

## **Weighing research competencies of department of English language education graduates at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh**

**Syarifah Dahliana<sup>\*</sup>, Saiful Akmal, Rizka Malda Phonna**

Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to scrutinize participants' research competency, source of research competency, and problems related to the research conduct. Nine graduates of the Department of English Language Education were purposefully selected; three of them completed their theses in one semester, three others finished in two semesters, and one other finalized in three semesters. In this qualitative study, semi-structured interviews were used. The findings revealed that graduates with one-semester thesis completion rates have stronger research proficiency than other groups. They have a higher motivational value component, a higher methodology-reflective component, and a higher operational activity component of research competency. Meanwhile, the emotional-volitional component of research competency remains equal for each group of participants. Furthermore, graduates acquired research competency through coursework, research conduct, and self-study. In terms of problems with research conduct, the data disclosed that graduates frequently struggled with self-motivation, supervisors, time/class schedule, identifying prior studies, data analysis, and selecting participants.

**Keywords:** *Research competency; Research conduct; Source of research competency*

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*\*Corresponding Author:*

Syarifah Dahliana  
Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh  
Jl. Syaikh Abdurrauf, Kopelma Darussalam, Kec. Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, 23111, Indonesia  
Email: syarifah.dahliana@ar-raniry.ac.id

## **1. Introduction**

In general, research competency refers to the capacity to resolve a scientific issue that calls for the application of certain scientific techniques (Ivanenko et al., 2015). Conducting a research means involving in systematic investigation that have particular processes and procedures in order to obtain some information related to the subject under investigation. Experiences usually play an important role to lead someone to have competency in conducting a research. This means that a person needs to be exposed to research experiences before she/he is able to provide the data with a great report finding. Thus, as a research report is one of the requirements to complete the study, some research courses are offered by university for students to enhance their ability in conducting research and writing their research report.

The Department of English Language Education UIN Ar-Raniry offered four research courses to help students have knowledge and experience of research conduct. These four courses include Research methodology, English Language Research 1, English Language Research 2. Nevertheless, in fact, many students still have problems writing a research report or finishing their thesis. This may raise a question whether the research courses have really helped the students to have ability to conduct a research and report the findings properly; In other words, there is an issue whether the research courses really assist the students to have their research competency.

To assess research competency, it is important to include the difficulty of doing research. Fuentes (2017) asserts that the study assessing research competency also revealed the participants' level of difficulty in conducting research in addition to their research competency. This is so that a better research course tailored to each student's issues can be developed as part of the evaluation of research competency.

The present study aims to ascertain how difficult it is for the participants to conduct research in order to acquire an adequate understanding of research competency. The authors also want to know where the research expertise came from. This is because it is possible that the analysed research competency could come from activities other than the university's research courses that are designed to foster research competency.

Graduates who finish their theses more quickly than other alumni will be compared to other alumni to gauge their level of research proficiency. For this reason, graduates will be classified according to the number of years they have complied and then examine them using the same criteria. The framework of research competency developed by prior research will serve as the basis for the analytical components.

In this light, this present study formulated the following research questions:

- 1) What are the research competencies possessed by Department of English language education department graduates?
- 2) What are sources of research competency used by Department of English language education department graduates?

- 3) What are the problems related to research conduct experienced by Department of English language education department graduates?

## **2. Literature review**

### *2.1. Research competency*

Finding a solution to a scientific issue is the definition of research competency given by Ivanenko et al. (2015). The motivational-value component, the methodology-reflective component, the operational-activity component, and the emotional-volitional component make up its four sub-competencies. The four sub-research competencies mentioned here are aiming at more process-oriented instead of procedure oriented mechanisms (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019; DeKeyser, 2020).

Researchers' understanding of the importance of learning scientific research skills and knowledge is categorized as a motivational value component (Usher, 2018). Methodology-reflective refers to a teacher's reflective teaching abilities; it is the capacity to identify a teaching challenge and employ a discovery from scientific inquiry as a solution (Böttcher & Thiel, 2018). Ability to identify a solution to a problem or a research outcome is an operational-activity component. An emotional maintenance in conducting research, such as a willingness to produce excellent research, is the last emotional-volitional component (Wahyudi, 2018). In brief, research competency goes beyond simply being able to conduct research. However, it also includes awareness in conducting research and emotional upkeep in producing high-quality research (Ivanenko et al., 2015).

Some prior studies have been conducted that have similar findings with Ivanenko and the four sub-research competencies. In particular, Selvi (2010) claimed that all four components do make up for research competency. Similar argument was also highlighted by Van den Berg (2016) who claimed that methodology-reflective component, motivational-value component, and operational-activity component are relevant, whereas Bankauskien et al. (2005) maintained that only methodology-reflective component and operational-activity component are useful to improving research competency. On the other hand, Celik (2011) argued that only the motivational-value component does. The work of Ivanenko et al. (2015) is more thorough than the other four sources that have already been mentioned above. For this reason, Ivanenko et al. (2015) will be used as the framework for evaluating research competency.

### *2.2. Source of research competency*

According to Fuentes (2017), sources of research competency include the current research course, self-study/reading of research-related reference materials, actual research experience, training and seminars (sponsored by universities), subjects/courses taken the previous semester that required conducting research, training and seminars, and fields of exposure/trip and study missions. Furthermore, according to Fuentes (2017), participants frequently prefer research courses as their primary source of

research competency. However, the research course had generally little to no impact on students' ability to conduct research (Sahan & Tarhan, 2015; Davidon & Palermo, 2015).

Source of research competency may come from both university and community. Some researchers (Van den berg, 2016; Celik, 2011; Selvi, 2010; Bankauskienne, et al., 2005) believe that being directly involved in research projects is the best source to have research competency as the students will learn from interactions and communications during the research field. However, the combination between learning from a research course and having direct experiences in the field actually will greatly develop individual research competency (Ivanenko, et al., 2015; Ismail and Meerah, 2012).

### *2.3. Research conduct problems*

In addition to sources of research competency, some problems related to research conduct are noted. In terms of the variety of findings, there are certain common trends among researchers about research conduct problems. Most studies mentioned above all agreed that one of the most frequent issues encountered during study conduct is a lack of research competency (Albareda-Tiana et al. 2018; Supriyanto et al. 2019). Lack of time, lack of funding, and lack of research resources and participant management challenges can all be ranked according to how many researchers share the same concerns.

Fuentes (2017) segmented research-related issues into some categories, including time/class schedule constraints, a lack of funding for research, a lack of research competency, and a lack of motivation. The largest issue that students run across when undertaking research, according to Fuentes (2017), is a lack of time or a busy class schedule. It is a problem when students were not given enough time to do their mini-research in the research-related courses they enrolled (Desmennu & Owoaje, 2018). Management time, then, becomes an important factor as well as support from university (Bocar, 2013). Specifically, the research conduct problems include several components, personal matter, respondent issues, and university concern (Fuentes, 2017; Akyureh & Avcan, 2018; Matin & Khan, 2017; Lacanlale, 2017; Bocar, 2013).

## **3. Method**

In this qualitative study, the authors utilized interviews to collect data. Semi-structured interviews were the type of interview employed in this study to explore authentic and dialogical findings in educational related research (Brown & Danaher, 2019). Tape recorder and a notebook to take notes were used during the interviews (Hammer & Wildavksy, 2018). The tape recorder makes it easier to analyse the data, and the notebook makes it easier to think of new questions. Introduction to participants from the researcher at the beginning of the interview was carried out before going on to describe the goals of the study, its significance, how the participant will benefit from it, and how long the conversation will last.

Furthermore, the participants are selected based on stratified purposeful sampling (Shaheen & Pradhan, 2019). They are selected based on the three categorizations used in this study: a half year (one-semester bachelor thesis completion writing time), one year (two-semester bachelor thesis completion writing time), and one and a half year (three-semester bachelor thesis completion writing time). Graduates who completed their theses within one semester category include DA (Participant 1/P1), DUY (Participant 2/P2), and ML (Participant 3/P3). Then, graduates who completed their theses within two semesters category include FZ (Participant 4/P4), CTA (Participant 5/P5), and SSN (Participant 6/P6). Finally, graduates who completed their theses within three semesters include RM (Participant 7/P7), NF (Participant 8/P8), and BD (Participant 9/P9).

The participants were given a consent letter at the start of the study that includes the name of the author, the nature of the research, the approach, the potential risks, and the advantages for the participants. This consent information form is important in conducting qualitative interviews to have participant's approval and willingness to take part in this study (Routston & Choi, 2018). The participants will have one interview each after deciding to take part. The goal of the interview is to examine participants' research skills, their sources of research skills, and their challenges when conducting research.

When conducting a data analysis, we use thematic coding (Williams & Moser, 2019). We first listened to the tape recording after gathering some information from the interview, then typed the transcription into paper, and then read the transcription. Second, the subjects that each interview question brought up were used to categorise the data. We specifically reviewed the interview questions after receiving the transcript in order to turn them into certain subjects. After some time, these subjects were used to group the participant responses. After organising the material into a few topics, we then look for recurrent themes or concepts.

In particular, we looked for phrases and concepts that were often used by the participants to respond to each topic. Additionally, categories are created from the concepts or words that participants utilise frequently. These categories will be used to group the participant responses instead of subjects. Building overarching themes from the data is the fourth step. This analytical phase focuses on breaking down the categories into more manageable groups (O'Connor & Gibson, 2018). We also looked for categories that can be combined into a single and comparable category. Determining potential and believable interpretations for the results was the final phase in data analysis.

#### **4. Findings**

Based on interview data, some findings related to participants' competency, source of competency, and problems in conducting research are noted. These findings are classified based on particular themes and research questions.

#### *4.1. Research competency of Department of English Language Education Department graduates*

The research competency of the graduates is analysed based on the work of Ivanenko et al (2015) who divides research competency into four components; they are motivational-value component, methodology-reflective component, operational-activity component, and emotional-volitional component.

##### *4.1.1. Motivational-value element*

The participants' awareness of the need for research work, desire for scientific study, and act of publishing research are used to assess their research competency in this component. We learned from the interviews that each interviewee has a unique awareness of research works and a unique desire for scientific works. In addition, one of the interviewees has had a research work or thesis published in a journal as stated by Participant 1: "I am happy; my thesis is published in one national accredited journal. I did not expect this far. My supervisors supported me and guided me".

##### *4.1.2. Understanding the need for research*

The benefits that participants believe the research has had on their lives are utilised to measure participants' awareness. According to the findings of the interviews, the graduates who completed their theses in one or two semesters stated that research is crucial when attempting to address an issue. They added that research aids in the improvement of one's ability to solve problems on both a personal and professional level. Adding new knowledge or insight is the final goal of study. In this light, Participant 4 demonstrated an awareness of the research work she had done at the time by stating:

The research role... in which we are looking for an innovation, an idea, a new, a more modern solution that is more efficient, ah... solving a problem that we have, for example, like solving a problem that we get from the college... a lecture assignment, from the internet, from books, from people's opinions, it could also be from our own creativity, from our head...

In response to this, Participant 3 said:

...like we previously stated, it is something that we can take from... it is the skill, because we have learned ELR (English Language Research) subject and also did the processes until the examination, so we know the process of it... hmm...if it for the benefit of life, may be it more to the finding of it... and also yes, the research is priority, if we don't research it how could we know it.

According to their response, alumni with one- and two-semester thesis completions are aware of the value of research work in their lives. It can be determined from their remark that research is a crucial step in solving every problem; in other words, research is a pre-activity in problem-solving. In contrast, alumni who completed their theses in three semesters merely mentioned that research is an activity that aims to develop research skills and offer fresh perspectives or knowledge. In this instance, Participant 9 stated that:

We gain a lot of fresh knowledge or insights from our study approach as well as the findings, so, um... Based on my thesis work at the time, I believe that research played a role in improving our capacity for providing better explanations, such as when a problem arises, we know what the solution is. I don't know if it can be done quickly or not. I just don't see the urgency to rush my research. I have other things to do, such as working and helping my parents.

Based on their response, one might draw the conclusion that graduates who completed their theses in three semesters are unaware of the value of conducting research. In contrast to other alumni who also highlighted the necessity of research works to their lives, particularly in solving every difficulty, it can be inferred from their answers that they only mentioned the advantages of research works to their lives.

#### *4.1.2.1. Strong interest in scientific endeavour*

The participants' involvement in any form of scientific work, such as research activities, seminars, conferences, and workshops that seek to develop research competency, is used to gauge their desire. According to the interview, the author discovered that the alumni who completed their theses in just one semester have a strong interest in scientific research. Participant 3 mentioned her involvement in a variety of scientific endeavours to demonstrate her interest in the field of science:

I have only conducted one study on my own, which is my thesis. However, I have taken part in four interviews, including this one, making it the fourth time I have been interviewed. I have also attended a number of workshops and research projects. One that comes to mind is the Aceh International Workshop and Expo on Tsunami Disaster, where many people's research projects were presented.

Participant 2 addressed this issue as follows:

I do not join any research-focused groups; at most, I become a respondent in surveys. This is similar to how you would find a respondent for a thesis if you were looking for someone who participated in surveys, possibly on a sex-based scale. In contrast, other research outside of the thesis has not yet been conducted, so attending seminars is very helpful to me.

According to their responses, graduates who completed their theses in one semester had been active in research projects as participants, taking part in seminars, workshops, and conferences that they thought were very constructive for enhancing their research competency.

On the other hand, it is found that graduates who completed their theses in two or three semesters do not have a strong interest in scientific works. Participant 7 reiterated: “I had never before, with the exception of while I was learning ELR, considered taking part in seminars that aimed to improve my researching abilities. I only learn research from ELR”.

Graduates with two- and three-semester thesis completion rates had participated in research projects, but they had never attended seminars, workshops, or conferences, which they perceived as sources for enhancing their research ability. As a consequence, graduates who completed their theses over the course of two or three semesters had less interest in engaging in scientific research than alumni who completed their theses in a single semester. In other words, compared to other graduates categories, those who completed their theses in one semester had a greater motivational-value component of research competency because they are more aware of the importance of research work and have a strong desire for it.

#### *4.1.2. Methodology-reflective element*

This section assesses participants' research competency by looking at their ability to do research, how they use research and reflection to enhance their classrooms, and how significant they view research as a part of their daily lives.

##### *4.1.2.1. Researching prowess*

According to the results of the interview, graduates who completed their theses in one semester are more capable of conducting research than other graduates. In this occurrence, Participant 1 said:

In terms of lacking research skills, when I was conducting my thesis I don't see that as a problem. I like it a lot. Making a choice about the title is therefore the first action to take. Actually, the most crucial aspect is the title. We must first decide what we enjoy doing in order to avoid stress. I must first select which title I believe to be the most enjoyable, accessible, and manageable for me.

Additionally, it is discovered that graduates who completed their theses in two semesters or three semesters frequently encounter various challenges when undertaking research. Participant 6 describes her research challenges in the following excerpt:

Finding prior research was my first challenge because, on average, they were out-dated, particularly those published in international journals. Then, doing



the data analysis is also very challenging for me. Participant 5 expressed the following in response to this difficulty: Ah, perhaps the only issue is that...in finding the object of study. The lecturers didn't want to assist; they didn't want to teach that topic in two meetings. So, I am struggling.

Graduates who completed their theses in one semester did not encounter any difficulties performing the research, in contrast to other alumni who encountered problems determining the research topics or subjects, identifying prior research, data processing, and other issues. Graduates who completed their theses in one semester even mentioned the enthusiasm to help decide which research issues to be selected. Graduates who completed their theses in two or three semesters obviously lacked passion and had difficulty identifying relevant research questions. We can therefore draw the conclusion that graduates who completed their theses in a single semester are more adept at conducting research.

#### *4.1.2.2. The ability to design a classroom through reflective practise and research*

The act of self-reflection after the class is over is generally referred to as the reflective approach, and its goal is to identify areas of instruction that need improvement (Mesa, 2018). The participants' capacity to identify their teaching gaps using the reflective process and to fill those gaps by carrying out research or drawing on prior research findings is thus used to gauge their level of capability. According to the interview results, all graduates are capable of identifying their weaknesses in the classroom through reflection and thus, coming up with solutions based on the findings of prior studies. In this instance, Participant 3 described her experience with the reflective method:

When I finished teaching, learning, and the class was adjourned. I asked my pupils what they found boring or uneasy about learning English with me. I then made sure not to repeat those issues in the future to help them feel more at ease when studying English.

Participant 4 added by describing her experience using earlier studies as remedies in relation to this issue:

There are times when I can't think of a solution right away, so I... go online. There are writings like academic journals or something, that describe how to solve problems like this, so, so, ah, I am searching to obtain a solution... to find the answer.

There are no graduates who are more or less skilled at applying the reflective method and research to build classrooms, according to their responses. The reflective teaching style has been employed by all graduates, and research has also always been used as a solution.

It is argued that the graduates who finished their thesis in one semester have a higher methodology-reflective component of research competency than other alumni. This is only based on their better ability to research because the other two components, such as the ability to use reflective methods and research in developing classrooms and the priorities of research in their daily lives, turned out to be equal for all alumni. In other words, there are no better or worse alumni in both components.

Graduates who completed their undergraduate theses in one semester have a higher methodology-reflective component of research proficiency. This is based on their greater capacity for research, as all graduates were found to have comparable levels of using reflective learning strategies and research to enhance classroom setting and prioritising research in their daily life.

#### *4.1.3. Operational-activity element*

By asking participants to use their research findings and participate in various types of research projects, this component gauges their level of research competency.

##### *4.1.3.1. Knowledge of using technology while writing a thesis*

According to the interviews, all graduates have used technological tools for data collecting and analysis. However, some graduates employed more technology than other graduates did when writing their bachelor theses. As for this situation, participant 9 said:

I believe I use technology more than others since, for example, I make use of e-books more frequently than conventional books, by using Google, right, and I look for articles or journals related to the title of my thesis. At times, when I did the consultation, the lecturer asked to send it via email, then like YouTube, I used SPSS because my thesis was quantitative. So, I learnt SPSS by watching the tutorial from YouTube...

In general, graduates who completed their theses in two semesters or three semesters employed technology and the internet to gather and analyse the data, including Google, Gmail, G-Drive, Ms Word, Ms Excel, SPSS, and other tools. It is argued that those who completed their theses in two or three semesters tended to use more technology than those who completed their theses in one semester. This is what Participant 9 said: “The literature and technology tools were evenly distributed, at 50/50”. Participant 2 further added:

I used to hunt for references; I searched for journals on Google and websites that offered journals. For APA referencing style, I used a book guide. By the way, my thesis is about discourse, and some of my sources are from books and some others are from e-books... It is fifty-fifty, so, yeah.

Alumni who completed their theses in one semester, in contrast to other alumni, considered the use of both technology and non-technological equipment during the thesis-writing process to be equivalent. In other words, there is no propensity among alumni to use technology gadgets more frequently than non-technological ones. Accordingly, all graduates have the experience of using technology to write their theses, according to the results of the interview.

#### *4.1.3.2. Putting their study findings to use*

According to the interviews, the majority of alumni have not yet put their findings into practice because they have not had an opportunity. In this situation, Participant 3 said: “I haven't used the research findings in my daily life because if I become a lecturer in the future, I will apply the results of the findings”.

Since her research is geared for lecturers and she is not now a lecturer, Participant 3 has not applied it, according to her response. Furthermore, most graduates share the same motive as Participant 3. They specifically stated that they have not had an opportunity to put it to use because their study is intended for future lecturers or teachers, but they are not currently earning the status of lecturers or teachers. However, one alumnus has already used the research's findings. In this instance, Participant 1 said: “Yes, I have... The research findings serve as a strong source of motivation for me, and the theory's implications have had a significant impact on my life”.

Participant 1 mainly did a study on the self-management of exceptional pupils at the Department of English language education. The conclusion is about their method for controlling themselves to be an excellent student; therefore it can be used as inspiration in Participant 1's daily life. Overall, her findings are applicable because they are intended to be used in our daily lives rather than being lectured to or taught by lecturers or teachers.

#### *4.1.3.3. Taking part in many research projects*

According to the interview, alumni who completed their theses in one semester are likely to participate in research projects at a higher rate than other graduates. In this instance, Participant 3 stated: “If it means getting involved in other people's research, this interview marks my fourth appearance as a subject of an interview; I have participated in four interviews overall”.

Her response indicated that Participant 3 frequently took part in research involving other people. All graduates who completed their theses in a single semester frequently took part in other people's research, either as interview subjects or survey participants. Alumni who completed their theses in two or three semesters tended to be less active in research projects. Some of them even skipped participating. Participant 9 said: “Not yet, I believe that my thesis is the only one in which I have participated. Participant 6 declares: As of right now, whether as a researcher or a respondent, I am not currently taking part in any other research”.

Generally, we can draw the conclusion that graduates who completed their theses in one semester have stronger operational-activity components of research competency than other graduates. This is due to the fact that former students who completed their theses in a single semester frequently participate in research projects, some of whom have also applied their findings, and some of whom have used technology in the course of putting together their theses. However, they have less experience contributing to other people's study and have not had the opportunity to use their research findings. Other graduates have experience using technology during thesis composing.

The results demonstrated that graduates who completed their thesis in one semester have a stronger operational-activity component of research competency than other graduates. This is because they frequently participate in research projects. One of them has also used technology in the thesis-writing process and has experience applying research findings. Other graduates have used technology to put together theses. However, they lack the opportunity to apply their study findings and have less experience participating in research.

#### *4.1.4. Emotional-Volitional Element*

The evaluation of graduates' self-improvement through research activity and their methods for resolving an issue they encountered while doing their theses serves as the basis for the assessment of their research ability.

##### *4.1.4.1. Self-improvement determination through research activities*

According to the interview, all alumni are committed to improving themselves through research activity. In this instance, Participant 9 stated:

By conducting research, we get new knowledge or new scientific understanding. The act of conducting research and the findings that we discover can lead to the discovery of many new sciences. Then, what's more... improving our capacity to explain, for instance, how we find a solution to a problem.

According to her response, Participant 9 underwent self-improvement through research activities, which is how she grew her research skills and increased her insight. Additionally, every graduate admitted the same thing happened to them as Participant 9, namely that engaging in research activities helped them acquire fresh perspectives and improved their research abilities.

##### *4.1.4.2. Approaches to problem-solving*

While bringing together their theses, each graduate faced a unique set of challenges, necessitating the employment of various problem-solving techniques. In essence, every graduate applied the right techniques to address their issues. In this instance, Participant 7 discussed the methods she used to address her issue, which was having trouble finding the participants:

So, because I have a hard time finding the participants, I immediately thought up this idea, so because my participants were working their thesis at a time, they must frequently meet their supervisors, so I had to locate them in that sort of place.

Her participants are primarily final-year English language education students who were preoccupied with finishing their theses, making it challenging to meet with them and conduct interviews. Due to this issue, she had to track down her participants and interview them at the locations where she met them. Additionally, Participant 9 discussed the methods she used to address her issue with motivation for herself:

The motivation was to speed up, to graduate, and to finish it because if I delayed it, to wait for other people, it would not solve the problem. I mean in the future we would face it too, whenever, so, just speed it up, I mean like regularly going to the campus and completing the thesis.

Additionally, some graduates used applicable ways to resolve their issues, including issues with tracking prior research, determining an appropriate data analysis, finding participants, issues with supervision, self-motivation, and others. In conclusion, there are no graduates who have a stronger or lower emotional-volitional component of research competency than others since the emotional-volitional component of research competency among alumni is equal. This can be characterised by the fact that all of the alumni are committed to improving themselves through research activities and that they all employ appropriate problem-solving techniques. As a result, the emotional-volitional component of research competency among alumni is equal, meaning that no alumni have a higher or lower emotional-volitional component of research competency than others. This can be defined by the fact that all alumni are committed to self-improvement through research activity and the use of appropriate problem-solving strategies.

#### *4.2. Sources of Research Competency Among Department of English Language Education Departments Graduates*

After speaking with the graduates, the author discovered that there are two categories of sources that may be used to categorise their research competence: primary sources and non-major sources. The primary factor that has a major impact on how well they conduct their study is their research skills. In contrast, the non-major sources of research competency have a little impact on the development of their research competency.

The issues alumni encountered throughout the writing of the bachelor are listed below. First, two graduates who completed their theses in one semester and three semesters agreed that the biggest challenge they faced was a lack of motivation. Second, one of the graduates who completed their thesis in one semester, two semesters, or three

semesters encountered problems locating participants for the research. Also, all graduates who encountered this issue, with the exception of one who completed their thesis in two semesters, viewed it as their main issue. Third, several graduates who completed their theses within two semesters and one graduate who completed their theses within three semesters encountered difficulties during supervision. In addition, some graduates who completed their theses in just two semesters viewed this issue as their main concern. On the other hand, one of the graduates who completed their thesis in three semesters regarded this issue as a non-major issue.

Fourth, a graduate who completed their thesis in three semesters cited a lack of time and a demanding class schedule as her main issues. Fifth, one of the former students who completed their thesis in two semesters claimed that obtaining already conducted research or prior relevant studies was the most difficult aspect of the process. Last, for those who completed their thesis in two semesters, selecting the appropriate method of data analysis is only a minor issue.

#### *4.2.1. Research-related courses*

The goal of research courses like English Language Research 1 and 2, Seminar and Discussion, and Research Methodology is to develop students' research skills. Additionally, graduates who completed their theses in one semester as well as other graduates who completed their theses in three semesters claimed that research courses played a greater role in enhancing their research competency than other sources of research competency. In this instance, Participant 3 said:

When I studied seminars and the discussion course, ah... my lecturer asked us to do some research studies, and then we looked into it and came to conclusions. That way, I obtained competence in research. During the seminar and discussion course, I learned a lot about conducting research while looking into a topic.

In completing the research, Participant 3 claimed that all of the theories and exercises she learned in research classes were really helpful. In addition, all graduates who completed their theses in one semester and some others who completed their theses in three semesters made the same claim, namely that research courses have a greater impact on their ability to conduct research than experience conducting research and self-study. Participant 9 added the following information regarding this claim: "In order to grasp the procedures we will follow when researching the thesis, we must first learn English Language Research".

Participant 9 evaluated a variety of sources, including research courses, research experience, and self-study, to determine the most effective methods for developing research competency. According to her response, research courses have a greater impact than other types of coursework because they provide us with the knowledge we need to

undertake research. As a result, we can say that research courses are the main source of research competency for graduates who completed their theses in one semester and certain graduates who completed their theses in three semesters.

#### *4.2.2. Research Experience*

According to the interview, alumni who completed their theses in two semesters and some alumni who completed their theses in three semesters claimed that conducting research plays a bigger role in building their research competency than other sources of research competency. Participant 6 stated the following in this instance:

I believe conducting research has a significant impact on establishing my research competency since the talent itself would not be enough if we did not start doing it for anything significant. We engage in self-study because we want to carry out our own research.

Her response suggests that research experience is more important in establishing research competency since doing research forces us to apply our research skills to address research difficulties. In other words, if we do not put the theory or insight we learn in research courses into practice, they will not become research skills, and we cannot build research competency without doing research. Additionally, all of the graduates who completed their theses in just two semesters as well as several graduates who completed their theses in three semesters agreed that the main source of research competency is the experience of carrying out research.

#### *4.2.3. Self-study*

In this context, self-study refers to an attempt to comprehend research theories by reading prior studies, communicating with colleagues, discussing with lecturers, and attending seminars, conferences, or workshops that are designed to improve researching abilities. The interviews suggest that certain graduates who completed their theses in three semesters valued independent study as their primary source of research expertise.

In this instance, Participant 7 claimed that her primary source of research expertise is reading prior studies:

I believe that reading prior studies has the most impact. I mean, we learn theories from research methodology courses... Therefore, I believe it will have less of an impact on our research ability if we do not see examples of the application from past studies, as I always learn more from examples.

According to her response, Participant 7 said that without studying how the ideas were used in earlier studies, we cannot turn the theories we acquire in research courses into research skills. For instance, after we are feeling familiar with the ideas guiding the creation of appropriate research questions, we must learn from examples of appropriate

research questions from earlier studies in order to develop this talent. It is also found from the interviews that several graduates who completed their theses in one or two semesters viewed independent study as a minor source of research competency.

We therefore discovered that there are three sources of research competency among alumni, including research courses, research experience, and self-study. Graduates who completed their theses in one semester and some who did so in three thought that research classes were the main source from which they learned how to do research.

With regard to research experience, all graduates who completed their theses in two semesters or less, as well as some who did so in three semesters or less, agreed that conducting research is the best approach to become an excellent researcher. The last group of graduates, nevertheless, who completed their theses in one or two semesters thought that self-study was a non-major source of research ability.

#### *4.3. Problem-related to the research conduct among Department of English Language Education Department graduates*

Based on what was said in the interview, the research problems were also put into two groups: major and minor. Graduates who considered the major problem to be the problem that mostly prevented them from finishing the thesis and those who believed that minor problems are the things keeping them from finishing the thesis on time.

##### *4.3.1. Insufficient self-motivation (major problem)*

Some graduates who completed their theses in one semester and one alumnus who completed their theses in three semesters struggled with self-motivation. For example, according to the Participant 1: “The only issue I had was myself; I was occasionally lazy, so there's really nothing. Participant 2 further added: Maybe it's a problem from you too. As we were writing the thesis...we must sometimes become so lazy and sluggish”. Their responses indicate that they have little drive to complete the investigation. Alumni who completed their theses in one semester claimed that their unexpected idleness was to blame for their lack of self-motivation. On the other hand, one of the alumni who completed their thesis in three semesters claimed that the reason they lacked motivation was because they conducted their study alone, without the help of their fellow classmates. Moreover, one graduate who finished their thesis in three semesters and a few graduates who finished their thesis in one semester both cited a serious issue with declining motivation.

##### *4.3.2. Difficulty in finding participants (major problem)*

During the research phase, one of the alumni who completed their theses in one semester, two semesters, and three semesters encountered this issue. In this instance, Participant 7 said: “Since my participants were PPL (field teaching practicum) students, it was challenging to meet them because they were preoccupied with their theses and



PPL at the time”. With regard to this, Participant 3 reiterated: “Thereafter, when I conducted interviews, I had challenges in doing the thesis and in gathering data because many of my participants were unavailable on the day of the interviews”.

According to their responses, the reason it was difficult to find participants was that they needed to track down people who were preoccupied with other activities at the time. Because of unforeseen obligations at the time, several participants even went against their word and refused to take part in the study. Furthermore, with the exception of one graduate who completed their thesis in two semesters, the majority of graduates who encountered this issue viewed it as their main issue.

#### *4.3.3. Problem with supervision (major problem)*

During their research, this issue was encountered by some alumni who completed their theses in two semesters and one graduate who completed their theses in three semesters. In this instance, Participant 4 explained the issue she encountered: “The misunderstanding resulted from the first supervisor and the second supervisor having different minds. We cannot compare them because they are unquestionably different. The issue is that their opinions differ”. Regarding this, Participant 9 said:

Maybe the second hurdle was ah... a revision like, on one side we wanted to finish it as soon as possible, on the other side the lecturer might be busy... so,... the revision stayed with the lecturer for a long time, maybe around two weeks, three weeks, maybe more. Ah... the expectations and reality were not balanced.

#### *4.3.4. Time management ((major problem)*

Participant 6 reported that one graduate who completed her thesis in three semesters saw this issue as her main concern:

I am not early in graduation because at the time I took two different studies at two different universities, so there are many campus subjects that must be taken at the same time. I have to reschedule it for next semester, so I took some more time to graduate.

Her response indicated that her dual enrolment in two universities was the cause of her lack of time and hectic class schedule. She had to change the order of her classes at two different universities, which required her to drop some courses and retake them in subsequent semesters.

#### *4.3.5. Difficulty in finding previous studies (minor problem)*

Participant 6 reported that an alumna who completed her thesis in just two semesters saw this issue as her concern: “Finding prior research is the first challenge I encountered because, on average, my prior research—especially those published in international journals—was out-dated”. Her response indicated that she was having

trouble pinpointing relevant prior research because few other researchers had ever looked into the topic of her study.

#### *4.3.6. Finding a proper data analysis approach (minor problem)*

Along with finding prior research, Participant 6 mentioned that obtaining an appropriate data analysis approach is one of her minor issues: “I had to use descriptive analysis at the time since I was having trouble deciding how to analyse the data. At first, I was completely baffled”. She indicated in her response that the process of analysing the data was initially challenging, but that it got simpler after she worked out how to do it.

### **5. Discussion**

The majority of the graduates did not exhibit any characteristic of research competency, the author discovered. Ivanenko et al. (2015) and Celik (2011) specifically mentioned the motivational-value component and indicated that publishing research work is one of the components or traits of research competency. The author did learn, however, that the majority of alumni did not publish their studies or theses.

Ivanenko et al. (2015) and Van den Berg (2016) claimed that applying research results and taking part in all types of research activities are two components of research competency with regard to the operational-activity component. However, our findings also discovered that most alumni required to put their thesis results into practice and rarely took part in various types of research work.

In addition, we also discovered that the two main sources of research competency among alumni are thesis research and research courses. This result is consistent with Ismail and Meerah's (2012) assertion that research competency may be acquired through both research courses and theses writing can help improve their research experiences.

Self-study, which was regarded as a primary source and a non-major source of research competency, is one of the additional sources of research competency we found in this present study. This conclusion is in accordance with those made by Fuentes (2017) and Ivanenko et al. (2015), who claimed that self-study could enhance research skill.

Additionally, the author found that alumni who finished their theses in a single semester needed more self-motivation to perform their study. This conclusion is in accordance with Bocar's (2013) finding that the university's management was equally responsible for the students' inability to do research. The graduates on the other hand, who completed their theses in just two semesters, require assistance with supervision. This result is in agreement with Matin and Khan (2017), who discovered that one of the issues with thesis construction is the procedure of consulting with supervisors. Consultation with supervisors is rated as the second-most complex problem by Matin and Khan (2017), who listed the challenges from the least to the most challenging.

Graduates who completed their theses in three semesters commonly struggle with obtaining participants for their studies, lack of motivation, time constraints, and a busy schedule. In the same light, the lack of time and class schedule is consistent with Fuentes' (2017) claim that one of the challenges encountered while conducting research is a lack of time management and conflicting class schedule. The challenges in recruiting participants are also in line with Akyürek and Avacan (2018) findings.

## **6. Conclusion**

The findings of this present study revealed that the nine Department of English language education department alumni had unique research skills, sources for those skills, and challenges with regard to the thesis or research implementation. Ivanenko et al. (2015) classification of research competency, which breaks it down into four parts: a motivational-value component, a methodology-reflective component, an operational-activity component, and an emotional-volitional component.

When it came to research skills, we found that past students who completed their theses in one semester had greater or better research propensities than other former students. The motivational-value, methodology-reflective, and operational-activity components of research competency are all greater in one-semester thesis-completed graduates compared to other graduate categories. In contrast, graduates had comparable levels of emotional-volitional research competency. In other words, there is no difference between the emotional-volitional elements of a graduate's research competency.

We also learned about graduates' potential sources of research competency. They separated the sources of research competency into major and minor sources. The most crucial source for developing their research abilities is a main source rather than a secondary one. Graduates who completed their theses in one semester or three reported that research courses were the primary means through which they learnt how to conduct research in particular. The minor sources, on the other hand, are the results of self-study and investigation. The primary source of research competency, according to one graduate who completed the thesis in two semesters and one graduate who completed the thesis in three semesters, is research conduct.

The graduates who completed their theses in one semester typically consider self-motivation as their main issue when it comes to research-related issues. One of them did add, though, that her biggest challenge is recruiting research participants. Graduates who completed their theses in two semesters want assistance with supervision and identifying prior research as important challenges. However, they also require assistance in finding and learning the proper way to examine their minor issues. On the other hand, graduates who finished their thesis in three semesters confront a number of significant problems. Their non-major issues include difficulties with supervision sessions, whereas their significant problems are time management, finding participants, and self-motivation.

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