UNCOVERING EFL STUDENTS' STRATEGIES IN HANDLING WRITER'S BLOCK IN UNDERGRADUATE THESIS WRITING
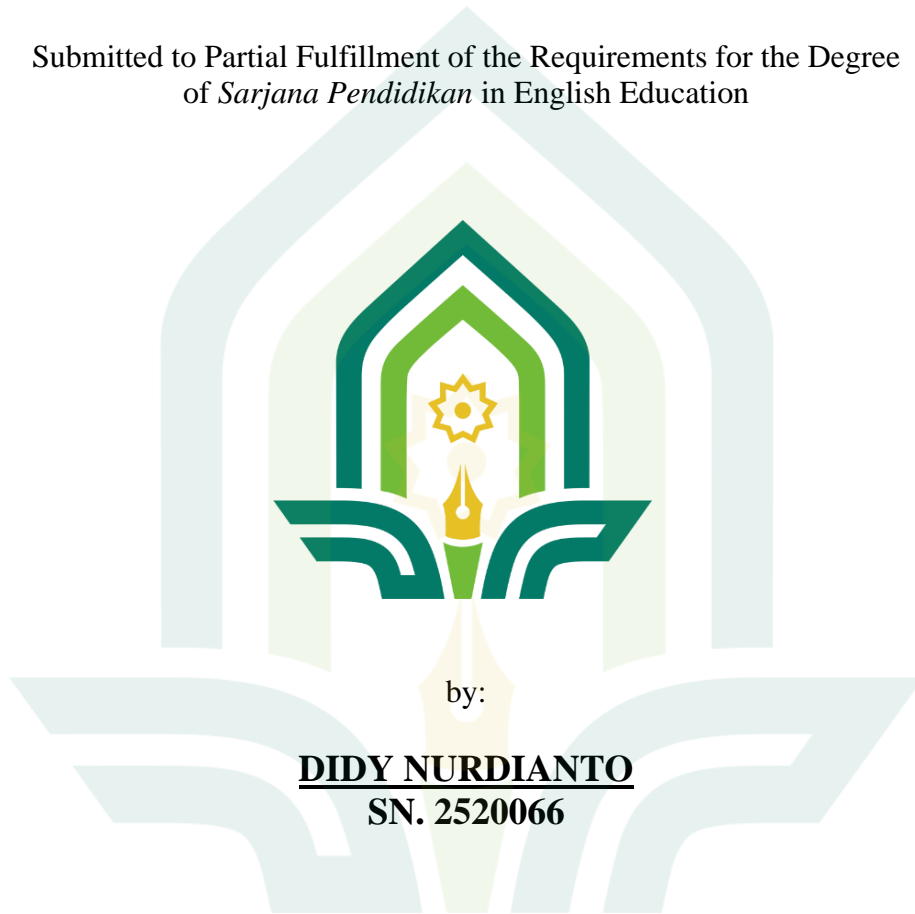
UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

Submitted to Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
of *Sarjana Pendidikan* in English Education

by:

DIDY NURDIANTO
SN. 2520066

ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING
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K.H. ABDURRAHMAN WAHID PEKALONGAN
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2024**

LEMBAR PERNYATAAN KEASLIAN
SKRIPSI

Yang bertanda tangan di bawah ini:

Nama   : Didy Nurdianto

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Fakultas   : Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan

Dengan ini menyatakan bahwa skripsi yang berjudul "Uncovering EFL Students' Strategies in Handling Writer's Block in Undergraduate Thesis Writing." adalah benar-benar hasil karya penulis, kecuali dalam kutipan yang telah penulis sebutkan sebelumnya.

Demikian pernyataan ini saya buat dengan sebenar-benarnya.

Pekalongan, 3 Juli 2024
Yang menyatakan

Didy Nurdianto
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NOTA PEMBIMBING

Lamp : 3 (Tiga) Eksemplar
Hal   : Naskah Skripsi
         Sdr. Didy Nurdianto

Kepada
Yth. Dekan Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan
UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan
c.q. Ketua Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris
di Pekalongan

Assalamu 'alaikum Wr.Wb.
Setelah melakukan penelitian, bimbingan dan koreksi naskah skripsi
saudara :
Nama   : Didy Nurdianto
NIM   : 2520066
Program Studi   : Tadris Bahasa Inggris
Judul   : Uncovering EFL Students' Strategies in Handling
Writer's Block in Undergraduate Thesis Writing
        Saya menilai bahwa naskah skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan
kepada Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan UIN K.H. Abdurrahman
Wahid Pekalongan untuk diajukan dalam sidang munaqasyah.
        Demikian nota pembimbing ini dibuat untuk digunakan
sebagaimana mestinya. Atas perhatiannya, disampaikan terima kasih.
Wassalamu'alaikum Wr.Wb.

Pekalongan, 28 Juni 2024
Pembimbing

Fachri Ali, M.Pd
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APPROVAL SHEET

The Dean of Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, confirms that the undergraduate thesis by:

Nama   : **DIDY NURDIANTO**

NIM   : **2520066**

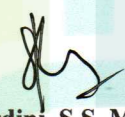Judul   : **UNCOVERING EFL STUDENTS' STRATEGIES IN HANDLING WRITER'S BLOCK IN UNDERGRADUATE THESIS WRITING**

Has been examined and approved by the panel of examiners on Friday, 19th July 2024 as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Pendidikan (S.Pd.) in English Education.

The Examiners,

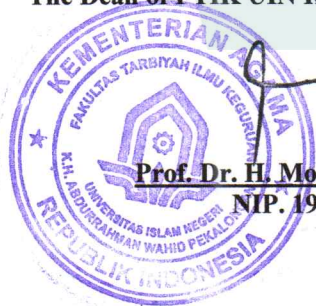**Examiner I**   **Examiner II**

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NIP. 19750207 199903 1 001   **NIP. 19810530 200901 2 007**

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ACKNOWLEDMENTS

MOTTO

"With Great Power Comes Great Gesponsibility"

(Uncle Ben)

ABSTRAK

Banyak penelitian yang membahas mengenai masalah mahasisawa saat menulis skripsi, namun pembahasan mengenai writer's block dalam menulis skripsi masih kurang mendapat perhatian. Penelitian yang dirancang dalam studi kasus ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi penyebab writer's block dan strategi mahasiswa EFL dalam menghadapi writer's block saat menulis skripsi. Untuk mendapatkan data, peneliti melakukan interview semi-structur dengan empat mahasiswa EFL disebuah universitas Islam di Pekalongan. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Beberapa temuan mengenai penyebab writer's block seperti ketakutan saat menghadapi kritik, ketakutan akan sebuah kegagagalan, rendahnya kemampuan menulis mahasiswa, kurangnya motivasi, kesulitan dalam mengkreasikan tulisan dan menentukan topik penelitian. Peneliti juga telah menemukan banyak mahasiswa menggunaakan beberapa strategi untuk mengatsi writer's block seperti menggunakan apl bahasa untuk membantu meningkatlkan kualitas tulisan mereka. Strategi sosial dilakukan mahasiswa untuk mendapatkan wawasan baru mengenai skripsi mereka. Membaca banyak buku dapat membantu mahasiswa memperdalam pengetahuan dan meningkatkan kemampuan menulis mereka. Kemudian beberapa mahasiswa memilih menulis dalam kondisi yang nyaman agar dapat memperbaiki suasana hati dalam menulis. Hasil penelitian ini memiliki implikasi praktis terhadap bagaimana mahasiswa mengatasi writer's block ketika menulis skripsi.

Kata kunci : Writer's Block, Ketakutan dikritik, Strategi Sosial

ABSTRACT

Many studies discuss student problems when writing theses, but the discussion regarding writer's block when writing theses still receives less attention. The research designed in this case study aims to explore the causes of writer's block and EFL students' strategies for dealing with writer's block when writing a thesis. To obtain data, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with four EFL students at an Islamic university in Pekalongan. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Several findings regarding the causes of writer's block, such as fear of facing criticism, fear of failure, low student writing ability, lack of motivation, difficulty in creating writing and determining research topics. The researcher found that many students used several strategies to overcome writer's block, such as using language apps to help improve the quality of their writing. Students used socializing strategies to gain new insight into their thesis. Reading lots of books can help students deepen their knowledge and improve their writing skills. Then some students chose to write in comfortable conditions in order to improve their writing mood. The results of this research indicate practical implications for how students overcome writer's block when writing a thesis.

Keywords : Wrtiter's Block, Fear of Criticism, Using Social Strategy

PREFACE

Praise and gratitude are always addressed to Allah SWT who always bestows enjoyment, guidance, blessings and health so that the process of writing my research proposal entitled **"Uncovering EFL Students' Strategies in Handling Writer's Block in Undergraduate Thesis Writing"** can be completed. It is submitted to English Study Program, UIN K.H ABDURRAHMAN WAHID Pekalongan, to fulfill one of the Final Project Course requirements. In arranging this paper, the writer truly get lost challenges andobstructions. Because of that, the writer says thank to all individuals who helps me in the process of writing this final project. The researcher also realizes that this paper is not perfect yet. Therefore, criticism and constructive suggestions for improving this paper is expected. Hopefully this paper can be useful to everyone in need.

Pekalongan, 3 July 2024

The researcher

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background

One of the important things that undergraduate students must do when they want to complete their studies is to conduct research which is then written into an undergraduate thesis. Indrian and Ardi (2019) stated that Indonesian university students frequently have to write an undergraduate thesis in order to graduate with a bachelor's degree. Most higher education institutions require their students to do research as a final assignment to complete a study. According to Turmudi (2020), university students in Indonesia seem to have to do scientific research in order to graduate from their study program. The final project is usually in the form of a thesis, so that in order to pass the student must complete the assignment. Writing an undergraduate thesis is viewed as an inborn and essential piece of college that ensures graduates' scholastic capabilities and status (Wahib, 2023). Therefore every student needs to write a thesis as a requirement to achieve graduation.

For some students, writing an undergraduate thesis is not easy. According to Reynolds and Thompson (2011), an undergraduate thesis may be the first experience for students in writing authentic science writing. Apart from that, when writing an undergraduate thesis, students are also involved in critical thinking activities. Students who write   undergraduate

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theses engage in critical and scientific thinking such as asking scientific questions, finding references, choosing research methods, evaluating data and presenting the results (Reynolds and Thompson, 2011). One of the important things for undergraduate students to prepare when writing a thesis is to understand in depth the structure of an undergraduate thesis. According to Dakhi and Hutabarat (2018), an undergraduate thesis consists of five parts: introduction, literature review, research methods, explanation of findings, then conclusions and recommendations. Therefore, every student who wants to complete their undergraduate thesis needs to understand the things involved in it.

According to Kusumaningrum and Wiyono (2020), students face many challenges when writing a thesis. These challenges include choosing the topic that will be used as the title of the thesis, determining the title, collecting and evaluating data, obtaining references, conducting research, and verbally recording research findings. They also struggle with comprehension of some writing procedures, schematic structures, and content. There are many difficulties that students need to face when writing a undergraduate thesis, one of which is writer's block or the inability to think of ideas when writing. According to Sasmita and Setyowati (2021), the challenges that must be faced by students when writing in the faculty of literature are writer's block (43.5%), difficulty in expressing ideas (17.4%), feeling less confident (21.7%), and afraid of making mistakes (17.4%). Other research shows that most students majoring in English experience

writer's block due to the systematic complexity of writing and problems in the writing process (Rosa and Genuino, 2018). Meanwhile, Prihandoko (2021) in a study stated that students experience writer's block which originates from demands for the best writing quality and complicated writing systematics. Zorba (2023) writer's block, at least to some extent, appears as an inherent part of the written production process. It means that many students face writer's block when write an undergraduate thesis, which slows them down in completing their writing.

Writer's block can be defined as an inability to begin or continue writing for reasons other than a lack of basic skills or commitment (Rose, 2009). This term was popularized by Edmund Bergler, a psychiatrist from Austria, in 1947 (Castillo, 2014). According to Zorba (2023), stopping in the writing process may result in temporary but significant reductions in the quality and quantity of written works. However, one of the challenges that needs to be explored is writer's block which is still   a problem that students often face.

The fact is that there are still many students who have difficulty starting and continuing to write their thesis because they cannot come up with ideas. Based on initial interviews at an Islamic university in Pekalongan, several students admitted to experiencing deadlock in the process of writing their undergraduate thesis. This problem is influenced by several factors such as students having difficulty findng appropriate references, demands for originality in the thesis, different lecturer

perspectives on a research topic and problems that arise from within the students themselves. According to Ahmed and Güss (2022), writing barriers occur due to affective or physiological, motivational, cognitive, and behavioral factors, and in some cases, a combination of these factors is also observed. Through this statement, writer's block usually occurs because of many things. Prihandoko (2021) was stated that students faced writer's block because the structure of undergraduate thesis was considered too complicated. Meanwhile, Bastung et al. (2017) stated that most students experience writer's block when writing introductions and conclusions. Therefore, it can be underlined that the causes of writer's block is generally a combination of motivational or pshycology problems and students' ability to write. Al Ghifari et al. (2023) argue that when a writer faces pressure and has no ideas or has low motivation to write, it is best to stop writing so that the writing is not mixed with things that make it bad. Based on the explanation above, writers need to find a way to overcome this problem.

The ability to overcome problems in writing an undergraduate thesis is very necessary for students. There are many things a writer can do when experiencing writer's block. Bachofen (2014) concludes that he follows certain ways to overcome blocks, doing many things to solicit ideas and restore his positive mood to continue writing. Meanwhile, according to Zorba (2023), there are three ways to overcome student writer's block. Most students choose to continue writing. Furthermore, students also asked for feedback from friends or teachers. Apart from that, students also chose to

do eating and drinking activities as a strategy to overcome writer's block. In his research, Zorba (2023) also stated that students need to improve their ability to use appropriate academic language, coherence, appropriate transitions, and producing well-written thesis statements. Writers would read some articles from certain journals, organize their time and place, etc. This refreshes them and makes them more positive. Through previous research we can find ways to overcome writer's block as one of the problems in writing undergraduate thesis.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher hopes that this research reveals that knowing the challenges faced by students in writing a undergraduate thesis can direct them to be able to find ways to complete their writing well. Writing undergraduate thesis can be an easy thing for students who have strategies to face challenges, but it will be hard if students do not know the challenges they face. Through knowledge of the causes of writer's block, students can determine the strategies used to overcome and manage it. Thus, students will be a little easier in completing their thesis. Through exploring the phenomenon of writer's block in writing thesis, this research seeks to provide insight into the causes and strategies for overcoming writer's block.

1.2   Formulation of the Problem

This study provides two research questions, the researcher explored :

1.   What are the causes of writer's block in undergraduate thesis writing?

2.   What strategies are used by students to overcome writer's block in undergraduate thesis writing?

1.3   Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding about the terms in this study, the researcher provides some definitions related to the study as follows:

Undergraduate thesis is a scientific work that attempts to solve a problem on a particular topic, which is carried out by students under the guidance of their supervisor as one of the graduation requirements (Djatmiko, 2018).

Writer's block is a situation where the writer will have difficulty starting to find new ideas or even continue writing (Castillo, 2014).

1.4   Aim of Study

The aims of this study are to investigate the causes of writer's block and students' strategies for overcoming writer's

block in undergraduate thesis writing.

1.5 **Significances of the Research**

a. Theoretical Use:

The results of this research will contribute to Carter's (2017) theory regarding the development of research writing and also support theories related to causes and strategies for overcoming the challenges students face in academic writing.

b. Empirical Use:

This study will provide empirical information about the causes of writer's block and how to overcome it.

c. Practical Use:

This research will give students an understanding through in-depth information in dealing with writer's block when writing a thesis. Apart from that, this research can also help supervisors provide a solution to the problem of writer's block experienced by students in undergraduate thesis. This research could provide a practical insight for overcoming writer's block when writing an undergraduate thesis.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1   Summary

Based on the findings and discussion regarding the causes of writer's block in writing a thesis, it appears that many things can influence the occurrence of writer's block. The researcher found that students' fear of facing criticism and failure. This happens because students feel less confident about their writing and consider criticism to be a failure. Second, the research results show that the cause of writer's block is a lack of ability to deal with problems when writing. The next finding is that students often feel a lack of encouragement or motivation to write. The important thing about the cause of writer's block is that students have difficulty finding research topics and processing ideas into writing. This problem arise because students that they lack references regarding the research they were going to carry out. The findings above are correlated with the occurrence of writer's block which then causes a decrease in the level of productivity in writing undergraduate thesis.

In this study, participants claim that they take steps to get out of writer's block. The strategy used by students is to use language applications as a tool. Most participants express using language apps such as Grammarly and Quillbot to help with paraphrasing and checking grammar. Then they read lots of references to get a lot of information about what will be researched. All of the participants conduct consultation sessions with supervisors and discussions with colleagues. The benefit from this strategy is that they get

answers to the problems they face and gain new insights into the research being carried out. Furthermore, they choose to write in comfortable conditions to facilitate their writing process. Some participants assume that writing in a comfortable situation would improve their mood. These strategies are use to overcome writer's block so that the thesis writing process can run effectively.

5.2 Recomdendations

5.2.1 Recommendation for EFL Students

In this research, several causes of writer's block are known that can help students avoid it. Besides, it is recommended that students to be able to use strategies to overcome problems such as writer's block that arise when writing a thesis. Therefore, thesis writing can run effectively and efficiently.

5.2.2 Recommendation for Thesis Supervisor

Through this research, it is suggested that supervisior can help students' writing process in completing their thesis, so that students can complete their thesis on time. Supervisors can provide a space for students to consult comfortably when they encounter difficulties in writing their undergraduate thesis. In addition, supervisors are advised to be able to help provide solutions when students experience writer's block.

5.2.3 Recommendation for Future Research

This research is focuses on causes and strategies of students to overcome writer's block. It is recommended that future resserachers explore the characteristics of writer's block, students' feeling and students' experiences regarding writer's block. Moreover, this research highlights on writer's block that occurs in academic writing, especially in undergraduate thesis writing. It is recommended that further study to investigate writer's block in other fields, including creative writing. This research involved students as partisipants, so further study can focus on supervisors as participants.
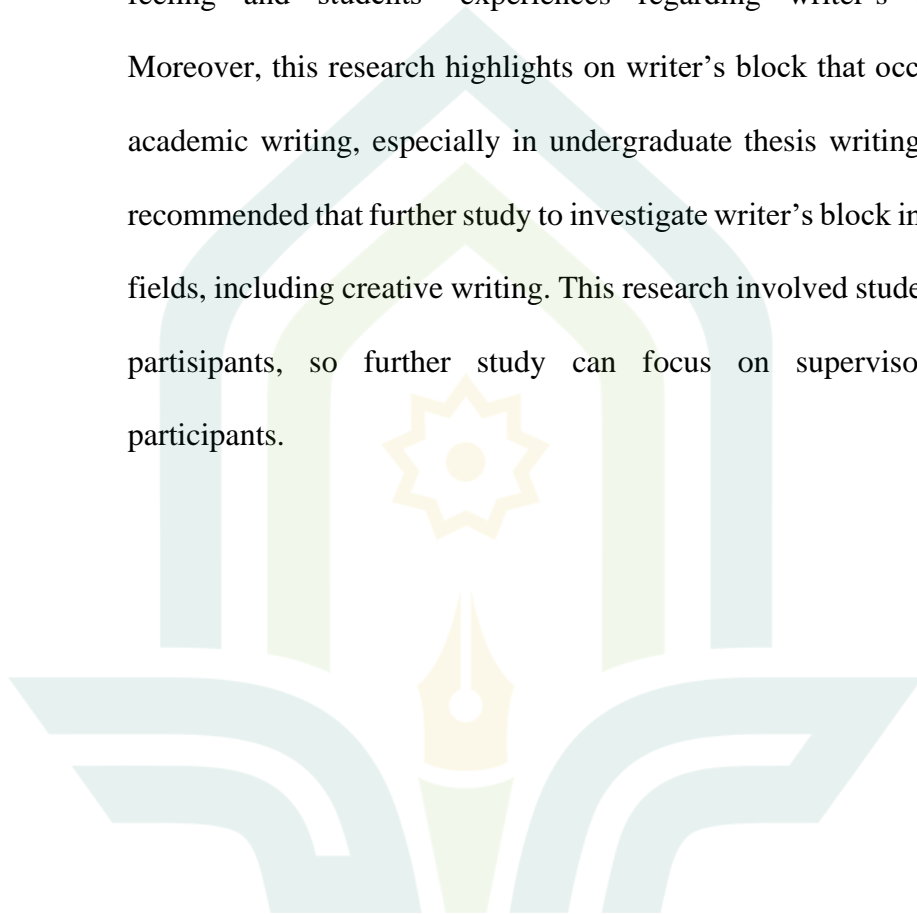
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