



How Do EFL Supervisors and Students Perceive the Journey of Thesis Writing?

*¹Azzahra Nanda Islami, ¹Amrullah, ¹Eryansyah

¹Universitas Sriwijaya, Indonesia

*Correspondence:

azzahranandaislamitakdir@gmail.com

Submission History:

Submitted: October 15, 2024

Revised: November 27, 2024

Accepted: December 1, 2024



This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Abstract

Thesis writing is a critical milestone for undergraduate students, yet it presents unique challenges for EFL learners who must navigate linguistic barriers alongside academic demands. In contexts where English is not the primary language, these challenges become even more pronounced, affecting both students' writing competencies and the effectiveness of supervisory support. This study aimed to identify the primary challenges in thesis writing and supervision from the perspectives of undergraduate EFL students and their supervisors at a state university in South Sumatra, Indonesia. Additionally, it sought to uncover the reasons behind these difficulties and explore solutions proposed by supervisors to assist students in completing their undergraduate theses. Employing a descriptive qualitative design, the study involved 70 undergraduate students engaged in thesis writing and six lecturers serving as supervisors. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews, with questionnaire data analyzed using percentage analysis and interview data subjected to thematic analysis. The findings revealed that students face challenges related to writing competencies and perceptions of supervisory support, including issues with topic selection, grammar, and effective communication. Supervisors identified seven key challenges and proposed actionable solutions, such as fostering consistent communication, encouraging extensive literature review, and improving adherence to institutional guidelines. These findings emphasize the need for a collaborative and structured approach to address the multifaceted challenges of thesis writing for EFL students.

Keywords: Thesis writing, undergraduate thesis challenges, thesis supervision, academic writing.

INTRODUCTION

Writing a thesis is one of the most demanding academic requirements for undergraduate students, marking the culmination of their university education. A bachelor's thesis is often described as a structured and logical presentation of research findings supported by valid evidence, requiring students to demonstrate both research proficiency and academic writing skills. According to [Ashwin et al. \(2016\)](#), bachelor's theses (BT) are considered written proof of students' ability to apply fundamental research skills and

theoretical knowledge within their core field of study. The thesis-writing process involves several critical stages, including selecting a relevant topic, designing a research proposal, collecting and analyzing data, and drawing meaningful conclusions. Each step demands careful planning, critical thinking, and meticulous attention to detail. As [Abdulai and Owusu-Ansah \(2014\)](#) emphasize, conducting research is a systematic process that involves meeting specific milestones and deliverables. To successfully navigate this rigorous process, students must also develop critical skills such as proficiency in information technology, logical reasoning, and effective time management ([Mahapatra, 2024](#); [Indah, 2017](#)). These competencies are essential for meeting the high academic standards required in thesis writing.

In the context of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) undergraduate students, thesis writing presents heightened challenges due to linguistic barriers such as limited fluency and accuracy in English. These difficulties arise from the need to adhere to the linguistic norms of the target language, which often differ significantly from students' native tongues. As [Hyland \(2015\)](#) highlights, non-native speakers frequently struggle to express their thoughts clearly in academic writing due to these differences. Specifically, EFL students encounter challenges with grammar, vocabulary, and structuring arguments cohesively, all of which can hinder their ability to effectively articulate research findings ([Toba et al., 2019](#); [Taye & Mengesha, 2024](#); [Siekmann et al., 2022](#)). In addition to linguistic obstacles, many students grapple with a lack of confidence and anxiety about meeting academic standards, further complicating the thesis-writing process ([Hikmah & Hafizh, 2024](#)). They also face difficulties integrating sources, using precise academic language, and adhering to the rhetorical conventions of English academic writing ([Suryani et al., 2013](#)). These challenges require not only technical proficiency but also significant discipline, patience, and adaptability. Moreover, students must navigate the iterative process of revisions and feedback from supervisors, all while meeting the stringent academic standards required for successful thesis completion.

EFL undergraduate thesis supervision plays a pivotal role in ensuring students successfully navigate the challenges of producing a research-based academic project. The thesis serves as a critical element of academic writing, requiring students to address significant issues in EFL education and linguistics through a structured and data-driven approach. Writing a thesis demands intellectual rigor, including activities such as conceptualizing ideas, outlining frameworks, drafting, revising, and refining the final work ([Lewis et al., 2021](#); [Cotos et al., 2020](#); [Bowen & Van Waes, 2020](#)). To achieve these objectives, students need to remain dedicated to their area of study while receiving comprehensive guidance and support through adequate supervision. Thesis supervision is a collaborative and interactive process that encompasses both emotional and cognitive dimensions ([Nangimah & Walldén, 2023](#)). This relationship between supervisors and students aims to guide students through the complex stages of thesis writing. As [Strebel et al. \(2021\)](#) suggest, this relationship involves two key dimensions: providing detailed instructions and writing guidelines and offering substantive input on research content. The effectiveness of supervision depends on the interplay of several factors, including the processes of supervision, the roles and approaches of supervisors, and the capabilities of students.

Challenges in the supervision process often stem from systemic issues, such as insufficient supervision time, poorly managed systems, mismatched expectations between

supervisors and students, and inadequate facilities for effective interaction (Ädel et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2024). Supervisors may also face challenges related to their roles and styles, including misalignment with students' needs or ineffective communication practices (Agricola et al., 2020). These challenges can hinder the progress of thesis completion and negatively impact the quality of the research. From the students' perspective, thesis supervision challenges often relate to their academic preparation and skills. Many EFL students struggle with low proficiency in English, which affects their ability to access international sources and articulate their findings clearly (Jomaa & Bidin, 2018). Furthermore, limited knowledge and skills in academic writing, coupled with low self-efficacy, exacerbate the difficulties they face during the thesis-writing process.

Several studies have delved into the complexities of thesis supervision, shedding light on the dynamic roles of both supervisors and students. Ädel et al. (2023) emphasized that adequate supervision requires negotiation and adaptability, often shifting between transactional and interactional approaches to meet students' needs. Similarly, Agricola et al. (2020) and Roberts and Seaman (2017) highlighted the importance of clear guidance, confidence-building, and fostering student ownership to create positive supervisory relationships. Zhang and Hyland (2020) explored how power dynamics in supervisory sessions influence the interactions between students and supervisors, while Bastola (2020) identified mismatched perceptions of feedback as a persistent challenge that can hinder progress. Additionally, Gedamu and Gezahegn (2021) noted the importance of balanced and constructive feedback, although many supervisors prioritize content and genre knowledge over linguistic accuracy. Expanding on this, Gezahegn and Gedamu (2023) revealed significant discrepancies in the perceptions of process-oriented feedback in Ethiopian universities. In Indonesia, Setyani et al. (2023) examined the role of Grammarly in boosting EFL students' confidence and accuracy during thesis writing, while Ren and Zhu (2022) used Activity Theory to uncover the benefits and limitations of mediated strategies in a Chinese undergraduate's thesis-writing process.

Despite these valuable contributions, significant gaps remain in understanding the dual perspectives of EFL undergraduates and supervisors, particularly in the context of Indonesian state universities. While existing studies provide insights into supervision dynamics, feedback practices, and the use of digital tools, they often focus on either students or supervisors without considering their shared and distinct challenges. Additionally, most research is conducted in non-Indonesian contexts, leaving the unique linguistic and academic difficulties faced by Indonesian EFL students underexplored. The lack of actionable, context-specific strategies tailored to the needs of both students and supervisors further underscores the necessity for a more comprehensive approach.

To address these gaps, this study investigates the challenges of thesis writing and supervision from both EFL undergraduates' and supervisors' perspectives at a state university in South Sumatra, Indonesia. By examining the obstacles faced by both groups and exploring supervisors' proposed solutions, this research provides a holistic understanding of the thesis-writing process in an underrepresented context. The findings contribute to improving supervision practices by offering practical recommendations that address both linguistic and academic barriers, ultimately enhancing the thesis-writing experience for EFL students.

METHOD

This research employed a descriptive qualitative design, which, as [Tomaszewski et al. \(2020\)](#) explain, focuses on understanding the essence of a phenomenon. This approach typically utilizes interviews or observations to gather comprehensive narrative data. The study was conducted within the English Education Study Program at a state university in South Sumatra, Indonesia, using purposive sampling for participant selection. According to [Creswell \(2013\)](#), purposive sampling involves deliberately selecting individuals and settings to gain insights into the phenomenon of interest. For this study, undergraduate EFL students in their 8th semester who were actively working on their undergraduate theses were selected. Additionally, six out of 17 thesis supervisors agreed to participate in the study.

The instruments used in this study included questionnaires and interviews. Two questionnaires were adopted to explore the challenges faced by students in thesis writing and supervision. The first, developed by [Fitria \(2022\)](#), consisted of 25 Yes-No items to identify the students' challenges in thesis writing. The second, adapted from [Azure \(2016\)](#), they contained 15 Likert-scale items to evaluate students' perceptions of their supervisors' qualities and attributes. To ensure validity and reliability, the instruments were tested on 30 non-sample students, yielding satisfactory results that confirmed their appropriateness for the study. Besides, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore supervisors' perspectives on the challenges faced by students in thesis writing and supervision. This approach allowed for the use of predetermined questions while providing flexibility for follow-up inquiries and deeper exploration. The interview guide was adapted from [Ebadi and Pourahmadi \(2019\)](#), with an additional question added to explore potential solutions to the identified challenges from the supervisors' perspective. To ensure content validity, the interview questions underwent expert judgment review.

The study began with the administration of two questionnaires to the student participants. These questionnaires addressed challenges in thesis writing and students' perceptions of their supervisors' qualities and attributes, as drawn from [Fitria \(2022\)](#) and [Azure \(2016\)](#). For ease of access, the questionnaires were distributed via Google Forms. Subsequently, six supervisors participated in interviews. Two interviews were conducted in person, one via Zoom, and three through voice notes on WhatsApp. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis, with each session lasting approximately 15–25 minutes. This combination of data collection methods ensured a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and solutions related to thesis writing and supervision.

The data from the questionnaire were analyzed using qualitative methods. Frequencies and percentage analyses, as described by [Nassaji \(2015\)](#), were applied to examine the data. The responses were organized in Excel to calculate means and percentages. The analysis involved evaluating each statement and score, followed by manual calculations to determine the percentage. The researcher identified the highest-rated statements selected by the respondents and interpreted the data based on the calculated results. For the interview data, the researcher transcribed the recordings into written form and categorized them according to the study's objectives. Thematic analysis, as outlined by [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#), was employed to systematically identify, organize, and interpret patterns of meaning (themes) across the dataset. The categorized data were then interpreted by connecting the findings to previous research to provide context and support for the results. This approach ensured a thorough and structured analysis of both questionnaire and interview data.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Challenges in Thesis Writing and Supervision from the Perspectives of EFL Undergraduates

The following tables showcase the highest-scoring responses from the students' questionnaire. They highlight the key factors contributing to their difficulties in thesis writing and their perceptions of their supervisors' qualities and attributes.

Table 1. Questionnaire index of factors affecting EFL students' difficulties in thesis writing

No.	Statements	Yes	No
1.	I have difficulty in choosing the title of thesis in English major.	71%	29%
2.	I feel not sure (pessimistic) about the title of the thesis research that has been taken.	53%	47%
3.	I feel bored/saturated while working on and completing the thesis.	61%	39%
4.	I feel doubtful/pessimistic about the abilities when working on and completing a thesis.	71%	29%
5.	I have fears or worries during the proposal seminar exam or thesis examination later.	93%	7%
6.	I have a health problem or problem while working on and completing the thesis.	67%	33%
7.	I tend to write sentences or paragraphs in Indonesian first and then translate them into English with a translator application when working on a thesis.	57%	43%
8.	I have difficulty writing sentences or paragraphs correctly according to English grammar.	66%	34%
9.	I have difficulty choosing the correct vocabulary or spelling to write an English thesis correctly.	71%	29%
10.	I have difficulty using punctuation correctly in the thesis.	71%	29%
11.	I have difficulty finding references related to thesis titles taken on the internet, for example, similar research/thesis, books, or related research journals.	63%	36%

The questionnaire results reveal several challenges faced by EFL students in thesis writing, spanning linguistic, emotional, and practical aspects. Many students struggle with selecting and feeling confident about their thesis topics, indicating uncertainty in the early stages of their research. Emotional challenges are also significant, with a majority experiencing anxiety, doubt, and even fear about their abilities and upcoming examinations. Linguistic barriers are a recurring issue, as students frequently face difficulties with grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation, often relying on translation tools to complete their work. Additionally, accessing relevant references and dealing with health-related issues further complicate the thesis-writing process. These findings underscore the need for comprehensive support systems to address these multifaceted challenges.

Table 2. Questionnaire index of qualities and attributes of supervisors

No.	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Percentage
1.	The supervisor ensures that I meet the deadlines set.	5	5	23	22	15	49.42%
2.	The supervisor provides constructive and timely feedback on my written work.	3	10	14	20	23	45.71%
3.	He/she available when needed for project discussion.	2	13	8	22	25	44.28%
4.	Has excellent interpersonal skills.	4	8	10	25	23	44.28%
5.	He/she is friendly, open and flexible.	4	11	8	20	27	44.28%
6.	Assists me in conceptualizing the research project.	3	7	12	26	22	43.71%
7.	Lead and helped me in shaping the research topic.	4	7	11	22	26	43.14%

The questionnaire results indicate that students perceive various areas for improvement in their supervisors' qualities and attributes. While supervisors are acknowledged for helping students meet deadlines, other aspects, such as providing timely and constructive feedback, being readily available for discussions, and demonstrating interpersonal skills, are rated less positively. Additionally, support in conceptualizing research projects and shaping research topics is perceived as lacking. These findings suggest that while supervisors fulfill some responsibilities, there is a need for more practical guidance, availability, and communication to support students in their thesis-writing process.

Challenges in Thesis Writing and Supervision from the Perspectives of Thesis Supervisors

Interviews with supervisors revealed various challenges that students encounter during the thesis writing process, complicating its timely completion. Lecturer A emphasized that the primary difficulties stem from students' lack of motivation and commitment, stating, *"The main challenges arise from the students, particularly their lack of intention to write and the necessity for increased motivation to complete tasks promptly. Strong motivation can facilitate the prompt completion of a thesis, even in the face of numerous challenges and obstacles."* Lecturer B highlighted similar issues, focusing on time management and communication: *"Firstly, regarding time, students desire quick consultations, which is not feasible due to the extensive research required. Secondly, there exists an imbalance in time availability between lecturers and students, wherein lecturers are available at certain times while students are not. They have other activities that require completion. Thirdly, student communication with peers is essential for gathering additional information on thesis preparation, including procedures for checking Turnitin, among other aspects."*

Lecturer C pointed to difficulties in conducting research, particularly in identifying relevant topics and methods: *"Identifying topics that have been extensively explored in prior research reveals areas where students may lack current information. Students require assistance in identifying research gaps, selecting research methods, and analyzing data. The students also find it difficult to locate tools for data analysis. The students demonstrate limited*

ability to interpret the results, as their responses primarily involve reiterating previously obtained findings. Grammar issues addressed encompass the distinctions between formal and informal language use." This perspective was supported by Lecturers E and F, who identified the selection of research topics as a significant challenge. Lecturer E noted, "The difficulty in finding a research topic stems from students' English proficiency, which remains below average, hindering their ability to explore research ideas." Similarly, Lecturer F added, "The students' deficiency in reading, particularly in reference materials, is the underlying cause."

In contrast, Lecturer D emphasized technical challenges in writing, stating that students struggle with formatting and adherence to campus guidelines: "Students frequently require adherence to campus guidelines, resulting in numerous formatting errors. Common mistakes include spacing, subsection numbering, and the positioning of table names." Lecturer F also highlighted broader issues, including difficulties in identifying research gaps and handling technical aspects of thesis writing.

Moreover, lecturer A highlighted the issue of time constraints, stating, "The availability of lecturers for guidance is limited due to their extensive teaching hours, resulting in an overload. Additionally, lecturers with external responsibilities do not allocate sufficient time for student guidance." This perspective contrasts with Lecturer B, who identified technical aspects of writing as a significant challenge: "Students expressed confusion regarding the request to enhance the discussion section, resulting in the findings section being more extensive than the discussion section." Besides, Lecturer C pointed to motivational and personal issues as critical obstacles in supervision: "Initially, motivation. A lack of student motivation can disrupt the consultation process. Internal problems, such as disharmony within families, contribute to students experiencing depression, aimlessness, and a loss of direction. The motivational aspect can be classified as an issue stemming from student intentions and associated with student characteristics. The intensity of consultation and revision of the thesis can be influenced." Lecturer F supported this observation, emphasizing the impact of student characteristics on thesis success, including diligence, adherence to guidelines, and proactive communication with supervisors.

Lecturer D identified students' failure to read and follow the campus guidance book as a recurring issue, noting: "Grammar errors are present. The students encounter difficulties in engaging with the supervisors in person. The students require an extended period to gather the data." Lecturer D's concerns align with those of Lecturer E, who observed: "There are different characteristics between one student and another. Student B engaged in consultations more frequently than student A. This characteristic affects writing arrangements, including instances of plagiarism and improper formatting. The students experienced confusion and engaged in extensive communication with the supervisor." Both Lecturers D and E emphasized that students' lack of adherence to the thesis guidance book leads to frequent formatting errors, which are a significant challenge in supervision. They stressed the importance of effective communication between students and supervisors, as it facilitates the writing process and enables students to share their difficulties openly.

Solutions for the Challenges in Thesis Writing and Supervision from the perspectives of Thesis Supervisors

Thesis supervisors proposed various solutions to address the challenges faced by undergraduate EFL students in thesis writing and supervision. Lecturer A emphasized the importance of thorough preparation, stating: *“Initially, the identified theme requires substantial preparation, including the compilation of references, the development of self-efficacy related to the chosen theme, and engagement with academic counselors and lecturers for suggestions and feedback. For lecturers with extensive teaching hours and external commitments, it is advisable to adhere to the directives of the Program Coordinator. Consequently, caution is issued to lecturers with excessive workloads, as those who demonstrate high commitment, integrity, and accountability can effectively manage their time.”* Lecturer A concluded that students should focus on reading extensively to gather references, selecting an appropriate research theme, and engaging actively with academic counselors and lecturers. Supervisors, in turn, should manage their responsibilities effectively both on and off campus to ensure quality guidance.

Lecturer B proposed practical solutions for consultation and time management: *“A consultation time will be scheduled every Tuesday. I will communicate with students to identify an alternative day if supervision time cannot be conducted on Tuesday. Establishing a consultation group to ensure that information is accessible to all students.”* Lecturer B also recommended that students read extensively, particularly literature reviews, to understand the distinction between findings and discussions better. These measures aim to enhance communication and streamline the supervision process by setting precise schedules and expectations for both students and lecturers.

Further, lecturer C highlighted the importance of proactive engagement from both students and supervisors: *“Encouraging students to complete their thesis promptly. I will reach out to students who are absent through WhatsApp to inquire about their preferred times for consultation. If the student is challenging to reach, I will attempt to contact their nearest friends or family members. To address the issue of thesis topics, students should engage in thorough reading and possess the capacity to explore new subjects.”* Lecturer C emphasized the supervisor’s role in maintaining communication with students, even initiating follow-ups when necessary. Strong relationships between supervisors and students were identified as key to creating a supportive and productive environment for thesis writing. Lecturer D emphasized the importance of utilizing available resources: *“Students must read the campus guidebook. For grammar, applications such as grammar checkers, Proof, or Read Proof can be utilized. I also offer online tutoring to facilitate student consultations.”* Lecturer D highlighted the need for students to familiarize themselves with campus guidelines and leverage grammar-checking tools to improve their writing. Additionally, students were encouraged to diversify their sources through online and offline reading to deepen their understanding of research topics.

In addition, lecturer E stressed consistent effort and collaboration: *“Students must demonstrate commitment by revising consistently during consultations and engaging in consultations regularly. Engage in discussions with peers or seek assistance from those with thesis writing experience. Students should collaborate with peers who possess relevant experience. Students are required to enhance their English language proficiency. Additionally, students must practice writing in English accurately and effectively.”* This approach

underscores the value of peer assistance in activities like proofreading and seeking constructive feedback, as well as the necessity for students to develop their English proficiency and writing skills. Lecturer F proposed integrating research into the curriculum: *“Engaging students in initial research throughout the learning process from the 1st to the 7th semester and incorporating them in research analysis, including participation in the lecturer’s research. Enhancing academic writing requires both discourse and linguistic proficiency. The subsequent issue pertains to consultations, which may be conducted online if in-person meetings are not feasible.”* Lecturer F suggested that involving students in research activities early in their academic journey and introducing research-related subjects in the curriculum could significantly improve thesis writing skills. Online consultations were also proposed as an alternative to address scheduling conflicts.

DISCUSSION

One of the most significant challenges in thesis writing is the process of selecting a research topic and formulating a thesis title. Supervisors observed that students often struggle with this due to limited engagement with academic references and unfamiliarity with current academic issues (Puspita, 2019). Self-esteem issues further exacerbate these difficulties, as students frequently feel uncertain and overwhelmed when tasked with choosing a thesis topic (Rizwan & Naas, 2022). Engaging with diverse references provides critical benefits for students. Reading widely enables them to improve their knowledge, expand their academic vocabulary, and enhance their ability to construct well-rounded arguments in their thesis (Mali, 2023). The more students engage with articles and other academic sources, the more research ideas they can generate, ultimately aiding in the identification of relevant topics and enriching their theses with comprehensive references (Almahameed & Alajalein, 2021). Furthermore, reading helps students build confidence in presenting their ideas and equips them with the knowledge needed to contribute meaningfully to academic discussions (Sholeh et al., 2021).

In addition, psychological factors also posed significant challenges for students throughout the thesis-writing process. Many students reported feelings of boredom, self-doubt, and anxiety, particularly regarding their progress and thesis proposal examinations. A lack of focus has been identified as a critical factor impeding students’ ability to complete their theses (Azwar et al., 2023), alongside doubt and pessimism about their capabilities (Rizwan & Naas, 2022). Supervisors in this study also noted a lack of motivation among students, which supports findings that intrinsic and extrinsic motivational struggles are common barriers. Moreover, internal factors affecting self-management were found to contribute significantly to the variability in students’ motivation levels (Perceka et al., 2023; Puspita, 2019).

Writing competencies emerged as a significant challenge for students during the thesis-writing process. Many students relied on composing in Indonesian and then translating their work into English using translation applications, which often introduced grammatical inaccuracies. Sutopo and Hastuti (2020) noted that while such tools can be helpful, students must verify the accuracy of grammar and word usage. Grammar-related difficulties were also highlighted, with students struggling to construct correct sentences, consistent with findings by Wau (2022), who identified grammar rules as a common challenge. Vocabulary selection and punctuation posed additional problems, as limited

vocabulary hindered effective writing and paraphrasing (Fitria, 2022; Puspita, 2019), and incorrect punctuation disrupted writing continuity (Suliman et al., 2019; Wati, 2021). However, from the supervisors' perspective, students also faced challenges in interpreting their research findings in the discussion sections. Supervisors observed that students often wrote disproportionately lengthy findings sections compared to their discussions, indicating difficulty in analyzing and interpreting results effectively. Identifying a research gap was another significant obstacle, consistent with findings by Almahameed and Alajalein (2021), who emphasized this as a widespread issue. Technical writing challenges, such as formatting errors involving font size, spacing, and paragraph alignment, were also common. Supervisors attributed these issues to students' failure to follow campus writing guidelines, a problem that Rizwan and Naas (2022) linked to a lack of adherence to technical guidebooks.

Further, health-related challenges are a notable obstacle for students during the thesis-writing process, as completing a thesis demands substantial physical and mental energy. The process involves multiple stages, such as topic selection, research design, data collection, analysis, and drafting, each requiring sustained focus and effort. Consequently, students often experience feelings of being overburdened, which can lead to physical and mental exhaustion (Rizwan & Naas, 2020). These challenges are closely linked to psychological factors, as the prolonged stress and pressure associated with thesis development can negatively affect students' well-being. Azwar et al. (2023) highlighted that cognitive overload, a state in which mental demands exceed a student's capacity to process information effectively, often contributes to health issues during thesis writing. This overload can manifest as burnout, fatigue, and even anxiety or depression, further impeding progress. Such health challenges not only affect students' ability to meet deadlines but also diminish the quality of their academic output.

From the students' perspective, several challenges arise during the supervision process. A key issue involves disagreements about the supervisors' role in ensuring deadlines are met. Baydarova et al. (2021) emphasized that students have specific expectations regarding the frequency of meetings, suggesting that supervisors should establish consistent schedules to support students more effectively. Additionally, students expect supervisors to be accessible and responsive to their inquiries, which they believe would facilitate smoother progress in thesis completion (Christidis, 2024). Moreover, students highlighted the need for constructive and timely feedback on their thesis work. Such feedback is regarded as essential for improving the quality of their writing (Christidis, 2024). However, delays in receiving feedback remain a recurring issue. This aligns with Safitri et al. (2021), who reported that supervisors are often challenging to meet and slow in providing feedback, leading to student frustration and delays in thesis progress. Furthermore, the lack of accessibility for project discussions exacerbates these challenges. Supervisors typically establish specific consultation days; however, as Bayona-Oré (2021) observed, not all supervisors consistently hold meetings due to their demanding schedules.

In addition, students stressed the importance of supervisors exhibiting friendliness, openness, and flexibility. A supportive and approachable demeanor helps create a comfortable environment where students feel encouraged to discuss their thesis without fear. Flexibility in supervision enables supervisors to adapt their support to student's individual needs, making the thesis process more manageable (Bayona-Oré, 2021). Similarly, Azwar et al. (2023) noted that challenges arise when supervisors are difficult to reach,

emphasizing the need for supervisors to maintain adequate and consistent communication with students. Finally, the interpersonal skills of supervisors were identified as crucial to adequate supervision. Supervisors with strong interpersonal skills provide more explicit guidance and establish better communication channels, positively impacting students' motivation and progress (Cartono & Novianty, 2021). While interpersonal skills do not necessarily require supervisors to express emotions openly, they are instrumental in fostering productive relationships and ensuring a smooth thesis-writing process (Bayona-Oré, 2021).

Continuing from the supervisors' perspectives, key challenges in thesis supervision revolve around time management and communication. Effective time management is essential for both students and supervisors, particularly in scheduling regular consultation sessions. Supervisors emphasized that students who consult routinely, such as once a week, are more likely to complete their thesis on time. This aligns with Nurkamto et al. (2022), who identified time management as a persistent issue in thesis writing. Their other responsibilities often constrain supervisors' availability for consultations, and as Azmat and Ahmad (2022) noted, time shortages can limit supervisors' ability to meet students' needs effectively.

Communication problems further complicate the thesis supervision process. Supervisors observed that while some students maintain regular communication to schedule consultations, others fail to do so, requiring reminders from their supervisors to stay on track. Poor communication is not limited to students; in some cases, supervisors themselves contribute to delays by responding to messages slowly, as highlighted by Fitria (2022). Similarly, Rizwan and Naas (2022) found that students often struggle to initiate and sustain effective communication with their supervisors. Maintaining consistent and open communication is critical, as students rely on their supervisors' guidance to navigate challenges and complete their thesis on time.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the challenges faced by EFL undergraduates in thesis writing, as well as the difficulties supervisors encounter in guiding them. From the students' perspectives, these challenges include difficulties in selecting and feeling confident about thesis titles, saturation during the writing process, self-doubt, anxiety about proposal seminars, health issues, and reliance on translation applications that often result in grammatical inaccuracies. Additional struggles involve vocabulary selection, punctuation usage, and locating relevant references. Regarding supervision, students identified issues such as supervisors failing to enforce deadlines, providing insufficient feedback, being unavailable for discussions, lacking interpersonal skills, exhibiting unfriendliness, and failing to assist in conceptualizing research projects or developing research topics. From the supervisors' perspectives, seven primary challenges faced by EFL students were identified: difficulties in selecting research topics, bridging research gaps, managing time effectively, adhering to formatting guidelines, maintaining motivation, interpreting data, and communicating effectively. Supervisors also noted that these issues were often exacerbated by students' limited academic and language skills. To address these challenges, supervisors proposed several solutions. These include encouraging students to prepare by conducting extensive literature reviews, maintaining consistent communication with their supervisors

and peers, scheduling regular consultation times, utilizing campus guidebooks, using grammar-checking tools, committing to frequent revisions, and improving their English language competencies through practice and additional support.

However, this study has certain limitations. It focused exclusively on the perspectives of EFL undergraduates and their supervisors from a single state university, with a relatively small sample size of 70 students and six lecturers. Future research could expand this scope by including more extensive and more diverse samples from multiple universities to provide a broader understanding of the challenges and solutions in thesis writing and supervision. Additionally, investigating the perspectives of other faculty members or exploring institutional policies and resources could yield further insights into improving the thesis-writing process for EFL students.

REFERENCES

- Abdulai, R. T., & Owusu-Ansah, A. (2014). Essential ingredients of a good research proposal for undergraduate and postgraduate students in the social sciences. *SAGE Open*, 4(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014548178>
- Ädel, A., Skogs, J., Lindgren, C., & Stridfeldt, M. (2023). The supervisor and student in Bachelor thesis supervision: a broad repertoire of sometimes conflicting roles. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 14(2), 207–227. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2022.2162560>
- Agricola, B. T., Prins, F. J., Van Der Schaaf, M. F., & Van Tartwijk, J. (2020). Supervisor and student perspectives on undergraduate thesis supervision in higher education. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 65(5), 877–897. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2020.1775115>
- Almahameed, Y. S., & Alajalein, M. M. (2021). Difficulties faced by Jordanian undergraduate EFL students in writing research problem statements. *International Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, 7(1), 13–22. <https://dx.doi.org/10.20469/ijhss.7.20002-1>
- Ashwin, P., Abbas, A., & McLean, M. (2016). How does completing a dissertation transform undergraduate students' understandings of disciplinary knowledge? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 42(4), 517–530. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2016.1154501>
- Azmat, M., & Ahmad, A. (2022). Students experience in completing thesis at undergraduate level. *J. Mater. Environ. Sei*, 13(3), 291–300.
- Azure, J. A. (2016). Students' perspective of effective supervision of graduate programmes in Ghana. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 4(2), 163–169. <https://doi.org/10.12691/education-4-2-4>
- Azwar, B., Ifnaldi, I., Nuzuar, N., Hartini, H., & Syamsulrizal, S. (2023). The role of reality counseling to improve students' responsibility in thesis completion procrastination. *Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction*, 13(3). <https://doi.org/10.47750/pegegog.13.03.42>
- Bastola, M. N. (2020). Engagement and challenges in supervisory feedback: Supervisors' and students' perceptions. *RELC Journal*, 53(1), 56–70. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688220912547>

- Baydarova, I., Collins, H. E., & Saadi, I. A. (2021). Alignment of doctoral student and supervisor expectations in Malaysia. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 16, 001–029. <https://doi.org/10.28945/4682>
- Bayona-Oré, S. (2021). Perceptions of postgraduate students on the relationship between thesis development and performance of a supervisor. *Journal of Turkish Science Education*. <https://doi.org/10.36681/tused.2021.90>
- Bowen, N., & Van Waes, L. (2020). Exploring revisions in academic text: Closing the gap between process and product approaches in digital writing. *Written Communication*, 37(3), 322–364. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088320916508>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Cartono, C., & Novianty, F. (2021). Challenges in building interpersonal communication skills between students with academic supervisor. *MUHARRIK Jurnal Dakwah Dan Sosial*, 4(02), 315–330. <https://doi.org/10.37680/muharrik.v4i02.761>
- Christidis, M., Waters, P., Arlegard, L., Saflund, Z., & Christidis, N. (2024). Factors influencing the quality of undergraduate students' degree projects: from student and supervisor perspectives. *Research Square*, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-4333157/v1>
- Cotos, E., Huffman, S., & Link, S. (2020). Understanding graduate writers' interaction with and impact of the research writing tutor during revision. *Journal of Writing Research*, 12(1), 187–232. <https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr-2020.12.01.07>
- Creswell, J.W. (2013) *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. [4th Edition], SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Fitria, T. N. (2022). Analysis of EFL students' difficulties in writing and completing English thesis. *LLT Journal a Journal on Language and Language Teaching*, 25(1), 295–309. <https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.v25i1.3607>
- Gedamu, A. D., & Gezahegn, T. H. (2021). EFL supervisors' written feedback focus and language functions: a mixed methods study. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-021-00125-2>
- Gezahegn, T. H., & Gedamu, A. D. (2023). Supervisors' and supervisees' perception and perceived practice of a process-oriented thesis written feedback: The case of Ethiopian universities. *Heliyon*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e12865>
- Hikmah, N. A., & Hafizh, N. M. A. (2024). Bridging success through comparative: Uncovering the motivation potential of improving students' writing, individually vs collaboratively. *Voices of English Language Education Society*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.29408/veles.v8i2.26196>
- Hyland, K. (2015). *Teaching and researching writing*. Routledge.
- Indah, R. N. (2017). Critical thinking, writing performance and topic familiarity of Indonesian EFL learners. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 8(2), 229. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0802.04>
- Jomaa, N. J., & Bidin, S. J. (2018). Perspectives of EFL doctoral students on challenges of citations in academic writing. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction*, 14(2), 177–209. <https://doi.org/10.32890/mjli2017.14.2.7>
- Lewis, K. B., Graham, I. D., Boland, L., & Stacey, D. (2021). Writing a compelling integrated discussion: A guide for integrated discussions in article-based theses and dissertations.

- International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship*, 18(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1515/ijnes-2020-0057>
- Mahapatra, S. (2024). Impact of ChatGPT on ESL students' academic writing skills: A mixed methods intervention study. *Smart Learning Environments*, 11(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-024-00295-9>
- Mali, Y. C. G. (2023). Narratives of two Indonesian lecturers about challenges of writing an undergraduate EFL thesis. *Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Learning*, 8(1), 42–60. <https://doi.org/10.18196/ftl.v8i1.17551>
- Nangimah, M., & Walldén, R. (2023). How supervisors provide and students react to EAL thesis supervision: Voices from Sweden and Indonesia. *Frontiers in Education*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2023.1118436>
- Nassaji, H. (2015). Qualitative and descriptive research: Data type versus data analysis. *Language Teaching Research*, 19(2), 129–132. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168815572747>
- Nurkamto, J., Djatmika, & Prihandoko, L.A. (2022). Students' problems of academic writing competencies, challenges in online thesis supervision, and the solutions: thesis supervisors' perspectives. *TEFLIN Journal*, 33(1), 123-147. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15639/teflinjournal.v33i1/123-147>
- Ebadi, E., & Pourahmadi, P. (2019). Exploring challenges in writing EFL master theses: Students and supervisors' perspectives. *I-manager's Journal on English Language Teaching*, 9(2), 42. <https://doi.org/10.26634/jelt.9.2.15431>
- Perceka, A. L., Ramdani, H. T., & Rusyani, H. (2023). The relationship between academic anxiety and academic self-management in 8th semester undergraduate nursing students in preparing a thesis. *Jurnal Ners*, 7(2), 1685–1692. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jn.v7i2.19774>
- Puspita, C. (2019). Factors affecting students' difficulties in writing thesis: A mixed-methods research at eighth semester of English study program in IAIN Curup. *English Language and Literature International Conference (ELLiC) Proceedings*, 3, 13–22.
- Ren, B., & Zhu, W. (2022). A Chinese EFL student's strategies in graduation thesis writing: An activity theory perspective. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 61, 101202. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2022.101202>
- Rizwan, M., & Naas, A. F. (2022). Factors affecting undergraduates' difficulties in writing thesis. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, 244–250. <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.2022.3.10.14>
- Roberts, L. D., & Seaman, K. (2017). Good undergraduate dissertation supervision: perspectives of supervisors and dissertation coordinators. *The International Journal for Academic Development*, 23(1), 28–40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144x.2017.1412971>
- Safitri, C. D., Azisah, S., & Annur, M. J. (2021). The analysis of students' challenges to thesis writing at uin alauddin makassar. *English Language Teaching for EFL Learners*, 3(2), 41-53. <https://doi.org/10.24252/elties.v3i2.21013>
- Setyani, E. D., Bunau, E., & Rezeki, Y. S. (2023). The influence of Grammarly towards Indonesian EFL students' first-degree thesis writing confidence. *ELSYA Journal of English Language Studies*, 5(1), 54–67. <https://doi.org/10.31849/elsya.v5i1.6773>

- Sholeh, M., Aziz, A., & Kholis, N. (2021). Development of teacher competence in creative writing to actualize literacy of madrasah. *ELEMENTARY Islamic Teacher Journal*, 9(2), 183. <https://doi.org/10.21043/elementary.v9i2.11903>
- Siekman, L., Parr, J. M., & Busse, V. (2022). Structure and coherence as challenges in composition: A study of assessing less proficient EFL writers' text quality. *Assessing Writing*, 54, 100672. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2022.100672>
- Strebel, F., Gürtler, S., Hulliger, B., & Lindeque, J. (2021). Laissez-faire or guidance? Effective supervision of bachelor theses. *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(4), 866–884. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1659762>
- Suliman, F., Ahmeida, M. B., & Mahalla, S. (2019). Importance of Punctuation Marks for Writing and Reading Comprehension Skills. (*Faculty of Arts Journal*), 13, 29–53. <https://doi.org/10.36602/faj.2019.n13.06>
- Suryani, I., Hashima, N., Yaacob, A., Rashid, S. A., & Desa, H. (2013). Rhetorical structures in academic research writing by non- native writers. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v3n1p29>
- Sutopo, A., & Hastuti, D. M. (2020). The role of machine translators in academic translation teaching. *International Journal of Scientific Engineering and Science*, 4(5), 29-31.
- Taye, T., & Mengesha, M. (2024). Identifying and analyzing common English writing challenges among regular undergraduate students. *Heliyon*, 10(17), e36876. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e36876>
- Toba, R., Noor, W. N., & Sanu, L. O. (2019). The current issues of Indonesian EFL students' writing skills: Ability, problem, and reason in writing comparison and contrast essay. *Dinamika Ilmu*, 57–73. <https://doi.org/10.21093/di.v19i1.1506>
- Tomaszewski, L. E., Zarestky, J., & Gonzalez, E. (2020). Planning qualitative research: Design and decision making for new researchers. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920967174>
- Wau, C. S. W. (2022). Students' difficulties in writing definition paragraph at the third semester students of English language education study program of STKIP Nias selatan. *Faguru: Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Keguruan*, 1(1), 1-9.
- Wati, N. S. (2021). Exploring the impact of punctuation usage on students' writing skills. *Pedagogy Journal of English Language Teaching*, 9(2), 108. <https://doi.org/10.32332/joelt.v9i2.3654>
- Wu, S., Oubibi, M., & Bao, K. (2024). How supervisors affect students' academic gains and research ability: An investigation through a qualitative study. *Heliyon*, 10(10), e31079. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e31079>
- Zhang, Y., & Hyland, K. (2020). Advice-giving, power and roles in theses supervisions. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 172, 35–45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2020.11.002>