced in writing thesis were different. The students' difficulties in writing thesis were related to: 1) Difficulties dealing with students' English proficiencies; 2) Difficulties dealing with students' time management; 3) Difficulties dealing with co-advisor relationship, students' plagiarism, students' personalities, the big number of supervised students and advisor workload; 4) Difficulties dealing with students' research methodology; 5) Difficulties dealing with students' research topic; 6) Difficulties dealing with students motivation; and 7) Difficulties dealing with students' attitude.

**Keywords:** *students' difficulties, writing, thesis*

**I. Introduction**

Academic writing is the kind of writing that required to do in college or university. It differs from other kinds of writing such as personal, literary, journalistic. or business writing. Academic writing remains one of the main ways you will be assessed in University, so it is an important skill to master. Academic writing is a complex task but it is made all the more challenging in University. Oshima and Hogue (1998:3) said that writing, particularly academic writing is not easy. It takes study and practice to develop this skill. For both native speakers and new learners of English, it is important to note that writing is a process, not a product. This means that a piece of writing whether it is a composition for the English class or a lab report for chemistry class is never complete which is always possible to review and revise and review and revise again. In the level of university especially university in Indonesia has a requirement as if students would like to finish their study they must make a scientific research. It means that students should prepare their self to face that challenges at all. Thesis is academic writing and it so differs from other kind of writing. Harmer (2002:91) said that

students will more concern on language focus, the most benefit greatly is writing subject. In most forms of academic writing a detached and objective approach is required. An academic argument appeals to logic and provides evidence in support of an intellectual position. It is important to present your arguments in logical order and to arrive at conclusions.

Universities usually have their own regulation format that must be followed by all students. It includes using scientific language in writing their theses particularly students who take foreign language department. The students who take English department should be aware of their skill because they must master of English to write the thesis completely. Lynch and Anderson (2013: 3) said that English grammar that you need to master, in order to express yourself correctly and appropriately in academic writing. Those areas include the basic distinctions of meaning in the verb tense system, the use of modal verbs to express degrees of certainty and commitment, and alternative ways of grouping and ordering written information to highlight the flow of the argument. People cannot learn language without systematically committing errors first. Errors which are made by learners contribute in understanding the

process of foreign language acquisition. By seeing students' errors, the researcher tries to collect information about students' errors in writing. Further analysis is needed in order to know in which language aspects they make errors and their frequency. Since English Education students are prepared to be English teachers, they should have a good competence in all language skills in order to be good English teachers. They should not only become good listeners and speakers, but also good readers and writers. It is impossible to teach effectively if their English ability is poor. They will teach writing effectively if they master writing and other language skills. In attempting to master aspects of writing skills, it is necessary to analyze errors in written text to find out how much their acquisition are obtained in teaching process.

If the researcher sees the difficulties in writing that students felt so we can find that there are grammar error and psychological factor which is influenced to writing. Grammar problems might be impact to error in writing but psychological factor is regarding to condition of learners focus. Brown (2000:219) said that problems in language are caused by error in understanding the language and affecting factor. In writing thesis students felt worry or not confidence of their ability. They are afraid in doing an error in English. In this case they will not write more than one paragraph because there is no confident in their mind.

In university level students have to focus on grammar well and good idea in creating clear thesis. This obligation is getting anxiety for students. They think that if they did the mistake their lecturer would be angry to them.

The preliminary research done by the researcher showed that the students found some difficulties in writing the thesis. Most of them said that they difficult in finding the title to propose, the limitation of using English well, and difficult to find the appropriate sources. Based on problem above the researcher is interested to hold the thesis title "Students' Difficulties in Writing Thesis at English Education Study Program of Muhammadiyah University Bengkulu (UMB) Academic Year 2016-2017.

This research focused on the questions as follows. 1) What are the students' Difficulties in Writing Thesis at the English Education

Study Program of Muhammadiyah University Bengkulu (UMB) Academic Year 2016-2017?; 2) What are the most difficult variable they faced in Writing the theses?

## **II. Research Methods**

The design of this research is a descriptive quantitative research, because in this research, the researcher described the the Undergraduate Students' Difficulties at Eight Semester in Writing Thesis at the English Education Study Program of Muhammadiyah University Bengkulu Academic Year 2016-2017. According to Arikunto (1988) that descriptive research purpose is to collect a particular data of interest factually and accurately. Meanwhile Ary (2010:28) also said that descriptive research purpose is to o summarize the characteristics of different groups or to measure their attitudes and opinions toward some issue. The subject of this research is 74 of the Eighth Semester students of English Education Study Program of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu in the Academic Year of 2016/2017 who taken writing class. The instruments that used to collect the data in this study were questionnaire and interview guide. Questionnaire was taken from Yusuf (2013). The interview guide was used to get the data that support the students' answers in questionnaire. During the interview, the students were recorded by using video camera. The data were analyzed by following the steps below: 1) checking the students' answer in the questionnaire; 2) classifying the students' answers; 3) calculating the students' score of difficulties in writing thesis; 4) checking the students' answers in interview; and 5) describing the data, and concluding the results.

## **III. Results and Discussion**

### **A. Result**

After the students collected the data from the students and analyzed them, the researcher described the data by calculating the scores and presented them in the form of findings. The findings showed that the difficulties that the students faced in writing thesis were different. The findings are described in the tables of difficulties variables below.

**1. Results from questionnaire**

Table 1. English Proficiency

No	Statement	The score
1	Difficulties dealing with students' English proficiencies	
a.	Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena Bahasa Inggris saya masih sangat terbatas untuk membuat thesis yang baik	177
b.	Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena saya tidak faham bahasa yang ditampilkan dalam teori yang akan menjadi acuan thesis saya	171

Table 1 showed that in English proficiency, item no *a* "Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena Bahasa Inggris saya masih sangat terbatas untuk membuat thesis yang baik" had

score 177, and items *b* 'Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena saya tidak faham bahasa yang ditampilkan dalam teori yang akan menjadi acuan thesis saya' had score 171.

Table 2. Time Management

2	Difficulties dealing with students' time management	Score
a.	Saya kesulitan dalam menentukan waktu yang tepat untuk menulis skripsi.	162
b.	Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena menunda-nunda pengerjaannya	177

Table 2 above showed that in time management, item *b* 'Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena menunda-nunda pengerjaannya' as the highest with 177 score. Item *a* 'Saya

kesulitan dalam menentukan waktu yang tepat untuk menulis skripsi' as the lowest with score 162.

Table 3. Research methodology

3	Difficulties dealing with students' research methodology	Score
a.	Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena saya tidak faham menentukan desain penelitian yang tepat sesuai dengan topik penelitian saya	153
b.	Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena kurang faham instrument yang harus digunakan dalam penelitian saya	147
c.	Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena kurang faham bagaimana menganalisis data penelitian saya	165

Table 3 above showed that in research methodology, the highest difficulty was item no *c* 'Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena kurang faham bagaimana menganalisis data penelitian saya' with 165; next, item *a* 'Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena saya tidak faham

menentukan desain penelitian yang tepat sesuai dengan topik penelitian saya' with score 153; and item *b* 'Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena kurang faham instrument yang harus digunakan dalam penelitian saya' with score 17.

Table 4. Motivation

4	Difficulties dealing with students motivation	Score
a.	Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena kurangnya niat dan tekad untuk menyelesaikannya	150
b.	Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena kurangnya dorongan dari orang-orang disekitar.	74

Table 4 showed that the students difficulties related to motivation item *a* 'Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena kurangnya niat

dan tekad untuk menyelesaikannya' was 150 higher than item *b* 'Saya kesulitan menulis

skripsi karena kurangnya dorongan dari orang-orang disekitar' with score 74.

Table 5. Attitude

5	Difficulties dealing with students' attitude	Score
a.	Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena saya acuh tak acuh dalam menulisnya	130
b.	Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena malas membaca sumber yang relevan	137
c.	Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena saya menganggap bahwa tidak akan selesai tepat waktu.	132

Table 5 showed that in students' attitudes, the difficulty of item *b* 'Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena malas membaca sumber yang relevan' as the highest score with 137; followed by item *c* 'Saya kesulitan menulis

skripsi karena saya menganggap bahwa tidak akan selesai tepat waktu' with 132; and the last item *a* 'Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena saya acuh tak acuh dalam menulisnya' with 130.

Table 6. Research Topic

6	Difficulties dealing with students' research topic	Score
a.	Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena topik penelitian saya sulit untuk diselesaikan	127
b.	Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena sulit menemukan sumber bacaan yang relevan dengan topik penelitian saya	156

Table 6 above showed that in research topic, the difficulty of item *b* 'Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena sulit menemukan sumber bacaan yang relevan dengan topik penelitian

saya' with the score 156 was higher than item *a* 'Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena topik penelitian saya sulit untuk diselesaikan' with score 127.

Table 7. co-advisor relationship, students' plagiarism, students' personalities, the big number of supervised students and advisor workload

7	Difficulties dealing with co-advisor relationship, students' plagiarism, students' personalities, the big number of supervised students and advisor workload	Score
a.	Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena kesulitan menemui dosen pembimbing	142
b.	Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena saya kesulitan dalam memparafrasekan teori yang ada atau mengembangkan teori menggunakan bahasa sendiri.	175

Table 7 showed that Difficulties dealing with co-advisor relationship, students' plagiarism, students' personalities, the big number of supervised students and advisor workload, item *b* 'Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena saya kesulitan dalam memparafrasekan

teori yang ada atau mengembangkan teori menggunakan bahasa sendiri' with 175 was higher than item *a* 'Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena kesulitan menemui dosen pembimbing' with 142.

Table 8. The order of students difficulties of all items

Items No															
1		2		3			4		5			6		7	
A	B	A	b	A	B	C	a	b	A	b	C	A	b	A	B
177	171	162	177	153	147	165	150	74	130	137	132	127	156	142	175

The table above showed that the students' score of difficulties in writing thesis are: in the first position was item 1a '*Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena Bahasa Inggris saya masih sangat terbatas untuk membuat thesis yang baik*' with 177; second 2b '*Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena menunda-nunda pengerjaannya*' with 177; third 7b '*Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena saya kesulitan dalam memparafrasekan teori yang ada atau mengembangkan teori menggunakan bahasa sendiri.*' with 175; fourth item 1b '*Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena saya tidak faham bahasa yang ditampilkan dalam teori yang akan menjadi acuan thesis saya*' with 171; fifth item 3c '*Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena kurang faham bagaimana menganalisis data penelitian saya*' with 165; sixth item 2a '*Saya kesulitan dalam menentukan waktu yang tepat untuk menulis skripsi*' with 162; seventh 6b '*Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena sulit menemukan sumber bacaan yang relevan dengan topik penelitian saya*' with 156; eighth item 3a '*Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena saya tidak faham menentukan desain penelitian yang tepat sesuai dengan topik penelitian saya*' with 153; ninth item 4a '*Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena kurangnya niat dan tekad untuk menyelesaikannya*' with 150; tenth item 3b '*Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena kurang faham instrument yang harus digunakan dalam penelitian saya*' with 147; eleventh item 7a '*Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena kesulitan menemui dosen pembimbing*' with 142; twelfth item 5b '*Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena malas membaca sumber yang relevan*' with 137; thirteenth item 5c '*Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena saya menganggap bahwa tidak akan selesai tepat waktu*' with 132; fourteenth item 5a '*Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena saya acuh tak acuh dalam menulisnya*' with 130; fifteenth item 6a '*Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena topik penelitian saya sulit untuk diselesaikan*' with 127; and the last is item 4b '*Saya kesulitan menulis skripsi karena kurangnya dorongan dari orang-orang disekitar*' with 74.

The items difficulties that presented in the table above are:

- a. Item no 1 dealt with Difficulties dealing with students' English proficiencies;
- b. item no. 2 dealt with Difficulties dealing with students' time management;

- c. item no 3 dealt with Difficulties dealing with students' research methodology;
- d. item no 4 dealt with Difficulties dealing with students motivation;
- e. item no 5 dealt with Difficulties dealing with students' attitude;
- f. item no 6 dealt with Difficulties dealing with students' research topic;
- g. and item no 7 dealt with Difficulties dealing with co-advisor relationship, students' plagiarism, students' personalities, the big number of supervised students and advisor workload.

The table above also showed that the students' difficulties in writing thesis from the highest are difficulties related to: 1) Difficulties dealing with students' English proficiencies; 2) Difficulties dealing with students' time management; 3) Difficulties dealing with co-advisor relationship, students' plagiarism, students' personalities, the big number of supervised students and advisor workload; 4) Difficulties dealing with students' research methodology; 5) Difficulties dealing with students' research topic; 6) Difficulties dealing with students motivation; and 7) Difficulties dealing with students' attitude.

## **2. Result from interview**

After finding the result from questionnaire, the researcher continued to analyze the results from interview. The description is as follows.

There were thirteen questions in interview guide. The questions are related to students' difficulties in completing their theses. From those questions, there were several difficulties that mostly found by the students. They are: 1) the factor of language vocabulary, 2) difficult to understand the theories, 3) difficult to determine the idea when first writing, 4) difficult to write the first chapter (background, etc), 5) difficult to review the theories, 6) difficult to determine the appropriate methodology, 7) difficult to analyze the data, 8) and give the appropriate suggestions.

## **B. Discussion**

Based on the results of this research, it was found that the students' difficulties in writing thesis were related to: 1) Difficulties

dealing with students' English proficiencies; 2) Difficulties dealing with students' time management; 3) Difficulties dealing with co-advisor relationship, students' plagiarism, students' personalities, the big number of supervised students and advisor workload; 4) Difficulties dealing with students' research methodology; 5) Difficulties dealing with students' research topic; 6) Difficulties dealing with students motivation; and 7) Difficulties dealing with students' attitude.

From the data above, the students really feel difficult in writing thesis, especially in the variables of their English proficiencies and time management. In the variable of their English proficiency, they found difficulties because their English is still low and limited so that they cannot write thesis well. It also caused them not understand what the theory present, while they must read many sources to support their thesis writing. This phenomena could be happen because English is really different with bahasa Indonesia, they may find difficulties in form of understanding the language, arrange good writing. According to Hyland (in Sajid 2015:175), majority in academic writing students are constrained with the requisite English language capability e.g. deficiencies in use of tenses, ambiguous or loose sentence construction, unparallel sentence construction, flaws in surface and deep structuresentences, poor diction (vocabulary) and expression (style of language), lack of transforming or rephrasing texts for synthesizing information as a member of discourse community to reproduce a research work, errors in use of pronouns, articles, punctuations etc. They are not well versed with academic writing conventions in genre-specific disciplines i.e. diverse text types that are organized in distinctive styles e.g. objective, message and audience.

In the variable of time management, the students like to postpone their writing thesis. This phenomena could be happen because when they find that their writing is criticize by the supervisor, they feel stuck and difficult to develop their ideas to revise the thesis correctly. As the researcher experience, the researcher also find difficult to revise the correction of thesis when the supervisor said it is still wrong. The researcher also see that other students feel the same. Accoring to Mack (2017), one of the effects of poor time management is scramble to finish tasks at the last minute. Eventually, the

students will miss a deadline. Based on this explanation, it can cause the students missed their deadlines to finish their thesis writing.

Other difficulty is the students also find difficulties to paraphrase the sentences in the theory, so they only copy paste the theory without giving their own sentences. That is why there are many of the students' thesis sometimes said as plagiarism writing. However, plagiarism is really forbidden in academic area. According to Dung (2010: 23), there are some causes that parphrasing is difficult, namely: a) Mistakes in Changing Words, b) Mistakes in Changing Word Order, c) Mistakes in Changing Grammar or Structure, and d) Mistakes in Changing Order of Ideas.

Related to the difficulties dealing with students' research methodology, the students feel difficult because they confused to decide what research design that most appropriate to their reearch. It can be assumed that they cannot defferentiate the types of research design in many types of researches. And they also find difficulties to determine what instrument that they should use in their research, whether they use questionnaire, interview guide, classroom observation list, or other instruments. They also do not know how to analyze their data properly. Sometime they do not know where to start and what to write after they got the data.

Related to the difficulties dealing with students motivation, most of the students feel that they had no strong desire to finish it. Actually this type of motivation should be put at the first position to write thesis because if someone had strong desire, other factor can be solve. It is intrinsic motivation, if the students do not have this well, they will really stuck to start their thesis writing. in the term of external motivation, the students do not feel it too difficult, because in the finding it was shown as the lowest score they achieved, it means that people around us not really become the difficulties for them. According to Harmer (1998:51) Motivation is some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do think in order to achieve something. In addition, Brown (2000: 164), there are two types of motivation, they were intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In learning process, motivation was an important an important aspect where it decides students to get success in second language learning. The student that has low motivation will get difficult in learning English. Motivation is the reason

wants to do something. Brown (2000: 160) stated that motivation is the most frequently used catch all terms for explaining the success or failure of virtually any complex task. It is easy to assume that success in any task is due simply to the fact that someone is motivated. Motivation was very necessary in doing anything.

Related to difficulties dealing with students' attitude, they find difficulties because they feel lazy to read relevant sources to support their writing thesis. They also feel that they cannot finish it in the right time. And the last, they are ignorance toward writing the thesis. The statements above showed that their attitude toward writing thesis is still not good.

The last, related to difficulties dealing with students' research topic, they feel difficult because their topic is really hard to finish. Sometime it happen because the students did not read the related article enough that can make them easier to find topic of research that they can do. The phenomena that the researcher see that the students propose their article without reading first, so that when their topic is accepted, they got confused to do that. According to Jamison (2017), a major problem that students run into when writing research papers is not reading enough about their topic. Remember that each issue has many different sides: imagine a circle of ten people, each one discussing a different aspect of the same issue. When researchers listen or read about each aspect, they become aware of the big picture. This awareness will help researchers write an informed and balanced paper.

The results above are supported by the data from interview because they had difficulties for many reasons. They are: 1) the factor of language vocabulary. Here, the students had limited vocabulary in English, so it makes them difficult to write a good thesis, 2) difficult to understand the theories. The theories that they found had high level of language, so they could not understand the content of the theories, 3) difficult to determine the idea when first writing. It is difficult because ideas need to be developed, while they have limited language to develop it, 4) difficult to write the first chapter (background, etc). It is difficult because in background, we need to know the phenomena through preliminary research, 5) difficult to review the theories. It is difficult because the students need to review the theories with their

own languages and need to develop the theories too, 6) difficult to determine the appropriate methodology. It is difficult because need to read more about the appropriate methodology, such as made the appropriate instrument, and meet the subject of the research, 7) difficult to analyze the data. It is difficult because it needs a long time to analyze the data, and need more understanding, and must be carefully in interpret it, 8) and give the appropriate suggestions. It is difficult because sometime the suggestions is not appropriate to the result that had been found.

The previous research results showed that the first was different with the present research where the result of her thesis shown that there was 20 % students did error in linguistic function. The differences with this thesis was to find out the affecting factor that including psychological, linguistics and sociocultural while the similarity of this thesis is to find out the students' error in English writing.

And the second one showed that there are differences characteristics of students who came from various areas. They have problem to show their ability because they are ashamed with other friends. The differences of this thesis is the scope of research where the researcher will find out psychological, linguistics and sociocultural while the similarity of this thesis is to find out the students' error in English writing.

#### **IV. Conclusion And Suggestions**

##### **A. Conclusion**

From the results of this research that showed the students' difficulties in writing thesis, it can be concluded that:

- a. Orderly, the students' difficulties in writing thesis are: related to difficulties of students' English proficiencies; related to difficulties of students' time management; related to difficulties of students' research methodology; related to difficulties of students' attitude; related to difficulties of students' research topic; and the least related to difficulties of co-advisor relationship, students' plagiarism, students' personalities, the big number of supervised students and advisor workload; and difficulties of students motivation. The students also had some other difficulties, namely: 1) the factor of language vocabulary, 2) difficult to understand the theories, 3) difficult to

determine the idea when first writing, 4) difficult to write the first chapter (background, etc), 5) difficult to review the theories, 6) difficult to determine the appropriate methodology, 7) difficult to analyze the data, 8) and give the appropriate suggestions.

- b. The most difficulties that the students found in their writing thesis is related to their English proficiency is still low and limited. So, that become the first cause that they cannot develop their writing thesis well.

## B. Suggestion

From the findings the had been described in the previous chapter, the researcher would like to suggest that

1. the students should minimize their difficulties and find the solution in the way of:
  - a. Improve their English, or at least have adequate English before writing thesis.
  - b. Should manage their time wisely in doing their thesis
  - c. Read more relevant sources that can support their research
  - d. Give more attention to avoid plagiarism.
2. Further researchers are suggested to do similar research and add more data with adding research instrument, such as interview guide.

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