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## **Exploring EFL Undergraduate Student's Experience on Thesis Writing: A Biographical Narrative Inquiry**

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### **Abstract**

Writing is one of the productive English skills that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Indonesia must acquire for written communication and academic writing. The use of suitable language learning strategies becomes an important consideration to overcome the challenges faced by students. Thesis writing, as one part of academic writing, does not only result in a written product but also contributes to the students' new knowledge. Under the theory of socio-cultural in cognitive development, this research is aimed at exploring EFL undergraduate students' experiences with the process of thesis writing and discovering how EFL undergraduate students construct new understandings about the research topic and the process of thesis writing. This research employed biographical narrative inquiry. Interview transcripts and multimodal text are the data in this study that are analyzed using thematic analysis. The result shows that the participant used four types of language learning strategies, namely cognitive, social, metacognitive, and affective, to solve the writing challenges that consist of difficulties in writing aspects, choosing appropriate theories, and presenting data. In terms of new knowledge construction, the participant finally performed the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) autonomously and resulted in development of new understandings in academic writing, politeness strategy, critical thinking, and self-correction skills.

**Keywords:** thesis writing, language learning strategies, learning experience, socio-cultural theory

### **INTRODUCTION**

Writing is one of the productive English skills that English as Foreign Language (EFL) students in Indonesia must acquire for written communication and academic writing. Academic writing ability, considered to be the most important aspect, must be acquired by a student, particularly an Indonesian EFL student, to fulfill any academic

requirements (Fareed et al., 2016). As writing is an essential skill for communicating with others, the ability to write in a foreign language is invaluable. Self-assessment is one of the most appropriate methods for evaluating the success of learners throughout the instructional process (Brown, 2005). It is undeniable that a learner, particularly an Indonesian EFL learner, must acquire academic writing skills which are considered to be the most essential aspect, in order to fulfill any lengthy academic requirements such as writing an observation report, book, or thesis (Supriyadi, 2015). Academic writing in English can be difficult for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writers, who frequently encounter language barriers. Academic writing is a difficult and complex form of writing because it requires students to engage in critical thinking along with composing properly. In addition, it entails a number of pillars of academic writing success (Al Badi, 2015). Therefore, academic writing is not as straightforward as one might presume. It requires an intricate procedure that integrates various thoughts, synthesizes perspectives, and extends conceptual terms, as well as a greater emphasis on authenticity, voice, and audience (Lavelle & Bushrow, 2007).

In Indonesian higher education contexts, such as those in English language education programs, writing a thesis is a prerequisite for undergraduate students to graduate from the university. However, writing a thesis might be a challenging task for the students, given their little experience conducting research and their difficulties in writing academically in their foreign language, i.e., English (Alharbi, 2019). Internal and external factors can influence the composition of a thesis, according to Murray (2017). The internal factor is the students' knowledge, whereas the external factor is the environment. Therefore, the intellectual and social competencies of the students could determine the essential points of their thesis. This study focuses on EFL undergraduate students experiences with the process of thesis writing and the ways in which EFL undergraduate students construct new understandings about the research topic and the process of thesis writing. According to the background of the study, the problems of the study are mentioned as follows:

1. What are EFL undergraduate student's experience from the process of thesis writing?
2. How do EFL undergraduate student construct new understanding about the research topic and the process of thesis writing?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Academic Writing**

Academic writing can be defined as a type of writing that is commonly used in college level and academic environment that use a formal language and specific structure; also, academic writing involves different types of students' cognitive skill (Oshima & Hogue, 2006; Almawarni, 2020). Academic writing has a specific set of characteristics namely complexity, objectivity, formality, hedging (Gillet, 2017). Aside from the academic writing characteristics, a number of aspects should be mastered to produce written text

properly, they are content, organization, meaning, vocabulary, and mechanics (Brown, 2004; Jacob, 1981; Nunan, 1991; Coxhead, 2012). As academic writing is considered as a difficult skill to master, some experts classified the types of difficulties that may be faced by the students. Nenotek et al. (2022) revealed that the students' difficulties in academic writing are in content, organization, discourse, and mechanics. Al-Mukdad (2019) stated that grammar and organization were the difficulties faced by academic writing course students. Summarizing the difficulties that had been exposed through previous studies, it is possible that students face different types of difficulties in writing academic paper.

### **Thesis Writing in EFL Undergraduate Context**

Thesis, in the context of Indonesian, refers to graduate-level research created by both undergraduate and graduate students. It is a form of academic writing in which an idea or theory is analyzed logically (Badreddine, 2019). Moreover, Darmono and Hasan (2002) stated that a thesis is the written manifestation of a student's beliefs that is required for graduation. In addition, they explained that the thesis is written in a systematic manner through field or library research. It is evident that a thesis is the concluding paper written by undergraduate and/or graduate students in order to graduate logically and methodically through the process of research. Writing a thesis is difficult, particularly for EFL undergraduates. The process may be extremely complicated and time-consuming to complete. According to Berndtsson et al. (2008), the thesis project is likely the largest endeavor students will undertake in their academic careers or in their lives.

### **Language Learning Strategies in Academic Writing**

Rubin and Stern introduced the concept of language learning strategies for the first time in 1975. Various definitions of language learning strategies have emerged and been defined in numerous ways in recent years. Based on the aforementioned definitions stated by the experts, it can be concluded that language learning strategies refer to specific action or strategy taken by language learners for helping them comprehend and attain language competences (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Brown, 2000; Oxford, 2017; Alfariy, 2021). Oxford (1990) states that there are two types of strategies: direct and indirect. Direct strategies are language learning strategies that involve the target language explicitly. Memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies are included here. In the meantime, indirect strategies support and manage language acquisition without involving the target language explicitly. Metacognitive, affective, and social strategies are included.

Furthermore, the following definitions were formulated for each strategy:

#### **a. Memory Strategies**

Memory strategies serve as mechanisms for the retention and retrieval of new information. Memory strategies is also known as mnemonics. They are essential to the process of acquiring a foreign language, particularly for memorization of English words. According to Oxford (1990), memory strategies are based on principles such as arranging and associating objects.

#### **b. Cognitive Strategies**

Cognitive strategies are the second group of direct strategies, and they are believed to play an essential role in the process of learning a foreign language. According to Oxford in Nikmalini (2014), the four main sets of strategies are analysis, reasoning, note-taking, and receiving and transmitting messages. Practice strategies are among the most important cognitive strategies. Learners overuse cognitive strategies, however, when they overgeneralize them or when they transmit sentences from one language to another, most frequently from their native language to the target language.

c. Compensation Strategies

Compensatory strategies aid students in overcoming obstacles brought on by limitations in the field of knowledge. With the aid of these strategies, learners can use the newly acquired language for either comprehension or production based on the context of previously perceived written or spoken text.

d. Metacognitive Techniques

The definition of metacognitive learning strategies is provided. These strategies are used to monitor, control, or self-direct language learning. These processes include planning, prioritizing, goal-setting, and self-management.

e. Social Strategies

Because language is an aspect of social behavior, it requires interpersonal communication. Utilizing strategies such as asking inquiries, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others, the strategies assist language learners to acquire knowledge with others.

f. Affective Strategies

Affective strategies are techniques such as self-reinforcement and positive self-talk that assist language learners in gaining greater control over their emotions, attitudes, and motivation in relation to language acquisition. It can also help them develop intense concentration when learning something. Conversely, it will be difficult for students to comprehend their learning if they cannot maintain a positive attitude.

According to Yulianti (2018), learning strategies facilitate students' expression of their own learning style, recognition of their identity as "learners," and recognition of their learning difficulties. Students encounter difficulties when composing academic papers. These issues pertain to the text's subject matter, structure, vocabulary, syntax, and mechanics. That is why, when a student is aware of the obstacles, he or she must also be aware of the strategies for overcoming them. Oxford, as cited in Putria (2017), stated that a number of factors influence the selection of a learning strategy: level of awareness, learning stage, task requirements, teacher expectations, age, gender, nationality or ethnicity, general learning style, personal nature, motivation level, and reason for learning the language. Thus, language learning strategies could differ based on the unique personal histories of individual students.

### **Socio-Cultural Theory in EFL Academic Writing**

Constructivist learning has developed as a substantial approach to teaching and learning. During past decades many researchers and scientists had elaborated on the historical precedents for constructivist learning theory. Vygotsky, the father of social constructivism, claimed that learning occurs through dialogue (Vygotsky, 1978). This dialogue is initially intermental, meaning it takes place between teacher and student, between students, or even between text and reader. However, the learner makes sense of what is said or written through internal or intramental dialogue (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus learning is both interactive in the sense that learners must interact with sources of ideas/knowledge in social settings, as well as in the sense that they must take an active part in reconstructing ideas/knowledge within their own minds.

There are two major strands of constructivism in language learning namely cognitive constructivism and social constructivism. In cognitive constructivism, learners are posited as active agents in knowledge construction (Piaget, 1971). Using this framework, students actively reconstruct knowledge in highly nuanced, unique ways, constructing malleable conceptual topologies based on prior knowledge, formal educational experiences, and other cues that aid comprehension. According to social constructivism, as opposed to cognitive constructivism, knowledge is seen as rooted in peoples' social contexts (Vygotsky and Cole, 1978). This theory holds that knowledge is formed via exposure to local and global cultural contexts and comes from engagement with an increasing variety of communities of practice (Cole, 1990; Scribner, 1985). In addition, Vygotsky's concept of "zone of proximal development" states that emerging mental functions must be supported and quantified through collaborative activities in which students engage in heuristic tasks or problem-solving with the help of more experienced specialists (Vygotsky and Cole, 1978).

Social environment is deeply considered in Vygotsky's theory; it helps learners to be critical in their learning process. Social interactions in social environment help learners to coordinate those three factors to build a critical learning process and achieve higher knowledge together with their partners (Schunk, 2008). Vygotsky (1978) called it as Zone of Proximal Development. It is defined as the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (as cited in Schunk, 2008).

One more concept linked with ZPD is of Scaffolding, i.e. a technique to provide right kind of support in right amount at right time to increase learners' competence. Wood et al. (1976) stated that scaffolding is a social process to support learners with an aim towards helping their future independence. Scaffolding is temporary, specific, meaningful and interactive. Walqui (2006) described scaffolding as contingent, collaborative and interactive. Through the interaction, the knowledgeable provides support to the novice. It helps a learner to move from a Zone of Actual Development to Zone of Proximal Development and finally reach to Zone of Desired Development, with the help of a more experienced person like, peers, elders in family, or teachers.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The researcher employed a narrative inquiry with biographical case study (Barkhuizen, 2014) by exploring the participant's experience during the process of thesis writing and the way the participant constructed new knowledge as a result of the thesis writing process. The data sources for this study were the interview transcript that was written based on the researcher and the participant's interview session and the participant's document related to the process of thesis writing.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### **EFL undergraduate student's experience from the process of thesis writing.**

There are two kinds of experiences had by EFL undergraduate student in the process of thesis writing. First, the student faced several challenges during the process of thesis writing, as stated in the interview result below

a. Writing aspects errors

*"Saya sering mendapatkan feedback tentang content dan grammar."*

(Interview, B12)

b. Difficulties in choosing appropriate theory

*"Saya juga pernah mendapatkan feedback terkait penggunaan teori yang tidak sesuai dan mengharuskan saya untuk mengganti teori tersebut berikut dengan hasil pembahasan yang telah dikerjakan."*

(Interview, B12)

c. Confusion on presenting the data analysis results

*"Saya kesulitan untuk menuangkan hasil analisis saya ke dalam bentuk tulisan karena saya bingung bagaimana penyajian data yang benar."*

(Interview, B7)

*"Kesulitannya lebih ke bingung bagaimana menuliskan hasil olah datanya dan kekurangan teman diskusi karena hanya sedikit mahasiswa yang melakukan discourse analysis dengan topik serupa."*

(Interview, B24)

The first challenge was about the writing aspects difficulties such as grammar, punctuation, and sentences structure of the paragraphs. Bakhou and Bouhanian (2020) found the similar difficulties on the thesis writing process of master students. Lack of academic writing skill, specifically insufficient grammar knowledge, became one influential factor that affected the students' writing quality. The second challenge was difficulty of choosing appropriate theory. The result is in line with a research by Abdulkareem (2013) who found that referencing and citing from correct resources were the critical challenges learners encountered in Academic Writing. The third challenge was

arising confusion on presenting the data analysis results. Boufeldja and Bouhanian (2015) presented similar finding that was students lack of knowledge concerning how each section and chapter of their thesis should be written.

Second, the student combined four group of language learning strategies formulated by Oxford (1990) to support her process of thesis writing and solve the difficulties. Cognitive strategy was used by the researcher to elaborate her knowledge with the revision so she can revise the thesis autonomously and avoid repetitive feedback. Social strategy was in form of social interaction with the participant's advisor and friends to get feedback and different point of view. Compensation strategy was used by looking for the other resources to support her prior knowledge of the research topic. The affective strategy was utilized by giving an encouragement for herself. All of the mentioned use of the strategies were retrieved based on interview result described in following section:

a. Cognitive

The participant use her knowledge to elaborate the revision note from advisor to her understandings, then she was able to revise the thesis appropriately and avoid repetitive mistakes.

*"Saya sering merevisi sendiri karena saya sering mengelaborasi revisi yang diberikan dosen pada konsultasi sebelumnya agar kesalahan yang direvisi tidak terulang kembali. Sebagai contoh, pada konsultasi sebelumnya telah dijelaskan kesalahan pada grammar, lalu saya berinisiatif untuk mengingat kembali feedback dari pembimbing untuk diterapkan pada penulisan saya yang sekarang. Saya juga sering merevisi sebagai hasil dari saya membaca referensi yang sudah ada."*

(Interview, B14)

b. Social

She consulted her advisor about the thesis progress and asked for her friend's feedback and suggestion.

*"Saya aktif berkonsultasi seminggu sekali. Saya sering berinisiatif untuk bertanya saat pembimbingan terkait kesulitan-kesulitan saya, dan biasanya saya langsung mendapatkan solusi saat itu juga."*

(Interview, B28)

c. Compensation

She gathered and prepared the needed material before she started writing.

*"Sebelum menulis skripsi, sebelumnya saya kurang memahami topik yang akan saya tulis. Namun untuk menulis sebuah karya tulis seperti skripsi, saya harus paling tidak memahami konsep dasar dan teorinya. Jadi saya terus mengembangkan pengetahuan saya dalam topik yang saya bahas, dengan riset pada internet (blog, youtube, googling) dan membaca (artikel, topik, buku)."*

(Interview, B40)

She used external sources to enrich and elevate the quality of her thesis such as books, research articles, and grammar-checker application.

*"Sumber lain yang saya gunakan adalah artikel penelitian dan buku."*

(Interview, B30)

*"Jika revisinya berupa revisi pada grammar, saya akan mengecek kembali secara manual lalu jika dirasa membutuhkan bantuan alat cek grammar saya menggunakan grammarly."*

(Interview, B13)

d. Affective

She gave positive affirmation to herself

*"Refleksi yang saya lakukan lebih kepada memberi afirmasi diri kalau saya sanggup menulis dan menyelesaikan skripsi ini."*

(Interview, B37)

To conclude, the participant combined four types of language learning strategies to improve the quality of her thesis writing and to overcome the difficulties on the writing process. Cognitive, social, metacognitive, and affective strategies were seen as valuable categories of language learning strategies that effectively aid the participant.

The use of appropriate language learning strategies is believed to be one of the factors that can help achieve the goal of foreign language learning. Studies have confirmed that language learning strategies help students become more effective in the classroom and encourage the development of more efficient mastery of the target language use (Oxford, 2016). Regarding the various use of language learning strategies, Sartika et al. (2019) explained that successful language learners usually use more learning strategies on their learning process. The student had finished her thesis and had completed the thesis examination, it reflects her successful result of thesis writing process that were supported by the use of different strategy types.

**EFL undergraduate student's new understanding construction about the research topic and the process of thesis writing.**

The participant constructed new understanding about theory underlying the research by developing her Zone of Proximal Development mediated by scaffolding from her advisor and peers as more knowledgeable others, based on Vygotsky's (1978) theory of sociocultural. The topic of her thesis is about discourse analysis of politeness strategy. At first, this topic was suggested by the advisor and she did not have a comprehensive knowledge about politeness strategy. The advisor was aware about the participant's basic knowledge and he suggested the participant to get more information regarding the topics related to the determined topic.

*"Topik ini awalnya merupakan saran dari salah satu pembimbing. Setelah mendapatkan saran tersebut, saya mencari tahu tentang topik ini lalu memutuskan untuk menerima dan melanjutkan saran tersebut untuk menjadi pembahasan pada skripsi saya."*

(Interview, B17)



As mentioned previously, the participant has not comprehended the topic deeply yet. She initiated an autonomous learning process by accessing the resources to enrich her knowledge about positive politeness continuously.

*"Awalnya kurang paham tapi saya terus mencari tahu sehingga pada akhirnya saya cukup memahami topik ini."*

(Interview, B19)

In addition to the autonomous resources exploration, the participant sought for the information by asking her peers who chose similar topic of thesis namely politeness strategy. In this stage, the participant gained new insights about how positive politeness strategy can be utilized to analyse different contexts such as talkshow, film, or teaching and learning activities in school.

*"Saya mencari artikel sebanyak-banyaknya untuk menambah pengetahuan saya tentang positive politeness. Saya juga bertanya pada teman saya yang memilih topik yang sama, sehingga saya bisa memahami topik tersebut. Saya akhirnya tahu bahwa pembahasan positive politeness dapat dilakukan untuk analisis pada talkshow, film, ataupun kegiatan belajar mengajar di sekolah."*

(Interview, B20)

The participant was actively asking for her advisor's feedback during consultation sessions. In these sessions, the advisor responded the participant's questions about her difficulties and confusion in thesis writing by providing several forms of scaffolding, as stated in the interview session with participant:

*"Saya aktif berkonsultasi seminggu sekali. Saya sering berinisiatif untuk bertanya saat pembimbingan terkait kesulitan-kesulitan saya, dan biasanya saya langsung mendapatkan solusi saat itu juga."*

(Interview, B28)

*"Saya selalu bertanya pada beliau. Sekecil apapun kebingungan saya, saya menanyakan hal tersebut."*

(Interview, B29)

*"Beliau terkadang secara langsung memberikan informasi yang kurang saya pahami. Terkadang juga beliau meminta saya untuk mencari tahu sendiri dulu dengan diberikan beberapa petunjuk atau kata kunci, lalu saya bisa mendapatkan informasi baru, setelah itu beliau mengkonfirmasi apakah informasi saya benar atau salah, jika salah maka beliau langsung mengarahkan saya, dan jika benar terkadang beliau menambahkan beberapa informasi baru atau analogi baru untuk menambah pemahaman."*

(Interview, B45)

Scaffolding provided by the advisor was direct direction or answer about the participant's difficulties, and the instruction for the participant to search for the needed information autonomously which was preceded by giving clues or keywords. After that, the advisor confirmed the accuracy of the information, followed by the needed guidance. If participant's work was still incorrect, the advisor would guide her to the intended information or the correct one. On the other hand, the advisor would give several additional informations if the participant already worked on the instruction correctly. The advisor also gave the scaffolding to the participant by explaining the uncomprehended materials through analogy.

As a result from the scaffolding provision, the participant could understand the topic of the thesis and write the thesis easier, as stated in the interview:

*"Untuk menulis saya harus paham, dengan revisi berkali-kali saya jadi paham. Dengan membaca dan feedback dari dosen, pengetahuan saya semakin bertambah sehingga saya lebih paham dan mempermudah penulisan."*

(Interview, B54)

The construction of new knowledge was implied from the participant's ability to elaborate the revision given by supervision on the previous consultation session and the current revision, as can be seen from interview result:

*"Saya sering merevisi sendiri karena saya sering mengelaborasi revisi yang diberikan dosen pada konsultasi sebelumnya agar kesalahan yang direvisi tidak terulang kembali. Sebagai contoh, pada konsultasi sebelumnya telah dijelaskan kesalahan pada grammar, lalu saya berinisiatif untuk mengingat kembali feedback dari pembimbing untuk diterapkan pada penulisan saya yang sekarang. Saya juga sering merevisi sebagai hasil dari saya membaca referensi yang sudah ada."*

(Interview, B14)

In addition, the participant generated better skills on writing in academic context properly, explaining politeness strategy, conducting self-correction, and thinking logically.

*"Pengetahuan saya jelas bertambah, terutama pada pengetahuan tentang teori, kemampuan menulis, kemampuan mengoreksi, dan kemampuan berpikir. Saya jadi mampu untuk menjelaskan apa itu politeness strategy, menyusun tulisan akademik dengan baik dan benar, saya bisa mengoreksi diri sendiri, dan mampu berpikir logis."*

(Interview, B38)

The participant can also process the information gained from her peers selectively because they have a better knowledge on the several subject matters only. The selection of

information is important to improve the thesis' quality, as explained in the interview result:

*"Dan dari teman tidak selalu saya terapkan sebab mereka tidak menguasai topik yang sedang saya tulis namun mereka menguasai beberapa hal yang berkaitan dengan teknik ataupun komposisi penulisan skripsi, jadi saya hanya mengambil saran atau jawaban yang saya butuhkan saja."*

(Interview, B51)

The student constructed new understanding about theory underlying the research. The participant had prior knowledge about politeness strategy and was aware of the necessary knowledge for her thesis. However, some aspects of positive politeness were not fully understood, which fell under her zone of proximal development (ZPD). The participant actively sought feedback from advisors and peers to improve her ZPD. The advisor provided scaffoldings for the participant to gain information on the thesis topic, and she shared her difficulties with her advisor and friends. She also initiated autonomous learning when faced with unfamiliar subjects, searching for references to support her understanding. Through academic writing, the participant expanded her ZPD and developed new understandings in academic writing, politeness strategy, critical thinking, and self-correction skills.

Socio-cultural approach implemented by the student is in form of supervision activities with the advisor and discussion with her peers. Through the social interaction that consists of discussing the difficulties faced during thesis writing and receiving feedback from advisor and peers foster the student's zone of proximal development to achieve the zone of desired development. As Fithriani (2019) stated, the students can produce a better academic writing product after received feedback from their teacher. Meanwhile, the result of the discussion with the student's peer or advisor is seen as one beneficial supplementary information source to enhance her revision quality. In terms of peer feedback utilization, Ginting and Fithriani (2022) revealed that students value the feedback from their peers as useful suggestion that can be perceived well for their writing process. De Brusa and Harutyunyan (2019) found the similar results from their study, students are positively helped by peer feedback because they can share different point of views that can improve their writing result in academic writing. In conclusion social interaction fosters the students' zone of proximal development in academic writing process, which can be seen as the beneficial approach according to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of cognitive development.

As the student's zone of proximal development is fostered to achieve the zone of desired development, several skills are unlocked as a result of scaffolding given by the advisor and peers during the thesis writing process. The skills include academic writing skills, politeness strategy knowledge, critical thinking, and self-correction. A study by Xianqi (2023) showed a similar result: critical thinking development in academic writing classes can be improved through social interaction. Viewed from the socio-cultural theory of cognitive development by Vygotsky, the result of the study emphasized that topic

discussion not only fosters students' English academic writing skills but also helps them to set up a correct world outlook, which can enhance their critical thinking skills. Abbaspour et al. (2021), regarding the self-correction skill, explained that through the provision of scaffolding in the academic writing process, students self-correction skills will be improved, which will affect their motivation and self-confidence.

In conclusion, under Vigotsky's socio-cultural theory of cognitive development, new understanding or knowledge construction is developed through social interaction. Scaffolding plays an important role as a facilitator of understanding construction from the zone of proximal development to the zone of desired development. The result is not only regarding the knowledge of the text's topic development but also the development of other skills such as critical thinking and self-correction skills.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

This study explores student's experience from the process of thesis writing and EFL undergraduate students' construction of new understanding about the research topic and the process of thesis writing. The previous chapter describes two main points in the following paragraphs.

First, the experience is about the challenges faced by the students during the process of thesis writing. The first challenge was about the writing aspects difficulties such as grammar, punctuation, and sentences structure of the paragraphs. The second challenge was difficulty of choosing appropriate theory, and the third challenge was arising confusion on presenting the data analysis results. Second, there are two kinds of experiences had by EFL undergraduate student in the process of thesis writing. First, the student combined four group of language learning strategies formulated by Oxford (1990) to support her process of thesis writing and solve the difficulties. Cognitive strategy was used by the researcher to elaborate her knowledge with the revision so she can revise the thesis autonomously and avoid repetitive feedback. Social strategy was in form of social interaction with the participant's advisor and friends to get feedback and different point of view. Compensation strategy was used by looking for the other resources to support her prior knowledge of the research topic. The affective strategy was utilized by giving an encouragement for herself.

The second, the participant constructed new understanding about theory underlying the research by confirming the information from the advisor and reading related research article. At first, she did not have a comprehensive knowledge about politeness strategy. The student gained new understanding of the research theory and politeness strategy, but some aspects of positive politeness were not fully understood. They sought feedback from advisors and peers to improve their zone of proximal development (ZPD). They shared difficulties and initiated autonomous learning when faced with unfamiliar subjects. Through academic writing, they expanded their ZPD and developed new understandings in academic writing, politeness strategy, critical thinking, and self-correction skills.

The thesis writing as one form of academic writing that should be finished by undergraduate students is a challenging process. It is important for students to master the

academic writing skill and research skill to produce a good-quality of thesis. The further researcher may conduct the similar research about student's experience from the process of thesis writing and EFL undergraduate students' construction of new understanding about the research topic and the process of thesis writing by choosing different level of participants such as master or doctoral students. Involving a wider range of population is also recommended in order to gain more reliable generalizability.

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