

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the background, research questions, research purposes, research significances, conceptual framework, and previous studies.

A. Background

Academic writing is one type of writing. Oshima and Hogue (2017) state that Academic writing refers to the type of writing that is commonly employed in high school and college courses. Academic writing exhibits a higher level of formality than narrative writing or personal writing. Each sentence in academic writing must demonstrate coherence and possess a well-structured sentence. This means that academic writing involves organized research practices used by students at higher education levels, using formal language while writing.

In his work, Bailey (2011) posited that the purposes of academic writing encompass reporting original research conducted by the writer, addressing a given or chosen question, engaging in a discourse on a topic of shared interest while presenting the writer's perspective, and synthesizing existing research conducted by others on a specific subject. This implies that academic writing serves not only to communicate information to readers but also to facilitate the engagement of researchers in broader scientific discussions and enrich their knowledge through the synthesis of information and critical thinking.

Furthermore, there are many types of academic writing. Al Farrosi (2023) mentioned that academic writing contains a wide range of forms, including short articles, essays, reports, and complex works such as theses and dissertations. In other words, a thesis is a type of academic writing that plays an important role in higher education as a student's final assignment in obtaining a bachelor's degree. Understanding academic writing is essential for students, especially in the English realm. Students need to know how to write academic papers, especially when writing a thesis.

Academic writing encompasses various essential elements. According to Wilson (2022), academic writing in different scientific fields consists of seven

essential elements, consist of: (1) Evidence, which is crucial for supporting the facts and information presented in academic writing. (2) Analysis, which is an essential part of examining evidence, as it entails interpreting the evidence in a manner that is grounded in the assumptions, motives, and commitments of a scientific field. (3) Respond to inquiries or solve difficulties; (4) A rigorous methodology is necessary to ensure the quality of the writing. (5) Structure based on the scientific field. Academic writing typically comprises an introduction, body, and conclusion. (7) Using argumentation to provide a fundamental idea substantiated by evidence is necessary. Therefore, these seven factors are essential for achieving high-quality and suitable academic writing.

Based on Ratnawati et al. (2018), in the process of writing, students must generate, outline, and compose new ideas in the form of a formal academic essay while demonstrating their capacity to adapt to new situations for educational contexts. This implies that students must possess critical thinking skills to generate new ideas and be able to adapt to the difficulties and modifications in the academic environment while writing.

Moreover, the Background is one part of the thesis, which is located in the research introduction. Thahirah et al. (2023) state that the research background should include a clear and concise explanation of the purpose and rationale behind conducting the research. This implies that the research background should encompass an entire set of material from all parts of the research.

Writing a thesis background at the undergraduate level can be challenging because it requires good writing skills and an in-depth understanding of all parts of the research. Moreover, Thahirah et al. (2023) state that students have several challenges in conducting their thesis background, including writing and organizing ideas, writing the reason they chose that study, struggling to identify a particular element that distinguishes their research apart from previous research, lack of vocabulary, and difficulty in grammar.

Based on a preliminary survey conducted by the researcher, three students in Islamic State Universities Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung by the year 2019 who had completed their thesis sensed the problems experienced while writing their thesis background. In this case, they frequently face problems in creating the background information that provides an integral component of the entire subject matter to be explored in their research. The problems encompass the following: (a) the difficult undertaking of finding relevant content and references that align with the thesis topic; (b) the challenge of establishing coherence between sentences; (c) experiencing writer's block; and (d) the difficulty in finding relevant theories. This aligns with Swales and Feak (2012), who state that students frequently struggle to integrate relevant literature and synthesize material to construct a coherent narrative, which is crucial for providing an appropriate basis for the thesis. Additionally, Belkhir and Benyelles (2017) discovered that EFL learners faced challenges when writing academically in English due to the need for proficiency in general writing skills, including the ability to access grammar, paraphrase, summarize, and incorporate evidence from journal articles to develop supporting ideas. Despite facing many problems, they were successful in getting over these problems, as proven by several students who successfully completed their thesis background and achieved the last stage of thesis completion while others were still in the process of preparing it.

In addition, several similar studies have been conducted. The gaps from previous studies are (a) most other studies address the common challenges students face when writing their thesis, while this research only focuses on the challenges when writing thesis background; (b) In research methodology, they generally use descriptive qualitative design and quantitative methodology, while in this research use narrative inquiry design; (c) In this research, researchers only used questionnaires and interviews.

Related to the statement above, this research aims to explore in depth the students' problem experiences in writing their background thesis and find out their strategies to overcome these problems. A Narrative Inquiry design will be

used to collect the data. It will conduct in-depth interviews with open-ended questions to obtain the data from the participants' stories.

Therefore, the researcher created a research title, “Exploring Students’ Problems in Writing Thesis Background: A Narrative Inquiry.” The researcher is interested in learning more about the problems that students experience while writing their thesis background for a bachelor's degree and examining strategies to overcome these problems. This is done to help novice researchers understand the problems they must overcome in future research.

B. Research Questions

The researchers are able to create research questions based on the background. The research questions in this study include:

- 1) What are the problems experienced by graduate and on-going students in writing thesis background?
- 2) What are the strategies used by the graduate and on-going students to overcome these problems?

C. Research Purposes

According to the above research questions, the research purposes include:

- 1) To figure out the problems experienced by the graduates and the on-going students' experience in writing thesis background.
- 2) To dig up the strategies used by the graduated and the on-going to overcome these problems.

D. Research Significances

In this part, the researcher will discuss the theoretical significances and practical significance as follows:

a. Theoretical Significances

From a theoretical standpoint, this research is essential for thoroughly exploring the problems students experience in writing thesis backgrounds and determining strategies to overcome these problems. The researcher hopes that this research can serve as an informative resource or literature for other researchers exploring the same topic.

b. Practical Significances

Practically, this research can help other researchers, students, and teachers:

1) To other researchers

This research aims to provide information about the problems students experience when writing their thesis backgrounds. This information aids the researcher in identifying strategies for overcoming these problems.

2) To students

This research can help undergraduate students prepare to face the problems of writing a thesis, especially in writing a thesis background. Understanding what to expect can help undergraduate students manage problems more effectively.

3) To teachers

This research can help teachers to know the problems faced by the students while writing their thesis background. It can help teachers to find the right strategies to overcome these problems.

E. Conceptual Framework

This research will investigate the theoretical framework to explore students' problems in writing their thesis background.

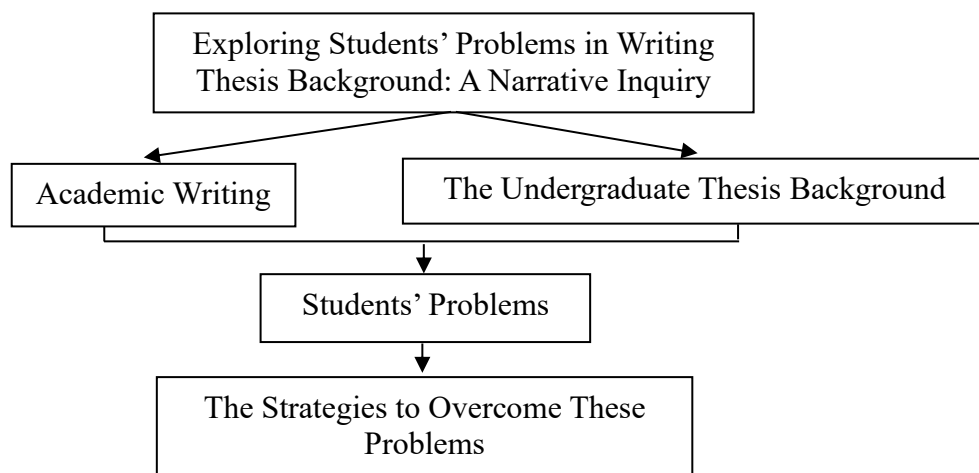


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

Writing is one of the four skills to be possessed when learning English. Irvin (2010) states that writing is one of communication skill. In this case, writing serves as an indirect communication skill because conveying information through written words rather than spoken language. Writing enables individuals to engage with a broader audience. In addition, writing can enhance a number of language abilities, including reading, vocabulary development, grammar, and overall linguistic proficiency. As mentioned by Fauzan et al. (2022), mastering writing is essential for humans to enhance their communication and cognitive abilities. Thus, Writing is an essential skill that enhances multiple areas of language and cognitive abilities.

Furthermore, academic writing has more complex academic rules than writing in general. Wahib (2023) posited that academic writing has various components in grammatical skills and mastery of sentence structure, conjunctions, and text. Students must be aware of the other challenges, such as understanding the problem, the writing rule, the citation, or understanding making a gap from one topic to different topics. Bailey (2011) states that there are six common types of academic writing including note, report, project, essay, dissertation/thesis, and paper. In this research, the researcher focuses on one type of academic writing; it is thesis writing.

Wahib (2023) states that an undergraduate thesis, which marks the final stage in obtaining a bachelor's degree, is seen as both a culmination of university studies and a significant challenge that can prolong the duration of study and cause personal distress for students. A student must possess the ability to write in an academic way as an essential part of the final assignment in order to get a bachelor's degree from a university. To acquire a bachelor's degree, students are required to complete an undergraduate thesis as part of their graduation criteria.

In writing their undergraduate thesis, students should write the thesis background as an integral component that provides a comprehensive explanation of the research to be conducted. Hertzman (2014) states that a research background should ideally encompass both hope and fact,

encompassing ideas, research findings, relevant information, and the purposes of undertaking the course. In this case, the researchers anticipate acquiring valuable insights on the issues encountered while writing. Meanwhile, Thahirah et al. (2023) state that the research background should include a clear and concise explanation of the purpose and rationale behind conducting the research. This implies that the research background should encompass an entire set of material from all parts of the research.

In writing a thesis background, students should fulfill some components. Providing a clear research background might facilitate the readers' comprehension and engagement with the research. Susanti et al. (2009) state that the research background should include: 1) clearly identify the specific area of interest, 2) provide a concise and balanced overview of the relevant published literature regarding the subject in order to give context, 3) clearly articulate the hypothesis that you have investigated, and 4) the rationale behind the researcher's selection of this particular research topic is the primary focus. Therefore, researchers can state that the background must include hope and fact, encompassing ideas, research findings, relevant information, and the purposes of undertaking the course, as mentioned before by Hertzman (2014).

Students face problems when writing a thesis background in identifying ideas, locating appropriate sources, and understanding the goal of the research. In the Indonesian context, academic writing has its own challenges. The differences in word structure and grammar between Indonesian and English provide a challenge for students. In addition, it is essential for students to possess the ability to convert or modify the content from Bahasa to English context. This is necessary to prevent the creation of difficult writing and to ensure that the message is comprehensible to readers, especially those who are native English speakers (Ariyanti, 2016).

Moreover, many researchers need help in writing their undergraduate thesis especially in writing their thesis background. A number of the students are still facing problems during the preparation stage. Therefore, understanding the problems experienced by students when composing their thesis

background, it is possible to identify and determine the potential solutions to overcome these variety of problems.

F. Previous Study

Several previous studies, particularly, have been utilized by researchers as sources and for the purpose of preparing study ideas as follows:

The first research was conducted by Thahirah et al. (2023), entitled “Student Difficulties in Writing Thesis Background”. This research was conducted using a descriptive qualitative method with data collection technique instruments in the form of interviews and document analysis. The research participants were eight students in the English education study program of UNM in the year 2018. The research results found that many students had difficulty writing the background of their thesis. The difficulties students face are writing and organizing ideas, writing the reason they chose that study, struggling to identify a particular element that distinguishes their research from previous research, lack of vocabulary, and difficulty in grammar. To address these difficulties, students are able to use strategies such as reading a lot of references, participating in discussions with knowledgeable peers, and providing guidance to their supervisor.

Secondly, research by Safitri et al. (2021), entitled “The Analysis of Students’ Challenges to Thesis Writing at UIN Alauddin Makassar,” Analyzed the difficulties faced by students and the underlying causes by using descriptive qualitative methodologies with the subject of this research consisted of 30 students of English Education Department intake year 2016. The results of the research state that students face challenges in accessing adequate references to support their research topics, formulating research instruments, employing data processing and analysis techniques, comprehending the intricacies of scientific paper writing, navigating the supervision process, locating respondent data, compiling research backgrounds, interpreting and describing results, lacking self-confidence, and ensuring grammatical accuracy. The challenges faced by students can be categorized into two main factors there are internal factor include their academic skills in research technique and scientific paper writing

rules, as well as their self-confidence. External factors include the availability of research references, research supervisor, and respondents.

Moreover, the research conducted by Swarni (2017), entitled “Student’s Problem in Writing Thesis: Case Study at English Department Mataram University”. The subjects of this study were 15 students in the English department of Mataram University academic year 2011/2012 noon class. This research found five types of problems by students in thesis writing: lack of idea in writing background in the introduction chapter, difficulties in finding the relevant references for the literature chapter, determining the appropriate methodology, difficulty in presenting the result chapter, and difficulty in writing the conclusion chapter. This research used descriptive quantitative design methodology to find the result by collecting data through questionnaires and interviews. The differentiation between previous studies and this research is in methodology.

Then, the research conducted by Singh (2019), entitled “International Graduate Students’ Academic Writing Practices in Malaysia: Challenges and Solutions”. This study used a quantitative methodology with 131 participants of international graduate students at a university in Malaysia. The findings of this study suggest that international graduate students faced significant challenges when it came to composing the literature review, methodology, and findings/analysis sections. Specifically, they struggled with employing appropriate academic style, constructing coherent paragraphs, and articulating ideas accurately in English. In contrast, they found writing the introduction, recommendation, conclusion, references/bibliography sections, and citing sources comparatively less difficult. The findings also suggest that coursework students find tasks such as writing abstracts, summarizing/paraphrasing, preparing writing assignments, and synthesizing information/ideas more challenging compared to the mixed mode students. In addition, a crucial solution identified in this study to address the challenges above is to express persistence and implement diverse methods of self-expression while also enrolling in supplementary writing courses.

The next is research conducted by Thi Mong & Boi (2021), entitled “Challenges Faced by English Majors when writing research papers.” This study used descriptive qualitative research with 53 participants who were English majors at Tra Vinh University. The research results find that students faced several challenges in writing research papers. The main challenges faced by most participants include the difficulty in selecting a research topic, identifying relevant material for the research, determining the significance of the paper, identifying the appropriate theoretical background, selecting and summarizing relevant studies, adhering to the correct citation style, deciding on the appropriate statistical method for data analysis, selecting appropriate formulas for data calculating, interpreting data clearly and concisely, and comparing the findings of the current study with those of related studies. The researchers also suggested solutions such as searching for a favorite topic, discussing the topic with the supervisor, reading some references related to the topic, conducting chapter by chapter, reading the rules of citation or references, and consulting with experienced researchers.

In previous studies, the researchers used new variables to fill in gaps in previous research studies. This variable is based on the problems experienced, especially by students in writing their thesis background. Researchers also added the students’ strategies to overcome these problems. Apart from that, researchers also used the narrative inquiry method to differentiate it from the methods used in previous studies.