WRITING THESIS IN THE FIELD OF ENGLISH EDUCATION: HOW DIFFICULT IS IT FOR INDONESIAN EFL STUDENTS?

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Abstract

This research highlights Indonesian EFL students' problems in writing thesis in the field of English Education at a private college in Indonesia. Respondents in this research were divided into two groups: Quantitative Research Group (QRG – 1) and Qualitative Research Group (QRG – 2). In terms of references section of the thesis, 'writing references for different sources' was the most difficult aspect for QRG – 1 and QRG – 2 indicated that the respondents shown 'confusion with references format'. Findings of this research emphasize that research design influenced to which degree an individual Indonesian EFL student encountered problems in the process of writing a thesis for a bachelor's degree in English Education.

Keywords: EFL, Indonesian, writing, thesis, survey

Introduction

Lecturers, as researchers, should conduct research thoughtfully. Their research is expected to provide contribution toward knowledge advancement in the society. This expectation eventually adjusts the lecturers' awareness on the use of research. This sort of awareness leads the lecturers to play a more specific role in such contribution and impact; that is being the "reflective practitioner" in area of research they concentrate (Norton, 2009, p. 21). In relation to that, this article presents findings on research that focuses on what English department can reflect from its students in the college regarding thesis writing. This research in particular has close connection to composition studies – "a disciplinary community that is uniformly concerned with the study and teaching of writing" (Kirsch & Sullivan, 1992, p. 1). Meanwhile, the focus primarily investigated on EFL students' difficulties in the process of writing thesis academically.

As background of this research, it is important to look back the status of English as a language in Indonesia. It is well-known that "English is the most widely used language in the world" (Wierzbicka, 2006, p. 3). It implies that as a language, English had been being used as a primary language for communication across different places in the world. However, the status of English language might be different in those places. In some places, English may take form as ENL (English as a Native Language), ESL (English as a Second Language), EIL

(English as an International Language), and EFL (English as a Foreign Language). In Indonesia, English plays a role as a prominent foreign language. Eventually, this research considers English within the context of EFL English in Indonesia.

In terms of types, approaches that most Indonesian lecturers applied in their writing classrooms were various. The dominant approach is the cognitive approaches. In theory, "cognitive approaches […] focused on the individual writer, investigating the strategies and areas of knowledge needed to complete a specific writing task" (Weigle, 2005, p. 128). Such approaches view writing as a cognitive product that can be produced by focusing on writing strategies and areas of knowledge. EFL students in Indonesia, assumingly, learn English academic writing with product oriented fashion. By observing the development of EFL in Indonesia, we need to raise this emerging question: "What did our students face when they wrote their thesis academically in English? Have we listened to them closely?"

The answers of the questions depend on research. Unfortunately, exact answers of the questions are not yet available, but for some aspects, scholars in composition studies have figured out differences between EFL students and other types of EL (English Language) students. Research shown that "expectations", "needs and wants", "attitudes", and "learning styles" are differences of learners that can be observed in EFL English setting (Tomlison, 2005, p. 140). The four differences are reflective, in a sense that they can be noticed among EFL students. In fact, the differences might exist in different forms amongst individual EFL students. Hypothetically speaking, to be able to write well in English needs times. Not only writing in English needs time, writing in first language also requires time. It is believed that "writing abilities are acquired over time, through practice and feedback" (Hesse, 2002, p. 41). Practice and feedback are essential components of teaching-learning activities that have to exist in a writing classroom. EFL students who perform a lot of writing practices will have little experience on what it means to write when they rarely receive feedbacks from their writing instructors in the classroom.

Reaching good writing abilities surely need times. This is what it means with process in writing. Process is important for students, in a sense that they will also keep writing after they finish their studies (Clark, 2003, p. 2). In the perspective of composition studies, the process of teaching-learning writing that EFL students do is crucial. Moving from the stage of knowing to the stage of mastering the ability of English writing is pedagogically good; however, they should follow the process of learning to write thoroughly. In other words, being able to write in English means that the students have started from learning to know what they will write into learning to write what they have already known from what they learned. Thus, research that highlights issues on EFL students' responses on difficulties they encountered in the process of writing thesis in the field of English education need continuous attention. Although other fellow researchers have conducted research on these issues, but reading the sort of research within the context of Indonesia is limited. This research, therefore, brings certain findings on the emerging issues on what Indonesian EFL students faced when they composed their thesis.

This research has critical questions that are worth pursuing. Following the earlier question, the next question is: "How difficult it is for EFL students to write thesis in the field of English Education?"

This research was done by following chronological procedure (Hubbuch, 1992, p. 35). The purpose of this research is to link current data to predicting what will be available to be seen in the future to make reliable and sensible policy scientifically. "Science is predictive [and it] is concerned with relating the present to the future" (Tayie, 2005, pp. 2-5). In Indonesia, English studies have become science, especially science of EFL English linguistics and language teaching as well as science of EFL English as arts or literary works.

Literacy in English language – a growing attention toward this movement in Indonesia since 2018 onwards – requires practitioners in education and researchers to share ideas and research findings on the connection between activities on reading to writing. For example, "professional scholars very rarely read the whole of a text in detail the first time that they encounter it" (Hughes, 1996, p. 162). Indonesian EFL students are encouraged to read international journals written in English, but do they read such texts efficiently and effectively as a whole? What did the EFL students do when they write academically? The answers are open for debates. However, in terms of writing, composition scholars argue that "three phases of composing: pre-drafting phase, an initial drafting phase, and a revision and editing phase" (Henning, Gravett, & Rensburg, 2005, p. 3). All these phases need to be followed by EFL students to achieve successful writing. Similarly, the writing process consists of prewriting, writing, rewriting where the rewriting process consists of revising, editing, proof-reading (McCuen-Metherell & Winkler, 2009, pp. 3-5). As such, EFL students in Indonesia need to be informed that writing in the sense of EFL English means that they write within their own pace and, the pace that they do should be in line with the above phases and process. Other than that, they might end up submitting their writing only as drafts.

Herdian, an Indonesian educator and a blog writer, listed ten common problems emerging amongst students who are composing skripsi—a bachelor's degree thesis: 1) "menemukan dan merumuskan masalah"; 2) "mencari judul yang efektif"; 3) "sistematika proposal"; 4) "sistematika skripsi"; 5) "kesulitan dalam mencari literature atau bahan bacaan"; 6) "kesulitan metode penelitian dan analisis data"; 7) "kesulitan menuangkan ide ke dalam bahasa ilmiah"; 8) "kesulitan dengan standar tata tulis ilmiah"; 9) "takut menemui dosen pembimbing"; and 10) "dana dan waktu yang terbatas" (Kesulitan dalam Menulis Skripsi, 2012). These ten problems are only prompts to see what happens in the real life. Further investigation on these issues for Indonesian EFL students should be done. This research encapsulates the above issues.

Students whose English is a first language have differences from students whose English is a second language, especially to those whose English is considered as a native language. One of the differences can be seen in terms of "different understandings of text uses and the social value of different text types" (Hyland, Second Language Writing, 2003, p. 31). Hyland's statement was heavily concentrated on the context of writing in English as a second language; meanwhile, views on the differences within English as a foreign language in the form of research are needed. Current research on academic writing illustrates that

"when the student's specialized knowledge of the topic to write is insufficient then the critical thinking cannot be identified well" (Indah, 2017, p. 234). Indah's research highlighted key concern on thesis writing: "on student initiated topic, the better reading on their topic, the higher their writing performance will be" (Critical Thinking, Writing Performance and Topic Familiarity of Indonesian EFL Learners, 2017, p. 235).

Research on English Composition also presents us valuable insights that "learning writing in English demands proper attention and rigorous process from both sides: students and the instructor or teacher" (Sukandi, 2015, p. 37). Sukandi's research emphasizes on the importance of positive culmination between students and teachers, where in this research teachers are viewed as thesis advisors or supervisors. In terms of teaching-learning writing, research on EFL students' writing accuracy in Egypt provides us recommendations that "university EFL/EL teachers should reconsider their methods of teaching writing" (Seiffedin & El-Sakka, 2017, p. 172). Furthermore, O'Brien, Marken, and Petrey, in their research stated that "students will work to achieve the expected standard for scholarship once writing is made an essential part of the course and their efforts are supported by scaffolding the assignment" (Student Perceptions of Scholarly Writing, 2016). Raising EFL students' awareness on the cruciality of writing academically well in English is regarded important for this matter.

Similar research on topic of academic writing shows interesting findings. Al Badi in Spain figured out that 72% of respondents shown their attitudes on academic writing that it was difficult, while 11% considered academic writing as very difficult thing to do, and only 16% decided to prefer academic writing neither difficult nor easy (Academic Writing Difficulties of ESL Learners, 2015, p. 68). In addition, research on this topic within Indonesian context shows relatively similar findings. In Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB), for example, research shows that from 54 respondents—consisting of 36 students and 18 lecturers in the institute—writing thesis in the first language, which is Bahasa Indonesia, also problematic. The research highlighted eighteen problems that were related to formal grammatical use of Bahasa Indonesia in thesis writing (Defina, Krishnawati, Wahyuni, Krishandini, & Ansori, 2011).

China views English as in the same way Indonesia views English. In China, English is also a foreign language. Liu, a researcher in School of Foreign Language of University of Jinan, conducted research on graduate thesis writing by using questionnaire that was distributed to 36 supervisors and 167 students. She found that "the discrepancies in teachers' and students' beliefs and the problems in the graduate thesis writing course are the key causes of the low quality of students' theses" (Liu, 2015). Meanwhile, Han investigated, from 414 graduates in ZJU—an independent university, that "a considerable number of students have problems in selection and report of topics" (Han, 2014, p. 120). These two Chinese researches show that, indeed, writing thesis for EFL students is problematic, but to which aspects that their difficulties emerge are left to be unknown.

Additionally, researcher in Sokoine University of Agriculture – Tanzania, Sotco Caludius Komba, figured out from 163 research reports, including 39 theses and 64 dissertations from three universities in Tanzania that postgraduate students "seemed to have challenges in writing all chapters which were included in their

research reports" and "writing a thesis or dissertation is not an easy task. It is essentially the product of effective training and proper guidance" (Komba, 2016). Komba's research findings show similar description as the two Chinese researchers; although Komba has larger scale of research data. Moving on from Asia to Australia, research shows different results. In the context of Australian universities, Wang and Li, through their research on thesis writing, mentioned that "cultural impact" happened to the thesis writing of international students studying in Australia, and "it is important for supervisors [particularly Australian professors] to understand international research students' unique pedagogical needs and develop intercultural sensitivity in their pedagogical practice in postgraduate research supervision" (Wang & Li, 2008). Australia is a country where most students come from different countries. They might come from countries that view English as ENL, ESL, EFL, or EIL. Undoubtedly though, by knowing these facts, Australian professors need to be sensible enough to be aware on such intercultural sensitivity and pedagogical needs. Being unaware of these two aspects will probably create confusion in the minds of the international students studying in Australia.

In brief, the above researches may provide findings on topics related to academic writing and thesis writing. The findings were concluded from data existing in various levels and different contexts; however, the findings also provide us different insights that we can learn and understand. As such, this article presents, as the research gap, findings on EFL students' difficulties in writing thesis within Indonesian context. This gap is also indeed interesting to be explored further in the form of research. Findings of this research, as this article presents, highlight these statistical data on the issues from different perspectives and different scientific nuance but approvable methodologically wise.

Method

This research follows research on mixed-method design. The higher priority was given to quantitative study while lower priority was given to qualitative study. This research procedure follows convention on the "explanatory design" of mixed-method research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008, pp. 560-62). This method, as Sugiyono also described, is called as "concurrent embedded strategy" in type of research with combination design (2016, p. 37). Specifically, this research is also categorized as a survey research, which means that it is "usually associated as a research approach with the idea of asking group of people questions" (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006, p. 77). Moreover, this research can also be classified as "descriptive survey research" (Tayie, 2005, p. 49). Meanwhile, it is also a "cross-sectional survey" that means that the research "collects information from a sample that has been drawn from a predetermined population" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008, p. 391). The purpose of survey research is to gather "large scale data in order to make generalizations" and the focus of this research is to find out factual information on students' conditions in terms of writing thesis (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2005, p. 78).

The widely known research instrument in survey research is questionnaire. For this matter, "questionnaires […] are important methods of collecting […] data" (Hyland, 1996, p. 63) and "questionnaire design depends on choice of data collection technique" (Tayie, 2005, p. 52). Data collected from the instrument

were in the form of EFL students' responses on their difficulties in the process of thesis writing in the field of English Education. Meanwhile, type of question in the questionnaire was open-ended question. The use of questionnaire in research, usually, leads "more to quantitative forms of analysis" (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006, p. 215). Therefore, the use of questionnaire in this research directed the researcher to analyse the collected qualitative data statistically.

1	Apakah yang menjadi masalah bagi anda dalam penulisan skripsi terkait dengan Bab I. *Introduction*?
2	Apakah yang menjadi masalah bagi anda dalam penulisan skripsi terkait dengan Bab II. *Review of Related Literature*?
3	Apakah yang menjadi masalah bagi anda dalam penulisan skripsi terkait dengan Bab III. *Research Methodology*?
4	Apakah yang menjadi masalah bagi anda dalam penulisan skripsi terkait dengan Bab IV. *Findings and Discussion*?
5	Apakah yang menjadi masalah bagi anda dalam penulisan skripsi terkait dengan Bab V. *Conclusion*?
6	Apakah yang menjadi masalah bagi anda dalam penulisan skripsi terkait dengan *References*?

Figure 1. List of Questions in the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was constructed in relation to the sections of the students' thesis. The students should compose six sections in their thesis. The sections are: section one is Chapter 1 for Introduction; section two is Chapter 2 for Review of Related Literature; section three is Chapter 3 for Research Methodology; section four is Chapter 4 for Findings and Discussion; section five is Chapter 5 for Conclusion and Suggestion; and the last section is References. Each chapter provided different challenges and difficulties for them to write. Therefore, questions in the questionnaire were designed accordingly by asking the respondents directly about what sorts of difficulties or problems that they encountered when they wrote each chapter of their thesis.

Sampling technique applied in this research was total sampling. The respondents who filled out the questionnaire regarded as the entire population. Respondents were students who graduated from English Education Study Program at STKIP PGRI Sumatera Barat. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents in the moment of 51st graduation event. Meanwhile, data in this research were collected on November 28, 2015 in 2015/2016 academic year. As many as ninety-eight students participated as respondents in this research. Twenty-four of them preferred quantitative research design, while seventy-four students chose qualitative research design for their thesis.

Data collected from the questionnaire were in verbal forms (lexical items) and listed according to their frequency. Listing the frequency was done by looking at words that had similar meanings. In other words, the data were firstly collected in the form of meaning-based qualitative data from the respondents' answers and then their answers were measured to achieve nominal data as a form of quantitative data through frequency (Sugiyono, 2016, p. 6).

The data were collected qualitatively and they were analysed quantitatively afterwards (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006, p. 199). In theory, reality in quantitative research is objective (Tayie, 2005, p. 86). Thus, this article illuminates research findings as objective as they are, as a form of reality. Quantitative analysis follows the idea of descriptive statistics in the form of "variable frequencies" (Sugiyono, 2016, p. 199). It presents ordinal data that informs "numerical values are assigned in accordance with a qualitative scale" (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006, p. 215). In terms of data analysis, "the percentage of respondents who chose each alternative for each question" is reported accordingly (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008, p. 404).

Findings and Discussion

Numbers displayed in this section had been arranged into coded responses and they represent categories for each type of research (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006, p. 200). In addition, coding was used in this research as one of the acceptable techniques for managing data (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006, p. 203).
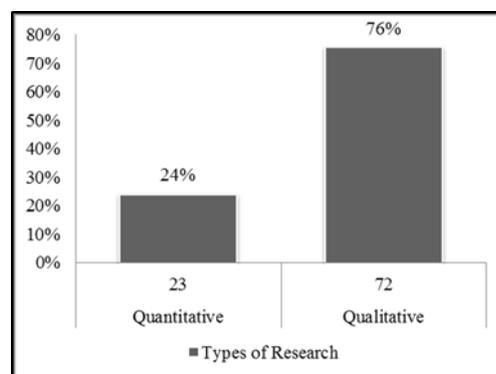
Figure 2. Percentage of Each Group

Figure 2 displays the categories of respondents. The categories were made by looking at method that the respondents preferred when they wrote their thesis. Separating participants' responses on this basis was useful to indicate the overall picture of writing thesis. The focus of this research was to find statistical data on EFL students' difficulties or problems in writing thesis. After reading and listing the respondents' answers, and locating the answers on the basis of similar responses, it is evident that each group shown different forms of difficulties in writing thesis in each chapter.

Note:
» QRG-1 stands for Quantitative Research Group
» QRG-2 stands for Qualitative Research Group

Finding 1: Problems in Writing Chapter 1. Introduction

Table 1. Problems in Writing 1 for QRG-1

Quantitative Research Design (QRG-1)

No	Problems	Questionnaire Number	f	%
1	Writing Research Background	4, 6, 8, 10, 15, 16, 17, 19, 22	9	38%
2	Finding and Developing Ideas	1, 3, 11, 18	4	17%
3	Research Problem or Phenomena	5, 13, 14	3	13%
4	Writing and Differentiating Research Background and Identification	12, 20, 21	3	13%
5	Different Opinion with Research Advisors about the Thesis	2, 7	2	8%
6	Writing Research Questions	9, 17	2	8%
7	Writing Paragraphs	23	1	4%
	Group Population (∑)		24	100%

Table 2. Problems in Writing 1 for QRG-2

Qualitative Research Design (QRG-2)

No	Problems	Questionnaire Number	f	%
1	Writing Research Background / Research Problems	24, 25, 27, 28, 32, 33, 34, 35, 38, 39, 47, 53, 64, 68, 70, 74, 75, 77, 78, 79, 88, 89, 90, 95	24	33%
2	Finding Researchable Phenomenon	29, 31, 39, 41, 45, 50, 54, 56, 62, 63, 69, 71, 80, 81, 82, 83, 91, 92	18	25%
3	Ideas and Organizing Ideas	26, 30, 36, 44, 46, 49, 52, 57, 58, 60, 61, 72, 73, 76, 84, 86, 93	17	23%
4	Finding Research Questions	53, 55, 59, 94	4	5%
5	Differentiating Background with Identification and Linking Background with Research Questions	40, 51, 67	3	4%
6	Dealing with Ideas and Grammar	37, 85	2	3%
7	Writing Sentence or Paragraphs	48, 87	2	3%
8	Writing Identification of Research Problem	65, 66	2	3%
9	Changing Research Topics	42	1	1%
10	No Answer	43	1	1%
	Group Population (∑)		74	100%

Data in Table 1 and Table 2 show that both groups mentioned that writing research background was the dominant problem encountered in writing Chapter 1. List of problems in QRG-1 can also be found in QRG-2; however, QRG-2 has more variant in terms of types of problems that the group encountered. Therefore, the first finding of this research is that writing background of research is challenging for EFL students. They seem to need further guidance on how to write research background for thesis.

Finding 2: Problems in Writing Chapter 2. Review of Related Literature

Table 3. Problems in Writing Chapter 2 for QRG-1

Quantitative Research Design (QRG-1)

No	Problems	Questionnaire Number	f	%
1	Citing Sources and Paraphrasing Them	2, 3, 6, 9, 11, 12, 17, 20, 21	9	39%
2	Understanding Related Theories	4, 8, 10, 14, 16, 19, 22	7	30%
3	Finding Related Sources: Book or Journal Articles	1, 5, 7, 13, 15, 18	6	26%
4	Linking One Variable with Another Variable	23	1	4%
5	No Answer	0	0	0%
	Group Population (∑)		23	100%

Table 4. Problems in Writing Chapter 2 for QRG-2

Qualitative Research Design (QRG-2)

No	Problems	Questionnaire Number	f	%
1	Finding Sources and Supporting Details	26, 32, 33, 36, 37, 39, 42, 44, 46, 47, 52, 55, 56, 57, 64, 66, 67, 68, 71, 72, 78, 83, 85, 86, 89, 92	26	36%
2	Writing Paraphrase	27, 28, 31, 35, 41, 48, 50, 51, 54, 60, 61, 62, 75, 76, 81, 82	16	22%
3	Citing Sources for Theory in Research	29, 45, 59, 63, 65, 69, 73, 77, 88	9	13%
4	Finding Related Theories	24, 25, 40, 70, 79, 93, 94	7	10%
5	Analyzing Experts Opinion with Many Sentences	34, 49, 53, 74, 84, 90	6	8%
6	Writing Sentence or Paragraphs	38, 80, 87, 91	4	6%
7	Writing Conceptual Framework	30, 95	2	3%
8	No Answer	43, 58	2	3%
	Group Population (∑)		72	100%

In general, QRG-1 and QRG-2 show that problems related to sources are dominant to be encountered by EFL students. Meanwhile, other types of problems in writing Chapter 2 relate to related theories in books or journals and how the students can organize the theories from different experts in the topic of their research.

Finding 3: Problems in Writing Chapter 3. Research Methodology

Table 5. Problems in Writing Chapter 3 for QRG-1

Quantitative Research Design (QRG - 1)

No	Problems	Questionnaire Number	f	%
1	Determining Technique for Data Analysis that Suits with Research Method	1, 3, 8, 16, 20, 23	6	26%
2	Deciding Suitable Formula for Data Analysis	6, 11, 13, 15, 22	5	22%
3	Organizing Research Questions in Questionnaire and the Use of SPSS with Selecting Samples	2, 14, 19, 21	4	17%
4	Data Analysis	4, 5, 10, 12	4	17%
5	Deciding Research	9, 17, 18	3	13%
6	No Answer	7	1	4%
	Group Population (∑)		23	100%

Table 6. Problems in Writing Chapter 3 for QRG-2

Qualitative Research Design (QRG-2)

No	Problems	Questionnaire Number	f	%
1	Instrument for Data Analysis	24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 36, 44, 45, 49, 53, 63, 64, 69, 74, 75, 77, 80, 88, 92	21	31%
2	Looking for Appropriate Research Method	26, 39, 40, 50, 52, 54, 60, 84, 85, 86, 93	11	16%
3	Deciding Research Design	46, 47, 68, 72, 76, 79, 81, 82	8	12%
4	Determining Samples of the Research	33, 41, 56, 57, 66, 78, 89	7	10%
5	Research Puposes, Techniques and Research Type	42, 51, 61, 67, 73, 87	6	9%
6	Making Indicators	38, 59, 62, 65, 83	5	7%
7	Creating Questionnaires	35, 94	2	3%
8	Deciding Participants	31, 90	2	3%
9	No Answer	34, 37, 43, 55, 58, 91	6	9%
	Group Population (∑)		68	100%

This third finding shows that, indeed, different method has different challenges for EFL students. However, a similar problem emerging between the two groups is related to the data analysis within their preferred method for research. QRG-1 has problems in deciding 'suitable formula' for data analysis, while QRG-2 has 'instrument for data analysis', such as questionnaire, for problems in writing Chapter 3.

For this item, four respondents did not answer the question in QRG-2, but QRG-1 remains complete.

Finding 4: Problems in Writing Chapter 4. Findings and Discussion

Table 7. Problems in Writing Chapter 4 for QRG-1

Quantitative Research Design (QRG-1)

No	Problems	Questionnaire Number	f	%
1	Data Analysis for Findings	5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 16, 18, 21, 22	10	45%
2	Transforming Data into Discussion	1, 4, 8	3	14%
3	Explaining Research Data	2, 20	2	9%
4	Synchronizing Research Findings with Research Questions	3	1	5%
5	Presenting Research Results	9	1	5%
6	Interpretation	10	1	5%
7	Writing Research Results	14	1	5%
8	Writing Discussion Session	15	1	5%
9	Developing Results into Sentences	17	1	5%
10	Writing Main Ideas in Paragraphs	23	1	5%
	Group Population (∑)		22	100%

Table 8. Problems in Writing Chapter 4 for QRG-2

Qualitative Research Design (QRG-2)

No	Problems	Questionnaire Number	f	%
1	Data Analysis that Suits with Indicators	26, 27, 28, 33, 45, 50, 53, 54	8	26%
2	Data Analysis	36, 38, 39, 40, 44, 45	6	19%
3	No Answer	37, 43, 46, 47	4	13%
4	Determining Research Findings	29, 30, 31	3	10%
5	Describing Findings in Words	24, 25, 52	3	10%
6	Doing Data Interpretation	31, 42, 51	3	10%
7	Writing Research Findings or Conclusion	32, 48	2	6%
8	Explaining Data from Instruments	34, 35	2	6%
	Group Population (∑)		31	100%

A surprising fact for this fourth finding is that 'data analysis' and how to present their 'research findings' in Chapter 4 are challenging for EFL students. Apparently, which method they preferred in their thesis did not trigger different challenges.

Finding 5: Problems in Writing Chapter 5. Conclusion

Table 9. Problems in Writing Chapter 5 for QRG-1

Quantitative Research Design (QRG-1)

No	Problems	Questionnaire Number	f	%
1	No Problem	1, 4, 5, 6, 11	5	22%
2	Getting an Idea to Write	2	1	4%
3	No Answer	3, 7, 12, 18	4	17%
4	Drawing Conclusion	8, 9, 13, 16, 20, 22	6	26%
5	Relating Conclusion to Significant of the Research	10	1	4%
6	Writing Appropriately	14	1	4%
7	Differentiating Conclusion and Suggestion	15	1	4%
8	Writing Sentence and Paragraphs Coherently	17	1	4%
9	Making Findings as Facts, not just Nominal Findings	19	1	4%
10	Dealing with Grammar and Conclusion	21	1	4%
11	Writing Opening Paragraph	23	1	4%
	Group Population (∑)		23	100%

Table 10. Problems in Writing Chapter 5 for QRG-2

Qualitative Research Design (QRG-2)

No	Problems	Questionnaire Number	f	%
1	Concluding the Data Analysis	24, 26, 28, 32, 33, 41, 42, 64, 80, 91	11	15%
2	Writing Sentences Coherently	25, 29, 38, 53, 87, 89, 90, 94	8	11%
3	No Answer	27, 36, 37, 39, 40, 43, 44, 45, 49, 57, 78, 79, 83, 84, 85, 86, 88	17	24%
4	No Problem	30, 34, 35, 46, 47, 54, 55, 58, 63, 65, 68, 70, 71, 73, 74	15	21%
5	Differentiating Conclusion and Summary	31	1	1%
6	Differentiating Conclusion and Suggestion	48	1	1%
7	Inserting Research Findings into Conclusion	50, 93	2	3%
8	Differentiating Conclusion and Abstract	51	1	1%
9	Dealing with Grammar	52	1	1%
10	Dealing with Content of the Conclusion	56, 66, 67, 72, 75, 81, 82, 92	8	11%
11	Elaborating Language for Conclusion	59	1	1%
12	Editing Sentences to be Coherent	60	1	1%
13	Paraphrasing	61	1	1%
14	Writing Suggestion	62	1	1%
15	Differentiating Conclusion and Finding	76	1	1%
16	Differentiating Conclusion and Interpretation	77	1	1%
17	Writing the Opening Paragraph	95	1	1%
	Group Population (∑)		72	100%

Writing Chapter 5 seems to be not that challenging for both groups. However, Table 9 and Table 10 show that the students have problems related to written language. They need to be guided further to compose a solid conclusion in their thesis. QRG-1 has 'drawing conclusion' as the dominant problem, while QRG-2 has 'concluding the data analysis' and 'writing sentences correctly' as the dominant problems. Thus, responses from the both groups indicate that writing technical aspects in Chapter 5 needs to be trained further for EFL students.

Table 11. Problems in Writing References for QRG-1

Quantitative Research Design (QRG-1)

No	Problems	Questionnaire Number	f	%
1	Writing References for Different Sources	1, 3, 22, 23	4	17%
2	No Problem	4, 5, 6, 8	4	17%
3	No Answer	7, 9, 12, 17, 18	5	22%
4	Writing Name of Authors	10	1	4%
5	Writing References with APA Style	11	1	4%
6	Writing Sources from the Internet	13, 20, 2	3	13%
7	Organizing Sentences and Alphabetical Order	14	1	4%
8	Feeling Confused with Writing References Format	15	1	4%
9	Writing References Format	16	1	4%
10	Encountering Different Opinion from Lecturer 1 with Lecturer 2	19	1	4%
11	Determining a Country and a City of Publication	21	1	4%
	Group Population (∑)		23	100%

Table 12. Problems in Writing References for QRG-2

Qualitative Research Design (QRG-2)

No	Problems	Questionnaire Number	f	%
1	Writing References from Journal and Internet	24, 62	2	3%
2	Writing References from Journal	25, 26, 32, 76	4	6%
3	Writing References from Various Sources	27, 37, 68, 95	4	6%
4	Writing Name of Authors who Have More than Three Names	28, 53, 92	3	4%
5	No Problem	29, 30, 34, 35, 41, 51, 54, 55, 57, 67, 73, 74, 89	13	18%
6	Locating Punctuation	31, 63, 66	3	4%
7	Writing References Chronologically	33, 38	2	3%
8	No Answer	36, 39, 40, 43, 45, 56, 58, 78, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 88	14	20%
9	Using Broken Link in References	42	1	1%
10	Facing Difficulties in Finding Relevant Sources	44, 70	2	3%
11	Feeling Confused with Reference Format	46, 47, 48, 59, 60, 64, 65, 71, 72, 75, 77, 79, 83, 90, 91, 94	16	23%
12	Locating City of Publication	50	1	1%
13	Connecting Theory with References	52, 93	2	3%
14	Encountering Different Opinion about References between Thesis	61	1	1%
15	Differentiating Journal and Book	69	1	1%
16	Differentiating MLA and APA Referencing System	80	1	1%
17	No Indication for Year of Publication	87	1	1%
	Group Population (∑)		71	100%

The findings show that each chapter in thesis had challenged EFL students through different forms. In order to discuss these findings and bring them to current debates and discussion on research within the area of academic writing, or composition studies as scholars mention, theory then is regarded as important instrument in this discussion section. In this case, theory can be used as an apparatus to explain empty spaces in findings of research (Nazir, 2014, p. 11);

meanwhile, facts can reorientate the orientation of theory (Nazir, 2014, p. 12). In this research, the empty spaces mean that the findings of research that can be used as a way to solve emerging problems that happen among EFL students writing thesis in Indonesia. In spite of the fact that "academic writers understand that writing is a process" (Green & Lidinsky, 2012, p. 12); however, in reality, lecturers in Indonesia focus primarily on assessing EFL students' writings only from the product.

Beyond the process of writing thesis in the field of English Education, we, as lecturers in Indonesia are invited to achieve global standard on literacy education. In 1987, Truman emphasized that literacy education can be achieved if the students are encouraged to perform "the culture of reading habits" (A Preface to Literacy: An Inquiry into Pedagogy, Practice, and Progress, pp. 31-32). In writing chapter 2, problems encountered by students are, namely: 'understanding related theories'; 'analysing experts' opinion with many sentences'; 'linking one variable (theory) to another variable (theory)'; and 'writing conceptual framework'. From these findings, EFL students' ability to express their arguments as other scholars have in their writings need to be encouraged and trained further.

In theory, Daniels emphasized that "languages are intimately related to the societies and individuals who use them" (Nine Ideas about Language, 2008, p. 12). Although complexities of learning English are higher than other countries due to existence of Bahasa Indonesia and vernacular languages (traditional languages, and mother tongue) in Indonesia, allowing EFL students in the country to express their mind clearly in English is possible thing to do. It is possible if only the thesis supervisors and examiners recognize that the process of writing thesis needs to be acknowledged more than assessing thesis as a product of research reported in written form.

Furthermore, Theodore M. Bernstein mentions that students can reach good competence in English when they reach the standards of "scholarly criterion" and "pedagogical criterion" in their works (Algeo, 2008, pp. 778-785). These criterions are, in surface, difficult to achieve, but possible when the EFL students are given plenty of times to write their thesis in English. In the context of American education, for instance, professors of English are aware that international students studying in the United States come from countries that have almost different background. "If the student was educated primarily outside the U.S. in a language other than English, second language acquisition is probably in process, and the student's writing is likely to be strongly influenced by the attitudes and rhetorical patterns of his or her home culture" (Edlund, 2003, p. 371). If this notion exists in the United States, then possibly, the same notion can be found in Indonesia. However, the central attention is that professors in Indonesia who become thesis supervisors or examiners need to be aware that their students do not have similar English proficiency and ability individually. This notion also leads our memory to the movement of foreign language acquisition in Indonesia. A single Indonesian EFL student would have different nuance of English language compared to another Indonesian EFL student. As such, the process of acquiring English as a foreign language is different between these EFL students.

The key that is in need of recognition from this research is that EFL students do have challenges in writing thesis. It means that thesis supervisors and

examiners in EFL setting need to be considerate when it comes to judging their students' thesis as a product. For this matter, one step to integrate "writing and critical thinking" is to realize that "when [we, as English instructors] assign formal writing [to our students], [we need to] treat writing as a process" (Bean, 2011, p. 1). How can we see the EFL students' critical thinking ability if we focus heavily on forms of thesis than the substance that they should have in their writing? At this point, John C. Bean also advises that when we respond "to the writing of non-native speakers is to focus on ideas and organization, as one would do with native speakers, but to use a somewhat different approach for handling error" (Bean, 2011, p. 85). Then, clearly at this point, knowing how difficult to write a thesis among EFL students is a must for Indonesian lecturers who advise EFL students' thesis. For example, QRG – 1 and QRG – 2 listed several problems in writing chapter 3 and 4 of their thesis, such as: 'looking for appropriate method'; 'transforming data into discussion'; 'synchronizing research findings with research question' and 'describing findings in words'. Scholar in critical thinking argued that one of "contributing causes of students' reading difficulties" takes in the form of "difficulty seeing themselves in conversation with the author" (Bean, 2011, pp. 162-166). Bean's theory has resemblance on findings of this research. Furthermore, intelligent thinking is defined as combination between attitude, knowledge, and thinking skills (Halpern, 2003, p. 7). EFL students in Indonesia need to be educated on the basis of connecting their attitude, knowledge, and thinking skills. Research supervisors and examiners as well as lecturers teaching research methodology in Indonesia should pay attention more on combination of these aspects in relation to supervising their students' thesis.

In terms of writing English academically, Gabrielatos mentioned that EFL students should not have to be afraid to use the same word again and again in their writing (Gabrielatos, 2002, p. 4). Gabrielatos' ideas clearly linked to findings of this research, especially to the answers of each question asked in the questionnaire. EFL students seemed to focus on forms rather than meanings that they want to convey in their writing. This aspect is linked to crucial elements that should be assessed from EFL students' thesis writing. In addition, Gurney listed that "assessment activities that encourage learning through experience" plays as one of "five key factors that provide a foundation for a good teaching" (2007, p. 91). In this case, supervising research is also a form of teaching but it is more direct, in a way that the EFL students receive feedback immediately about their thesis writing. Even after comprehensive test, EFL students still receive feedback on findings of their research results and how appropriate and relevant their research methodology was.

Since thesis supervisors and examiners are also teachers in a sense that they teach EFL students to compose thesis, therefore, at this point, recognizing what one's own knowledge and expertise is required. In this regard, "teachers' knowledge is personal, context-rich, and elusive" (Russell & Bullock, 1999, p. 132). A student who should meet with five lecturers who have slightly different knowledge on topics of research and have different expectation toward the EFL student's research, or thesis, will likely encounter challenges through multiple forms in the process of writing thesis and, especially in the process of thesis examination. We also need to bear in mind that we are "not the real audience" for our students (Elbow, 1998, p. 220). Therefore, we should direct EFL students to

write their thesis as if they write for a larger audience who might share different interests to their thesis. More often than not, we encourage our students to write their thesis on the basis of what we want them to do and to have in their thesis, but we neglect the necessity of helping them out to write their ideas clearly on paper. To achieve this stage, we need to be informed that we need to "minimize [the] students' concentration on grades and maximize their involvement in and enjoyment of their writing by employing the concept of 'intrinsic motivation' – that is, by helping students find the writing assignment significant and therefore worthy of assessment" (Kizza, 1997, p. 277). Eventually, we can be considerable enough to say that expecting students to be "generative thinkers" is one of six features of effective instruction, especially in the context of writing thesis by using English as a foreign language (Hanson, 2009, p. 3).

In relation to writing between cultures, as David Bartholomae mentioned, we are informed that, "when students enter college, they are asked to study texts, histories, perspectives, positions, and ideas different from their own. They [are also] required by their classroom discussions and papers to interact with cultural difference in thoughtful ways" (Dombek & Herndon, 2004, p. 90). Cultural difference might not happen as big as in the context of the United States, but in terms of Indonesia, cultural difference might be geared toward the idea of mutual tolerance, Indonesian democracy, or traditions that exist in different provinces. For the context of writing thesis, EFL students need to be aware that they need to be in dialogue with the texts they read because "…good writers are in dialogue with their readers" (Henning, Gravett, & Rensburg, 2005, p. 123).

In line with what this research has figured out, Donald M. Murray emphasizes that considering writing as a process means that "the students are individuals who must explore the writing process in their own way, some fast, some slow" (2011, pp. 5-6). Being considerate and compassionate as thesis supervisors for EFL students writing thesis in the field of English Education are regarded as important action to do, and wise. The intention is geared toward improving awareness on the difficulty that EFL students faced in the process of writing their thesis. In short, from this discussion, one clear answer to the question raised in the title of this article is that the EFL students' difficulty in writing thesis is reflectively various among individual EFL students and such difficulties are different in accordance with research method that they preferred to have in their thesis.

Conclusion

From findings of this research, five essential points can be made: First, EFL students have various types of problems or difficulties when they write their thesis in the field of English Education. Second, Problems that EFL students faced when they wrote their thesis were various depending on research method that they selected for their thesis. Third, every individual EFL student has different types of difficulties when they wrote each chapter in their thesis. Forth, thesis advisor and examiner in the context of EFL need to be considerate in terms of assessing EFL students' thesis. Fifth, process of writing a thesis needs to receive more attention that viewing thesis solely as a product.

The five points suggested that each and every individual EFL student views thesis writing differently; and problems, challenges, or difficulties they faced are individually different. When EFL students are being supervised in writing their thesis, we should be aware that which research method they preferred for their thesis will challenge them to a great deal in finishing their thesis. The point is that standing on the process of writing a thesis is tremendously important to see how EFL students in Indonesia can cope with expectations in a scholarly manner of writing a thesis.

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