

**Exploring Indonesian EFL Students' Challenges
in Thesis Writing from A Sociocultural Perspective**

THESIS

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FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING

AR-RANIRY STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY

BANDA ACEH

2024 M/1446 H

THESIS

Submitted to *Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan*
Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Bachelor Degree of Education in English Language Teaching

by:

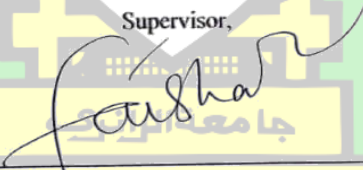
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Date: 05 / 07 / 2024

It has been defended in *Sidang Munagasyah*
in front of the board of the Examination for the working paper
and has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Bachelor Degree of Education in English Language Teaching

On:

Thrusday, August, 8th 2024
Safar 3, 1446 H

In Darussalam, Banda Aceh

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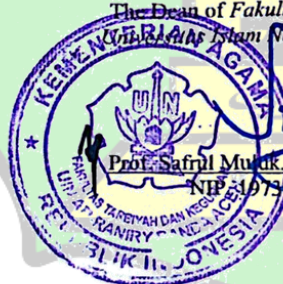

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in Thesis Writing from A Sociocultural Perspective**

adalah benar-benar karya saya, **kecuali semua kutipan dan referensi yang disebutkan sumbernya**. Apabila terdapat kesalahan dan kekeliruan didalamnya, maka akan sepenuhnya menjadi tanggung jawab saya. Demikianlah surat pernyataan ini saya buat dengan sesungguhnya.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Alhamdulillah abbil 'Alamin. First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Allah SWT for his boundless grace and blessing throughout the completion of this thesis. Shalawat and salam to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the greatest example for all people throughout the world.

My appreciation addressed to my supervisor, Faishal Zakaria, S.Pd.I., M.A., Ph.D, for his invaluable guidance, support, and encouragement throughout this research. His expertise and critical feedback were essential in developing this study.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to my academic advisor, Fera Busfinal Zalha, M.A, for her support and advisory role. I extends gratitude to all lecturers and staff of the Department of English Language Education at UIN Ar-Raniry, who have taught and helped since the first year of the researcher's degree at this university.

My biggest thanks to my beloved parents, Yusnidar and Rusin, for their unconditional support, and invaluable advice. I am also indebted to my brothers, Muhammad Rusnanda and Muhammad Ashil Al-abraar, for encouragement you have shown me through this thesis project.

Moreover, I would like also to thank Teuku Naufal Harist for his consistent support during this thesis project.

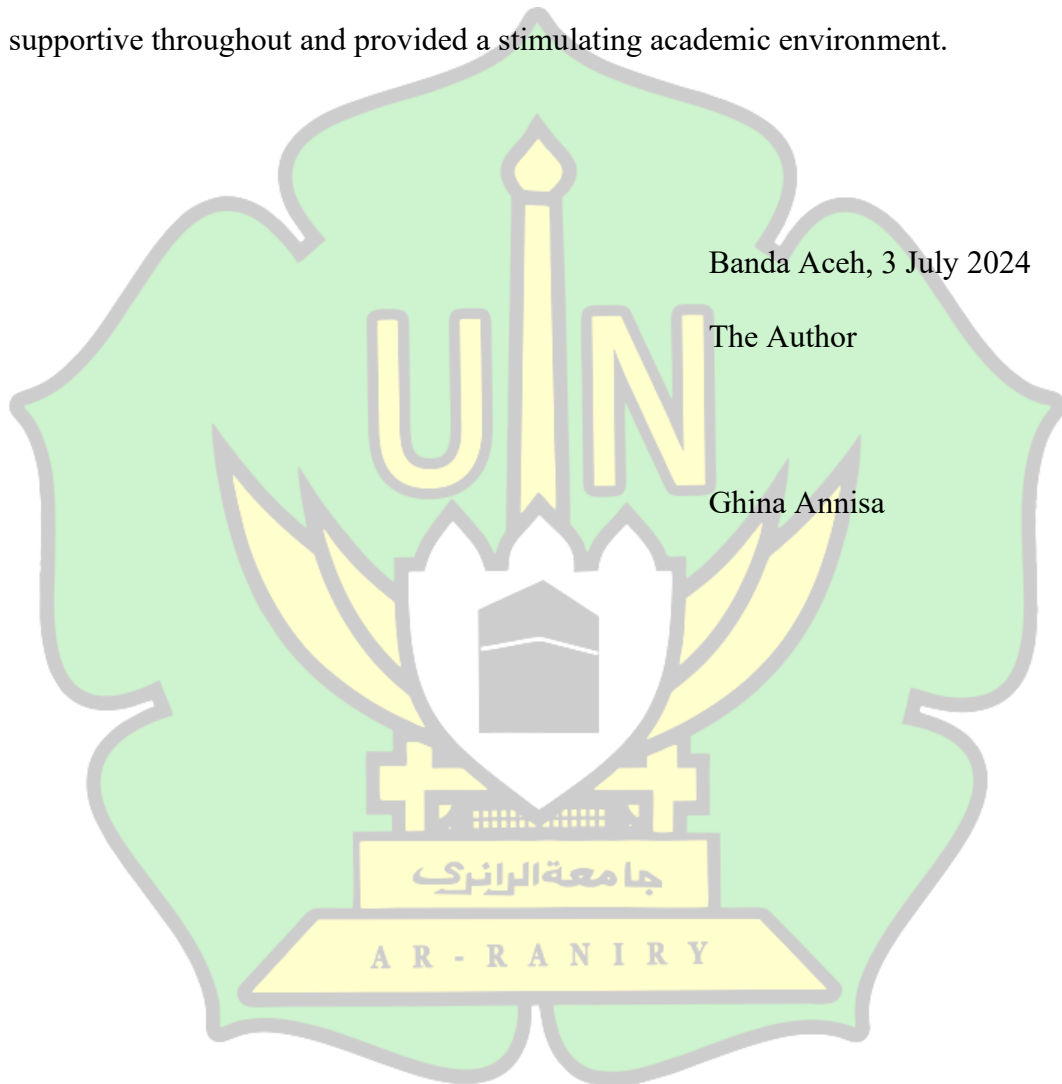
Furthermore, unforgettable thanks are also dedicated to the participants who were willing and helped me in collecting data so that this research completed well.

Lastly, I extend my appreciation to all my friends, who have been supportive throughout and provided a stimulating academic environment.

Banda Aceh, 3 July 2024

The Author

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ABSTRACT

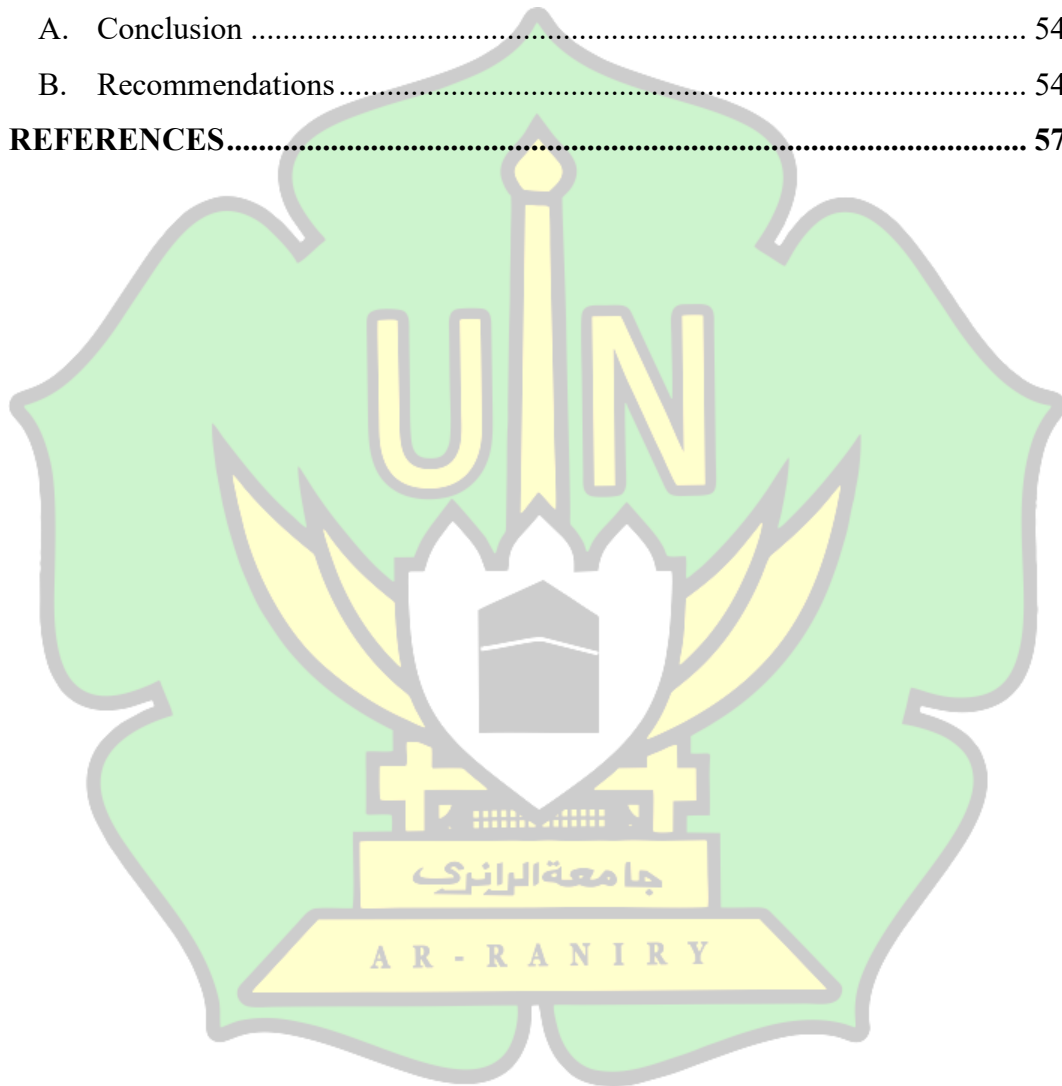
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Supervisor : Faishal Zakaria, S.Pd.I., M.A., Ph.D
Keywords : Thesis Writing, Sociocultural

Thesis writing become one of the most challenges in graduating from university for English as foreign language students. This study explores the thesis writing difficulties faced by English Language Education students. Through sociocultural lens, it examines how social and cultural factors influence their experiences and the strategies they employ to overcome writing challenges. Adopting a qualitative case study approach, the research utilizes purposive sampling to interview four final-year students actively engaged in thesis writing. Data collection involves in-depth interviews and document analysis. Thematic analysis used to identify the difficulties students faced and the strategies they developed to address them. The research investigates two key areas: 1) Sociocultural factors influencing thesis writing. The study explores how social factors (student-supervisor relationships, peer psychological support, personality and personal traits) and cultural factors (students' lack of academic and reading ability, thesis regulations and convention) create challenges for students in thesis writing process. 2) The research examined the strategies students employ to alleviate their writing difficulties, including consulting a supervisor, striving to study independently, time management, and therapy and stay motivated. The findings of this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by students in thesis writing, particularly within a sociocultural context. This knowledge informs educators on how to better support students and develop strategies to help students overcome these challenges.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Writing is one of the most challenging tasks for many EFL students. Among the four key English abilities (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), writing is arguably the most difficult but valuable one. Nurulhaq et al. (2023) stated that writing ability is a complex language skill that requires mastery of various aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure to deliver ideas to readers and to produce sound academic writing pieces.

To succeed in academic writing, students should manage writing strategies to express ideas (Tukan, 2024). Furthermore, McMahan et al. (2016) stated that the messages of writing should be written clearly and comprehensively. This explanation is in line with the statement by Fujii and Fukao (2001), who argued that understanding academic writing is necessary for students to practice academic writing to force students to write more rationally. Academic writing strives for neutrality and avoids personal opinions or biases. It focuses on presenting evidence and logical arguments to support claims.

Academic writing is a crucial skill in higher education because academic writing is the foundation of academic success. Academic writing allows students to demonstrate their knowledge, performance, critical thinking abilities, and capacity to engage with complex ideas. Oshima and Hogue (1999) clearly explain

that academic writing focuses on the kind of writing that second language learners need to do at a higher level of education. Oshima and Hogue also claim that academic writing differs from any other kind, such as personal, literal, journalistic, or business writing. Therefore, for undergraduate students, academic writing would usually mean thesis writing.

Thesis writing has long been a part of academic life for university students in Indonesia. For example, students of the English education program of an Islamic university, where the proposed research will take place, in Banda Aceh, are specially taught academic writing skills and other English skills to prepare for the thesis writing endeavor toward the end of their Bachelor's Degree program. Berndtsson et al. (2008) stated that the thesis project was probably the biggest project that university students would have undertaken in their academic life and maybe even their life. In line with that, Berndtsson et al. (2008) mentioned that one of the purposes of a thesis is a stepping-stone toward graduate studies.

Also, thesis writing has been quite challenging for many undergraduate students in Indonesia over the years. Zulfikar (2016) reported that most students agree that building the argument is the most challenging part of their attempt to shape research projects. In a similar vein, Imane (2022) states that:

“the majority of EFL students still face difficulties in learning language skills especially writing. Because writing in a foreign language is one of the most challenging tasks, most EFL learners struggle to master all its aspects. It requires considerable effort and practice on the part of the

learner and beneficial instruction, guidance and feedback on the part of the teacher” (p. 12).

This is evidenced by the decline in students writing thesis proposals and writing for thesis trials. This can be caused by various things, such as studentslack of knowledge about thesis and thesis proposals, lack of student motivation, or studentslack of ability to write, which often make students afraid to start writing.

Considering the high-stakes nature of thesis writing, English students are anxious about completing the task. Because thesis writing involves research reports that follow a special research format and organization, students must abide by established rules adopted by their respective universities. There have been quite a number of studies that looked at what caused such writing difficulties. Alafgani (2013) mentioned some major factors of difficulties in thesis writing including basic knowledge of thesis formats, the process of consultation, and the social-academic environment.

Lee et al. (2015) use a sociocultural approach to look into students’ beliefs about writing, expectations of writing and desire for self-expression in writing as they moved from school to postsecondary education. This study has implications for teaching and learning of academic writing, i.e., the impact of sociocultural factors, students’personal histories, experiences and intent participation on academic writing should not be underestimated.

Another similar study was conducted by Dwihandini et al. (2013) to analyze the fact that sociocultural factors hinder students from accomplishing

their thesis. This research found that “most of their interviewers agreed that sociocultural factors might cause difficulties in writing the thesis. The research results indicate that 33% of respondents stated that sociocultural factors influenced their writing an appropriate thesis. This research also found that only 14% of the respondents stated that sociocultural factors are problems that may occur in writing a thesis” (p. 11).

Despite some existing studies on this topic, further research on sociocultural factors influencing EFL students’s experiences in writing academic pieces within the context of the English education program of an Islamic university in Banda Aceh is still needed. Also, Dwihandini’s study did not examine students’ actual experiences and challenges in writing theses or how students deal with those challenges. This research is not only to find out whether socio-culture really influences the completion of the thesis but also to investigate how students overcome it.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for a study investigating the sociocultural factors influencing academic students’ writing performance as they work on their thesis. In this sense, this present research explored how social contexts, cultural backgrounds, and educational factors shape Indonesian EFL students’ experiences in their thesis writing.

B. Research Question

This study seeks to answer the following research questions :

1. What are the factors causing final-year Indonesian EFL students to struggle to write their thesis?

2. How do these final-year Indonesian EFL students solve their writing problems?

C. Research Aims

In accordance with the research question above, the aims of this research are as follows :

1. To figure out the factors causing final-year Indonesian EFL students to struggle in writing their thesis
2. To explore what final-year Indonesian EFL students do to alleviate their writing problems

D. Theoretical Foundation

Sociocultural factors are the larger-scale forces within societies and cultures that affect the thoughts, behaviors and feelings of individual members of those societies and cultures (Akintoye & Saliu, 2020). According to Slavkov (2015), sociocultural theory and the process approach to writing are two related and well-known aspects of modern second language pedagogy.

Sociocultural theory is all about the societal and cultural influences that affect how we develop, think, feel, and behave. This approach seeks to understand how these societal factors interact with individual ones to influence how people learn, develop, and grow.

Sociocultural Theory (SCT) developed by Lev Vygotsky (1978) has significantly impacted education. In this research, sociocultural theory has a positive impact on writing performance. This can be proved in several ways: (1) Improving Critical Thinking and Argumentation Skills. Through social interaction

and collaboration, students develop the ability to analyze complex ideas, evaluate research, and construct well-supported arguments, which are essential skills for a compelling thesis. (2) Enhance Writing Skills. This point means scaffolding and feedback within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) help students refine their writing mechanics, style, and clarity of expression, leading to a more polished and effective thesis. (3) Deeper Understanding of Discipline-Specific Discourse. This point means participating in the discourse community. Students better understand the specific language, conventions, and expectations associated with the field. This allows students to write a thesis that effectively communicates within the discipline. By integrating sociocultural concept able to providing constructive feedback on drafts helps students identify areas for improvement and refine students thesis writing.

E. Significance of the Study

The research looks forward to contributing to lecturers and final-year students.

1. Lecturers

The result of this research would provide information about the factors that cause students' difficulties in completing their thesis as a graduation requirement. By identifying the sociocultural factors that influence thesis performance, the study helps the lecture address potential challenges faced by students. This can lead to improved student success in thesis writing.

2. Students

By doing this research, I hope this research will make students realize and be aware of the difficulties in writing a thesis. Therefore, the students probably know the major factors in writing a thesis so they can obtain and resolve the factors influencing their difficulties in writing a thesis.

F. Research Termonologies

1. Thesis Writing

Thesis writing is one of the forms of academic writing which is written as academic requires. Thesis writing is a project based on generating idea. Thesis writing refers to scientific composition to complete academic education for Bachelor program. Thesis writing must be presented systematically following academic writing. Thesis writing is considered as a research paper and students writing abilities that have been learned in Bachelor program. Later on, Halifudin (2014) explain that the students “must write with the outline of academic provided as the theorists have suggested including abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, results and discussion and conclusion” (p. 180).

Thesis writing is scientific work that is required for a person to complete an undergraduate education program. The process of doing the thesis is done individually and required to learn independently. As a student, the demands for independent study are enormous in writing thesis. Thesis is considered a difficult task. In thesis writing, students should understand and know the factors influencing their academic writing performance.

2. Difficulties in Academic Writing

Factor refers to a situation that is difficult to control due to complexity, which causes and influences the occurrence of something. In writing a thesis, many factors cause final-year students difficulties, such as motivation, generating ideas, analyzing data, etc. Furthermore, Gills (2005) as cited in Zakaria (2013) stated that L1 is helpful for classroom management. In academic writing, particularly thesis writing process, sometimes a lecturer might use the L1 to teach students if they faced difficulties in academic writing learning process so that can influences students in generating and analyzing ideas.

A range of student theory findings are provided by a selection of students who wrote the thesis (Brookes and Grundy (1991) as cited in Asisa (2021). But the difficulty of thesis writing may be attributed to the study intent, the review findings, the results of the studies and the overall investigation in accordance with the ratio stated.

Blaxter (1998) as cited in Asia (2021) identifies the critical points of a good thesis, namely that students must be aware of the subject or inspire ideas, students must also take advice from related experts who are profoundly experienced in their field because the experts have already worked on the subject or can judge the students themselves.