

The Analysis of the Factors Contributing to EFL Student's Difficulties in Finishing English Undergraduate Thesis

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This research aims to analyze the factors contributing to students' difficulties in writing an undergraduate thesis. The researcher used Narrative Inquiry as the research approach in this qualitative research. The participant was an 11th-semester student of the English Education department at one of the universities in Malang, Indonesia. The researcher conducted a direct Interview with open-ended questions to gain the data. This finding shows four significant factors that affect an undergraduate student in finishing the undergraduate thesis: psychological factors, English linguistic factors, English Proficiency factors, and student attitude factors. Considering the findings, the researcher suggested some solutions in the following: Improve English linguistic ability; improve English speaking proficiency; organize time effectively; build communication with the supervisor; and read many references.

INTRODUCTION

English has indeed become the dominant language for international communication in academia, research, and publication. Many scholarly journals, conferences, and academic institutions worldwide use English as the medium for

sharing knowledge. This dominance is driven by historical, economic, and technological factors, making English a lingua franca for scientists, researchers, and scholars from diverse linguistic backgrounds to communicate and collaborate effectively. Four English skills involve reading, listening, speaking, and writing. For academic study, the capacity to understand written materials is essential. To keep up with developments in their field, researchers must read and comprehend research articles, current literature, and other pertinent resources written in English. English is frequently used for academic conferences, lectures, and discussions. To interact with spoken academic content in live presentations, webinars, or recorded lectures, researchers must be proficient listeners. For researchers to collaborate with colleagues, take part in discussions, or present their findings at conferences, they must be able to communicate well in spoken English. Sharing ideas and insights through spoken communication requires fluency and clarity. Moreover, according to Mitchell (2018), writing is an incredibly complex cognitive task that students, academics, and researchers face. Writing involves managing multiple cognitive processes simultaneously, including generating ideas, organizing thoughts, selecting appropriate language, and considering the audience—all while adhering to the rules of grammar and style. Effective writing requires critical thinking skills to analyze information, evaluate evidence, and construct coherent arguments. This cognitive aspect adds depth and complexity to the writing process.

The undergraduate English students have to write their thesis to finish their studies. A thesis is a research paper undergraduate students write to complete their studies. Evans et al. (2011) described the thesis as an extended idea that contains logical, structured, and justifiable reasoning based on valid evidence. While finishing the thesis, students must develop information technology proficiency, critical analysis, and decision-making skills. (Lundgren and Robertson, 2013). Naves et al. (2022) stated that the thesis is one of the most conscientious and lengthy projects in which students must display their management skills to complete it. Completing a thesis is a highly rigorous and meticulous undertaking that students must engage in during their academic careers. This complex assignment, which

marks the end of their academic journey, calls for a great deal of commitment, critical thinking, and time management. Students must pay close attention to detail at every level of the research and writing process, which demonstrates the conscientious quality of a thesis. Every stage of the process necessitates a deliberate and comprehensive approach, from the careful selection of a research topic to the extensive literature evaluation and the accuracy needed in data collecting and analysis. According to Fitria (2022), writing a thesis in English can be pretty challenging due to the extensive vocabulary and proficient grammatical skills that language demands. Bailey (2011) also stated that writing a good English thesis is a demanding test for both students and supervisors because there are many things that students must do in thesis writing.

In addition, the thesis stands apart from other academic work due to its length and depth. This expanded scope gives students the chance to go extensively into the topic matter they have selected, showcasing not only their mastery of the discipline but also their capacity to add fresh perspectives and information. Due to the project's duration, students must maintain their concentration and dedication for a considerable amount of time, demonstrating their tenacity and fortitude in the face of difficulties in the classroom. Students can demonstrate their management abilities after they complete their thesis. As students learn to negotiate the complexities of research design, data gathering, and analysis, effective project management becomes increasingly important. They have to set up reasonable deadlines, manage their time well, and modify their plans as the project progresses. The ability to manage resources—such as academic literature, research materials, and mentor relationships—comes into sharp focus during the thesis process.

According to George (2022), writing a thesis contains many steps, such as choosing a relevant topic, making a proposal, designing research, collecting data, analyzing data, and making a conclusion. Leo (2013) also stated that the thesis requires students to be disciplined to pass the targets by conducting field surveys, observing, thinking logically, and revising the thesis based on supervisors' feedback. It takes a lot of time and energy to complete a thesis since academics have to come

up with research topics, create methodology, gather and evaluate data, and come to insightful findings. Because this academic endeavor is so thorough, it requires a patient and disciplined approach. It also recognizes that the road to finishing a thesis involves embracing the transformative learning experiences along the way, in addition to concluding. Producing a scholarly paper that represents depth, rigor, and intellectual growth requires an understanding of the intricacy of the thesis-writing process and enough time for each step.

A Long and challenging process of finishing a thesis makes students feel overwhelmed. Students feel anxious, disappointed, frustrated, or depressed for not reaching the target while completing their thesis (Bayon & Ore, 2020). Every stage of the process, from coming up with the study topic to defending the thesis at the conclusion, has its own special difficulties and complications. The sheer variety of effort involved in creating research questions, reviewing a large body of literature, developing techniques, and delving into data analysis can lead to a cumulative workload that is emotionally and psychologically exhausting. Students may experience stress and a sense of overwhelm due to the pressure to achieve academic success and pay close attention to detail.

Moreover, based on the research from Universitas Negeri Surabaya, the student's stress level in working on the thesis is very high, namely 97% (General & Budiani, 2013). Because a thesis project requires a long-term commitment, students must maintain their passion and focus throughout time. The demands of juggling research obligations, personal obligations, and schoolwork can complicate an already complex process. Anxiety and apprehension can be widespread due to the weight of expectations, both internal and external, as well as the ambiguity that frequently accompanies original research. Students may experience physical and mental exhaustion due to the complex nature of academic writing and the need for several edits and enhancements. Having to constantly rework arguments, follow strict citation guidelines, and take adviser or peer opinion into consideration might make writing a thesis more difficult.

Students' stress while working on their thesis makes them face various choices. Several students successfully graduated from their universities but used other people's services (Bayona-Ore, 2020). The use of external services or assistance in academic work, including the completion of assignments, projects, or theses by someone else, is generally considered academic dishonesty. If students are relying on other people's services to complete their academic requirements without proper attribution or acknowledgment, it raises ethical concerns. Academic dishonesty undermines the integrity of the educational system and can have serious consequences for the individuals involved. Furthermore, a few students still need to graduate on time. According to Hasana and Rahmati (2022), 17% of students in the Education Department of Universitas Islam Malang did not graduate on time. Moreover, according to Hidayat (2019), it was found that 20% of students in Bandung thought seriously about committing suicide, and 6% had attempted suicide, such as cutting, jumping from a height, and hanging themselves. Student suicides are deeply concerning, and it underscores the importance of addressing mental health issues in academic settings.

Several previous studies have explored the challenges students encounter when writing their thesis. According to Monica (2020), the obstacles students face in thesis writing include English proficiency, time management, co-advisor relationships, plagiarism, individual personalities, research methodology, research topic selection, motivation, and attitude. Based on Fitria (2022), Students' challenges in writing and completing their thesis include struggling to communicate effectively with their supervisors, producing unclear and difficult-to-read writing, encountering difficulties in finding adequate references or lacking complete reference sources, experiencing technical issues with their devices such as laptops or computers, facing financial constraints or cost-related problems, dealing with personal issues throughout the thesis process, and working in an environment that is not supportive or lacks conducive elements.

Based on the previous studies above, those studies report the students' problems writing a university thesis. The previous research and this research are

similar in investigating students' problems in writing a thesis. However, this research has a different subject: an EFL student in one of the universities in Malang, Indonesia. The researcher will conduct research entitled "Investigating Factors Contributing to English Students' Stress in Writing Thesis" This research will attempt to answer the research question: What factors contribute to stress in a working thesis? This research aims to provide information for educators, supervisors, and students about issues in thesis development.

METHOD

A qualitative design will emerge in this research. According to Hennink et al. (2020), qualitative research aims to gain a contextual understanding of the topic studied. Meanwhile, Gudmundsdottir (2001) stated that narrative study analyzes the experiences of human beings. Moreover, qualitative gives room for a deeper understanding of the research subjects as they exist in their unique environment (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It seeks to explore and understand the richness, complexity, and context of a phenomenon. Therefore, the researcher focused on finding the data using a qualitative approach to get the answer to the factors contributing to students' stress in writing an undergraduate thesis.

In the field of scholarly inquiry, it is vital to comprehend the nuances of the components that contribute to students' stress throughout the completion of their theses. Because of the importance of this topic, the researcher has decided to use narrative inquiry as the methodological framework for this study. The choice to employ narrative inquiry is indicative of a sophisticated and compassionate approach to research, as it aims to obtain not only quantitative information but also a deep comprehension of the emotions and experiences of the participants. A qualitative research technique called narrative inquiry explores people's stories and narratives to provide a deep analysis of their lived experiences.

The researcher hopes to comprehend the nuances of the emotional terrain around thesis completion by choosing narrative inquiry. By encouraging participants to relate their personal stories, this approach offers a special means of

communicating the complex difficulties, victories, and emotional swings that come with writing a thesis. The researcher is interested in internal, subjective feelings that may lead to stress, such as self-doubt, fear of failure, or the emotional toll of the research trip, in addition to external stressors like time restrictions or academic pressure. The researcher's dedication to capturing the breadth and context of the participants' feelings is demonstrated by the use of narrative inquiry. This methodology transcends conventional quantitative methodologies, enabling a more comprehensive investigation of the human condition in the scholarly setting. It recognizes that stress is a complicated interaction of feelings, perceptions, and personal coping strategies rather than just a number. Furthermore, narrative inquiry is consistent with the moral requirement to recognize and honor the perspectives of all involved. It enables people to tell their tales in an authentic way, which adds to a more thorough and sympathetic depiction of the difficulties involved in writing a thesis. This method acknowledges that every participant's path is different and that stress takes on different forms for each person depending on their personal, intellectual, and environmental circumstances.

The research subject is an 11th-semester student of the English education department at one of the universities in Malang. The participant was available to be a respondent voluntarily without any compulsion because the data collection was also carried out according to the procedure. It's crucial to obtain informed consent from participants, meaning they voluntarily agree to participate in the study with a clear understanding of the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits involved. Participants should feel free to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any negative consequences. Researchers typically follow an established protocol or procedure for data collection to ensure consistency and reliability. This includes using standardized methods, maintaining confidentiality, and protecting the privacy of participants.

The instrument used to collect the data in this research was an interview with open-ended questions. According to Creswell and Clark (2011), Open-ended questions in qualitative research allow the participant to give information that does

not restrict the participant's opinion. Using interviews with open-ended questions as the data collection instrument is a common and effective approach, especially in qualitative research. This method allows for in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives, experiences, and insights. Before collecting data through an interview, the researcher used informed consent as evidence that the participant was willing to be the respondent without compulsion. After the participant signed the informed consent, the researcher interviewed the participant in person. The interview process was recorded in audio form, which aims to transcribe and analyze the data when the data analysis process is implemented.

The researcher's methodological framework of choice for investigating the difficulties encountered by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in finishing their undergraduate theses is thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, reporting themes, organizing, and describing the data in detail. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that yields a thorough understanding of the investigated topic by locating, examining, and summarizing patterns or themes in the data. This approach works especially well when examining intricate and multidimensional topics, like the challenges faced by EFL students when their academic careers come to a conclusion. There are six steps of thematic analysis such as familiarising the data, creating initial codes, collecting codes with supporting data, grouping codes into themes, reviewing and revising themes, and writing into narrative text (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher's choice to employ theme analysis highlights her dedication to identifying the underlying patterns and themes that contribute to the issues faced by EFL students when writing their undergraduate theses in English, in addition to the obvious obstacles. Through a thorough study of a variety of data sources, such as written reflections, surveys, and interviews, thematic analysis makes it possible to identify recurrent themes that might be crucial to answering the research question.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Upon completing the data collection phase of the research endeavor, the researcher meticulously analyzed the findings to unveil the multifaceted factors influencing undergraduate students in their journey toward completing their thesis. The discerned factors can be categorized into distinct yet interconnected domains, shedding light on the intricate web of challenges faced by students in this academic pursuit. First and foremost, psychological factors emerged as influential contributors, encompassing aspects such as stress, anxiety, and self-efficacy, underscoring the profound impact of the student's mental and emotional well-being on their thesis progress. Furthermore, English linguistic factors surfaced as significant determinants, reflecting the language-related hurdles that students encounter, such as comprehension difficulties and language proficiency gaps. Parallely, English proficiency factors made evident the intricate relationship between language competence and the successful execution of a thesis, encapsulating the nuanced interplay of language skills and academic performance. Lastly, student attitude factors came to the fore, encompassing a spectrum of dispositions ranging from motivation and perseverance to potential hindrances like procrastination or self-doubt. This comprehensive breakdown of influencing factors provides a nuanced understanding of the diverse challenges that students navigate in their pursuit of completing an undergraduate thesis, paving the way for tailored interventions and support mechanisms to enhance the academic experience.

Psychological Factors

The researcher found that the condition of the student's psychology affects undergraduate thesis work. According to Brown (2007:153), the psychological factors of the students can be involved in the thesis works. Psychological factors affecting the undergraduate thesis are self-esteem, attribution theories, self-efficacy, willingness to communicate, inhibition, risk-taking, anxiety, empathy, extroversion, and motivation. An individual's academic career is shaped by a multitude of psychological aspects that all have a role in the successful completion of an undergraduate thesis.

Participant said “Psychology is the most important factor that affects me when I write my undergraduate thesis. I was diagnosed with bipolar, which caused uncontrollable mood swings; therefore, sometimes I feel that suddenly I do not want to write my thesis. Moreover, I have problems speaking with others due to my diagnosis. My friend said that I like to ramble, so I went to a mental hospital at that time. I feel better now, but I am still afraid to talk and consult with my supervisor”

Participants mentioned that psychology is the most important factor that contributes to undergraduate thesis work. Her bipolar disorder affects her emotions to write her undergraduate thesis. She has anxiety about talking or presenting her thesis proposal because she recognizes that she has speaking difficulties due to bipolar disorder. Manic highs and depressed lows are two extremes of mood fluctuations that are typical of bipolar illness. The erratic character of these mood fluctuations might significantly affect one's capacity for sustained engagement in thesis work as well as motivation and focus. Uncontrollably fluctuating moods are mentioned, which highlights the difficulties in preserving emotional stability, which is necessary for prolonged concentration and productivity on academic tasks like writing theses. It may be challenging for the person to regularly work on the thesis during times when their desire or enthusiasm wanes. The statement also refers to the communication challenges that result from having a bipolar condition. The person admits to having trouble communicating with others and to having a propensity to ramble. This may be connected to how mood fluctuations affect linguistic communication and could be a factor in difficulties with expressing thoughts clearly both in writing and spoken form.

She also experiences periods of low energy, affecting her ability to engage in sustained academic work. This research result is similar to the research result by Dwihandini, et al., (2013), that psychological factors have a 55% influence on the undergraduate students at Mahasaraswati University who writing a thesis. Therefore, it can be concluded that students' psychology is one of the factors contributing to students' difficulties in finishing their thesis. Understanding and addressing these psychological factors is crucial for supporting students through the

thesis-writing process. The mention of a previous stay at a mental health facility alludes to a period of severe mental health issues. Getting expert assistance is a good first step toward taking charge of mental health issues. It's critical to identify and take care of mental health problems as they emerge. In addition to improving each student's well-being, addressing mental health issues during the thesis-writing process raises the standard of academic research as a whole. A student is more likely to participate in the research process successfully, turn out better work, and make a significant contribution to their academic community if they feel supported in their mental health journey.

English Linguistic Factors

The second factor is English linguistics because the data shows that a student finds it difficult to finish a thesis because of a lack of grammar. According to Fitria (2022), It is very challenging to make proper sentences because of a lack of grammar. It's normal and fair to be concerned when someone admits they struggle with grammar and finds it difficult to form correct phrases. Since grammar offers the foundation for precisely expressing ideas, it is essential to efficient communication. A lack of proficiency in grammar can indeed be a significant obstacle for students working on their theses. Poor grammar can affect the overall quality of writing, clarity of ideas, and the perception of the work's academic rigor.

Participant said “It is hard to write an undergraduate thesis because sometimes I am still confused about grammar”. It can be determined that English linguistics is the factor that contributes to the student’s difficulties in finishing an undergraduate thesis. It has similarities with research results by Dwihandini et al (2013), who stated that linguistic factors affect undergraduate students in writing their thesis. English linguistics can significantly impact a student's ability to complete an undergraduate thesis. Students need to recognize that developing proficiency in English linguistics is a gradual process, and seeking support from available resources can greatly assist in overcoming these challenges.

The influence of English linguistics on a student's capacity to successfully complete an undergraduate thesis cannot be overstated. Language proficiency, precision in communication, and adeptness in academic writing are pivotal components that intricately shape the thesis-writing process. An undergraduate thesis, often requiring a substantial amount of academic discourse, demands a mastery of English linguistics to effectively convey ideas, articulate arguments, and adhere to the stringent standards of academic writing. Proficiency in English grammar, syntax, and vocabulary is paramount for crafting coherent and impactful narratives that align with the academic conventions of the discipline. Furthermore, a nuanced understanding of linguistic nuances is crucial for accurately interpreting and synthesizing complex research literature, contributing to a student's ability to situate their work within the broader scholarly context. The intricacies of English linguistics also extend to the effective utilization of terminology specific to the field of study, ensuring the precise expression of concepts and ideas. In essence, the role of English linguistics in the completion of an undergraduate thesis is foundational, acting as a linchpin that connects the student's intellectual prowess with the demands of scholarly communication. A student equipped with a heightened command of English linguistics is not only better positioned to navigate the academic rigors of thesis writing but is also poised to contribute meaningfully to the broader academic discourse within their chosen field of study.

English Proficiency Factors

The researcher also found that students have difficulties in reading theories and writing the thesis because of their limited English proficiency. According to Ortega, et al., (2023) limited English proficiency refers to individuals who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, and understand English. In academic settings, this can impact a student's ability to fully engage with course materials, understand lectures, participate in discussions, and comprehend complex theories in the context of a thesis or academic research.

Participant said “I have difficulties understanding Theories because we use references that are written in English. Therefore, it is hard for me to continue my undergraduate thesis because I do not know what to write”

Based on the participants, it shows that one of the factors contributing to students’ difficulties in finishing their thesis is limited English proficiency. A participant has limited ability to understand English text and write in English. A participant indicates that they have trouble understanding theories as the academic literature they use is published in English. This language barrier might make it difficult to fully comprehend theoretical ideas, which makes it difficult to move on with the undergraduate thesis. Meanwhile, an undergraduate thesis often involves an in-depth understanding of academic texts, literature reviews, and the ability to articulate complex ideas, all of which require a strong command of the English language. Writing a thesis involves not only understanding but also effective communication of research findings. Limited writing proficiency can hinder the clear and coherent expression of ideas. In the academic context, proficiency in English is crucial for meeting the expectations of academic writing, adherence to citation styles, and the presentation of well-structured arguments—all vital components of a thesis.

The barrier to developing the undergraduate thesis is directly proportional to the language-related difficulty. One participant noted that deciding what to write in their thesis is made more difficult by their limited command of the English language. This implies that establishing the theoretical framework and thesis content requires an understanding of pertinent theories. The difficulty of the language is directly correlated with the obstacle to writing the undergraduate thesis. One participant observed that their poor mastery of the English language makes it harder for them to decide what to write in their thesis. This suggests that knowledge of relevant theories is necessary to develop the theoretical framework and thesis substance.

Students Attitude Factors

The fourth factor is students' attitudes. The researcher found that students feel lazy and lack of intention to write an undergraduate thesis and ask the supervisor when the student feels confused. Feelings of laziness and a lack of motivation are common challenges that students may face during the process of writing an undergraduate thesis. These issues can be attributed to various factors, including burnout, stress, lack of interest, or feeling overwhelmed by the complexity of the task.

Participant stated, "That is my mistake. When I feel confused, I never consult with my supervisor". The statement "I'm confused" suggests that there is some ambiguity or unclearness about specific parts of the theory. Many things might confuse, including hard-to-follow directions, complicated topic matter, and trouble structuring ideas. The statement identifies a pattern of behavior that is consistent in not seeking advice from the supervisor when faced with uncertainty. This suggests that there may be a communication barrier affecting the cooperative aspect of the student-supervisor connection in the classroom.

Recognizing a pattern of behavior in which the person ignores their supervisor's advice when they are confused while writing their thesis, accusing them of being lazy. It is similar to the study from Lestari (2020), that the students' attitudes participants in the thesis working. Baidoo-Anu (2018) stated that bad student attitudes cause poor academic performance. Therefore, laziness is the part of the student's attitude that can affect an undergraduate thesis work. the impact of laziness on undergraduate thesis work is a multifaceted issue that can permeate various aspects of the research process. Laziness, characterized by a lack of motivation, procrastination, and an overall reluctance to invest sustained effort, can significantly hinder the successful completion of an undergraduate thesis. The consequences of such an attitude are evident across different stages of the thesis, from the initial research and planning phase to the final presentation and defense.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

After meticulously analyzing the gathered data, the researcher revealed a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted factors contributing to students' challenges in completing an undergraduate thesis. The conclusion drawn from this rigorous examination unveiled a myriad of influential elements affecting students' progress in the thesis-writing process.

The first factor is related to the student's psychological factors. The second factor is English linguistics because the data shows that a student finds it difficult to finish a thesis because of a lack of grammar. Furthermore, the researcher also found that students have difficulties in reading theories and writing the thesis because of their limited English proficiency. Moreover, students' attitudes because it is found that students feel lazy and lack of intention to write an undergraduate thesis. Therefore, it can be concluded that there are four factors contributing to the student's difficulties in finishing their thesis such as psychological factors, English linguistic factors, English Proficiency factors, and students' attitude factors.

Upon a thorough examination of the research findings, the researcher conscientiously put forth a set of constructive and tailored solutions designed to address the unique challenges encountered by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students engaged in the demanding task of crafting an undergraduate thesis. First and foremost, recognizing the pivotal role that language proficiency plays in scholarly endeavour, the researcher advocated for a concerted effort to enhance English linguistic ability. This encompassed a multifaceted approach, including the development of strong writing skills, a nuanced understanding of grammar and syntax, and an adept command of academic vocabulary. Simultaneously, the emphasis on improving English speaking proficiency emerged as a crucial component of the suggested strategies, acknowledging the significance of effective verbal communication in the various stages of the thesis process, from articulating research ideas to engaging in thoughtful discussions during presentations.

Furthermore, the researcher underscored the paramount importance of effective time management, urging students to employ strategic planning and organizational techniques to navigate the intricate and often time-consuming nature of thesis work. In addition, fostering a proactive and communicative relationship with the thesis supervisor was identified as a key element in the proposed solutions, emphasizing the need for regular updates, seeking guidance, and actively engaging in a collaborative partnership to ensure the smooth progression of the thesis.

Lastly, the researcher recommended an extensive and varied approach to reading references, encouraging students to explore diverse literature to enrich their understanding of the subject matter, refine their research methodologies, and imbue their theses with a comprehensive and well-informed perspective. Collectively, these meticulously considered solutions not only address the specific linguistic challenges faced by EFL students but also provide a holistic framework aimed at cultivating a conducive environment for academic success and the proficient completion of their undergraduate theses.

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