ABSTRACT

PROFILING EFL THESIS PROPOSALS: A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF ACADEMIC WRITING PROFICIENCY AND ITS INFLUENCING FACTORS

A THESIS

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2025

The proficiency in academic writing is an essential skill for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. This research investigates the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels and lexical bundles in students' EFL thesis proposals, and aims to identify students' perspectives on the challenges and difficulties that affect their writing skills. Lexical bundles are recurring word combinations that can impact the clarity, coherence, and organization of academic texts.

This study employed a qualitative method, adopting a corpus-based approach and utilizing the software tool AntConc to analyze the frequency and distribution of lexical bundles. While CEFR proficiency levels were assessed using VirtualWritingTutor.com, an online diagnostic writing tool. To explore the contributing factors affecting students' writing performance, data were also collected through open-ended questionnaires. The participants in this study were ten postgraduate students enrolled in an English Education program 2024 cohort, at Universitas Islam Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, who had successfully defended their thesis proposals.

Findings suggest that the CEFR framework and the use of lexical bundles play a significant role in academic writing performance, offering valuable insights for improving the writing skills of EFL students. However, several challenges hinder students' writing development. These challenges include linguistic difficulties, such as issues with grammar, including tense usage and vocabulary choice, as well as the interference of their first language (L1), which can lead to errors in syntax and phrasing. In addition, students struggle with expressing critical ideas clearly and with organizing thoughts coherently. Moreover, motivation plays a crucial role, with varying motivation levels often influenced by external factors like deadlines, feedback, and personal goals. Finally, students also face challenges in maintaining academic integrity, including avoiding plagiarism and properly citing sources, which requires a comprehensive understanding of academic norms and practices.

This study concludes that students face various difficulties and challenges in writing a thesis proposal. To support students in writing a thesis, specialized courses that provide more exposure to academic writing models and constructive feedback could be further strengthened. At the same time, students are encouraged to continuously develop their academic writing competence, not only to meet the

higher-level requirements of the Master of English Education graduate program but also to broaden their readiness for professional opportunities and wider recognition.

Keywords: *lexical bundles, academic writing, CEFR, EFL thesis proposals, corpus-based analysis, writing proficiency, learner feedback*