

Ways to Overcome Problems in Writing Literature Review: English Education Postgraduate Students' Point of View

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ABSTRACT

Writing a strong thesis in an academic setting is a significant task that must be completed before graduating. Thesis writing is a distinct genre with its own norms, regulations, and criteria. Graduate and master's degree candidates must not only fulfil the prerequisites for this field, but also demonstrate proficiency in a language other than their native tongue, in this case is English. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine how to help Indonesian EFL learners who were writing literature reviews for their master's theses in English majors get over their writing challenges. Six interviewees participated in this study using the qualitative descriptive research approach. This study's findings indicated that there were three approaches. These included the requirement for assistance in drafting literature reviews, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to identify the literature review, and the creation of a mental map of the theoretical framework. To address these approaches, the following steps must be taken. Improving training in research methodologies, improving access to academic resources, and offering a handbook with specific advice on completing literature reviews are a few of them. After that, let the pupils to become more familiar with artificial intelligence and its uses.

Keywords: Literature Review Sections, EFL Postgraduate Students, Ways to Overcome Problems

Introduction

There are three primary forms in the writing process. There are three types of writing: academic, work-related, and personal. Academic writing differs from those other types of writing in that it follows specific guidelines and conventions (Bowker, 2007). Writing a strong thesis in an academic setting is a significant task that must be completed before graduating. Thesis writing is a distinct genre with its own norms, regulations, and criteria. Graduate and master's degree candidates must not only fulfill the prerequisites for this field, but also demonstrate proficiency in a language other than their native tongue, in this case, English.

When finishing a thesis, a writer or researcher needs to consider a few things. According to Halifudin (2012), the components include the following: abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, findings and discussion, and conclusion. One of the components that explains the theory the study addresses is the literature review.

Reviewing the literature means assessing it and combining previous findings into a compelling argument that defines the research gap and, thus, validates the significance of the investigation. It does more than only provide an overview of the corpus of research (Rewhorn, 2018). Higher order cognitive abilities must be applied throughout this process in order to

collect, arrange, summarize, analyze, relate, evaluate, and synthesize the literature (Rewhorn, 2018). According to Huang and Zhang (2016), a person's academic aptitude and understanding of the corpus of literature pertaining to the topic of study may also be gauged by their performance on the literature review. A literature review may be categorized as a sub-genre when it is a part of another body of work, such as a thesis or research paper. It may also be regarded as a genre as it relates to a stand-alone work of writing, like a book or review article.

Certain challenges were discovered by several researchers when preparing literature reviews. The majority concentrate on students pursuing bachelor's degrees. When preparing a literature review, Irawandi and Arisanti (2017) and Puspita (2019) frequently examine both internal and external issues. Puspita (2019) discovered the challenges due to three variables. These are linguistic, social, and personality aspects. This study found that students had difficulty paraphrasing phrases from the source to the thesis writing, particularly in relation to linguistic issues. Muliani also carried out a research that was comparable and included three criteria (2020). Thahirah et al. (2023) concentrate on identifying challenges related to the thesis backdrop. They found that the challenges are with composing and structuring thoughts, coming up with new ideas, vocabulary deficiencies, and grammar.

In the meanwhile, Satriani, et al. (2024) investigated the challenges associated with preparing the master's thesis literature review. They discovered that five challenges had surfaced. Choosing a subtopic for the literature review section, locating credible and pertinent journals to support the research, completing the literature review with a synthesis of skills, creating an outline or flow when writing the literature review section, building an

argument, and understanding the purpose of the literature review are the challenges.

Their research primarily examined the challenges faced by students pursuing bachelor's and master's degrees. Knowing how to get over obstacles is necessary after the issues have been identified. As a result, the current study looks into strategies for overcoming the challenges associated with writing literature reviews for postgraduate courses. Six postgraduate students from two state universities in Bandung are also the subject of this investigation.

Literature review

Writing

A thesis is a piece of work that students complete as a written document (Chandrasekhar, 2008). It is a duty that students must do in order to demonstrate that they have done their research for their final project and in order to graduate from college. A student must prepare a thesis in accordance with their topic of study, which is based on field research, in order to graduate from college. There are several steps that need to be finished when writing a thesis.

Two primary concepts are discussed in this section. The concepts are the main components of the thesis as well as the writing process. It begins with the steps involved in creating an appropriate thesis, including prewriting and planning, writing the thesis, revising, and publication (Lipson, 2005). Prewriting is the process by which the writer arranges the categories or makes a mental map. The next step is to actually begin writing. At this point, the author might go into further detail with each mind map part or thought that it supports. Subsequently, in each writing process, the writing output is not a single finished product. Regarding that, editing ought to be taken into account. The final step is to show or publish the written work. Still, the writing ought to be simple, clear, and instructive.

Following the thesis writing process, certain important components need to be taken into account. The introduction, methods, findings and discussion, literature review, and conclusion are these components. The claims made by Swales and Feak (2012) are validated. They noted that the IMRD format is the organizing structure used in academic writing. Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion is the acronym for the IMRD format (Swales & Feak, 2012). The literature review segment is credited for several reasons in spite of its components.

Literature review

In addition to being one of the most crucial parts of a research paper and academic writing in general, the literature review is also one of the trickiest assignments to complete (Denney & Tewksbury, 2013; Swales & Feak, 2012). (Badenhorst, 2018). The literature review has rarely been discussed from a genre analysis perspective, despite the fact that numerous textbooks and research articles have discussed its various aspects (e.g., meaning and purpose), developed taxonomies for classifying it, designed rubrics for evaluating it (Boote & Beile, 2005), and divided it into types (Swales & Feak, 2012; Fink, 2014). This is because it was not addressed as a separate section (Hsiao & Yu, 2012; Kwan, 2006). Although many textbooks and research articles have discussed genre, including its meaning and purpose, developed taxonomies for classifying it, created rubrics for evaluating it (Boote & Beile, 2005), and divided it into types (Swales & Feak, 2012; Fink, 2014), the genre has rarely been discussed from a genre analysis perspective in the literature review. The reason for this is that it was not covered in a different section (Hsiao & Yu, 2012; Kwan, 2006).

Research Methodology

This research used a descriptive qualitative methodology. According to Taylor et al.

(2000), descriptive data from people's written or spoken words as well as their observable behavior are produced using qualitative methods as a research process. information gathered through open-ended interviews. An interview is a question-and-answer format used to gather data. According to Moleong (2002), this research tool is a purpose-driven discourse. The respondents' responses were gathered using the interview criteria. The interview rules were question-focused and then went into further detail. It was determining the challenges faced by the students. Six postgraduate students participated in the interviews. The participants were postgraduate students from two state institutions in Bandung, West Java, who had previously completed their master's degree program in English instruction.

Findings and Discussions

The findings of this research highlighted ways to overcome students' difficulties in writing thesis literature review. The information presented in this part was obtained from interviews with six postgraduate students from two Bandung State Universities. Three strategies to help students get over the challenges of writing a literature review were identified by this study. The methods covered include mind mapping the theoretical framework, identifying the literature review, and using artificial intelligence (AI) applications to assist with authoring literature reviews. The previously suggested strategies for overcoming obstacles are then explained below.

a. Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications assist in writing literature reviews

In recent years, researchers have increasingly embraced Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications to enhance their literature review process. AI applications have become instrumental tools in

streamlining the literature review process. These applications not only assist researchers in discovering relevant academic sources but also help in organizing information and identifying research gaps more efficiently. These technological advancements offer researchers sophisticated methods for literature searching, and citation analysis.

Nowadays with AI, we use several applications like Publish or Perish, and mind mapping tools specifically designed for literature reviews, as well as Skyscapes.

S1, Translated version

For extracting articles to build a theoretical framework, which used to be manual and time-consuming, I know use applications. Currently, I particularly enjoy using Research Rabbit. With Research Rabbit, you just need to input several articles about your theory (e.g., green theory), and the AI will process and create a mind map that helps identify research gaps.

S2, Translated version

I utilize websites that I get from friends, social media like Instagram, or recommended sources. These include tools like connected papers and other platforms that can assist us in our research.

S4, Translated version

Those proves can be seen that AI-powered tools are helping researchers streamline their literature review process

through automated article extraction, relationship mapping between papers, and gap analysis capabilities. Then, the essence of how these subjects describe using AI tools to make writing literature review more efficient and systematic compared to traditional manual method.

b. Creating mind mapping of the theoretical framework

The development of theoretical frameworks through mind mapping represents a strategic approach in academic research, where scholars employ various methodological techniques to structure their conceptual understanding. Here are the description of interview result.

Regarding mind mapping for specific topics, when I was writing my proposal, I took examples from the internet, looking at how others structured their frameworks and what their diagrams looked like. Then, I studies which approaches seemed most suitable for my work. I definitely use an imitative approach, it means that I look for patterns that I find in scientific articles.

S4, Translated version

I thoroughly read one or two articles that I consider to have comprehensive data, and then I model my work after them. What I mean is, I read and then replicate their approach. I end up following their example because they have extensive, comprehensive data, so I later adopt similar literature organization strategies that they used.

S4, Translated version

I use active reading, so it is like read and create a map. When making these maps, it is a rather lengthy process that needs to be done carefully to achieve better results.

S5, Translated version

Several key approaches could be found that drawing inspiration from existing frameworks found on the internet, particularly when writing research. Another strategy implemented is focusing on comprehensive reading of one or two data-rich articles as reference models, then adapting their theoretical structure and literature organization. Besides that, one of iterative process used here. The implementing of a cyclical approach of reading and mapping.

c. **The importance of guidance in writing literature review**

In academic research, having clear guidance for writing literature reviews serves as a crucial foundation that helps researchers maintain focus and direction throughout their scholarly investigation.

The research methodology we examine serves as our research 'knife' (analytical tool). So, guidance is extremely important. Do we need guidance in writing? It is absolutely essential. It prevents us from going off track or becoming scattered in our approach.

S6, Translated version

The prove captures the metaphorical comparison of guidance to a research 'knife' (tool) while emphasizing its critical role in maintaining focused and structured literature reviews.

Conclusion

This study identifies three key tactics that postgraduate students in English education use to get over obstacles while writing literature reviews. The three tactics include applying artificial intelligence (AI) apps, creating mind maps of theoretical frameworks, and putting organized writing advice into practice.

The results show two kinds of significances. The first is seen from theoretical significance. The integration of AI tools in literature review processes represents a shift from traditional manual methods to more efficient, technology-enhanced research approaches. Then, mind mapping techniques provide a systematic framework for organizing theoretical concepts, demonstrating the importance of visual representation in academic writing. In line with practical implication, students and researchers should recognize that seeking and utilizing proper guidance is essential for maintaining research focused.

In summary, this study adds to the expanding corpus of information on academic writing techniques and provides useful advice for improving the quality of literature reviews for postgraduate research. The results indicate that conducting a literature review may be greatly enhanced by a mix of technology tools, visual organizing strategies, and appropriate supervision.

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