Supervisors' Perspectives on Generic Difficulties Faced by EFL Students in Writing Thesis: A Multiple Case Analysis

Hari Prasad Tiwari

Tribhuvan University

Author Note

Dr. Hari Prasad Tiwari (orchid: 0000-0002-0023-3360) is a lecturer in English Education at Mahendra Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj, which is one of the constituent campuses of Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu. He teaches and supervises postgraduate students. In addition to teaching, he has been actively involved in teacher training, seminars, and workshops. He has also completed PhD in English Education from Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

Correspondence concerned in this article should be addressed to Dr. Hari Prasad Tiwari, Tribhuvan University. Email: haritiwarimmc@gmail.com

Abstract

Writing a thesis is one form of academic writing that requires adequate research-related knowledge, interest, motivation, and effort. For this reason, students often consider thesis writing a challenging task. This qualitative multiple case study seeks to explore supervisors' perspectives on the difficulties faced by master's level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students while writing theses in English Education. The participants consisted of eight thesis supervisors who have supervised at least ten master's theses written by the students who studied English Education as the specialization subject at the Master's level at constituent campuses under the Faculty of Education (FoE), Tribhuvan University (TU). I used simple random sampling to select the constituent campuses and purposive sampling to select the sample. I collected the data using a semi-structured interview. The interviews were conducted via a video conferencing tool named Zoom. According to the interest of the participants, the interviews were conducted in English, and all the interviews were audio-video recorded in Zoom. Recorded interviews were then transcribed and analyzed using the constant comparison method of qualitative data analysis. The findings show that the students' typical challenges with thesis writing were connected to their difficulty in integrating and generalizing related literature, their inability to prepare a theoretical framework, their lack of general knowledge of research, their lack of knowledge of citation and referencing, their difficulties in selecting appropriate methodology, and their inability to use academic language. The study concluded that EFL graduate students, regardless of their performance on the written examinations, depend substantially on their supervisors when writing a thesis.

Keywords: challenges, Master's level students, research, supervisors' viewpoints, thesis writing

Supervisors' Perspectives on Generic Difficulties Faced by EFL Students in Writing Thesis: A Multiple Case Analysis

A thesis is a piece of academic writing that requires both intellectual and rhetorical abilities. According to Dong (1998), writing a thesis in a second or foreign (SL or FL) language is considered a very complex and challenging task. But no matter how challenging it is, writing a thesis is mandatory for the students who study for master's degrees in English Education at the Faculty of Education (FoE) at Tribhuvan University (TU) to complete a master's degree. Students who study M.Ed. in English Education at constituent and affiliated campuses under FoE should write their theses according to the format and guidelines prescribed by the Dean's office. Each student is assigned a supervisor by the respective department to assist them in writing their theses. During the thesis writing process, the supervisors guide and assist the students. Furthermore, students write their thesis under the guidance and supervision of a supervisor. When the students complete their theses, they are submitted to the concerned department with the supervisors' recommendation for external evaluation. They are then evaluated by an external examiner appointed by the Dean's office and approved by the thesis evaluation committee, which has three members, including the department head, an external examiner, and a member. Although the thesis is evaluated and approved by the thesis evaluation and approval committee, it cannot be evaluated without the recommendation of the supervisor. If the supervisor does not guide and supervise the students properly, they will face many problems during thesis writing. Therefore, the supervisor has a great deal of importance when writing a research paper.

According to Oshima (1998), academic writing is more challenging in an academic setting, like thesis writing. This ability requires research and training to master. In recent years, researchers have become more interested in investigating

whether and how much L2 students who write a thesis in English find it difficult to write the thesis to meet the standards according to the genre (Vos, 2013). Supervisors report that students struggle to construct a cohesive, coherent, and well-balanced text during thesis writing (Todd et al., 2006). They also report that students struggle to contextualize their arguments in different sections of their theses. According to Divsar (2018), students have trouble composing master's theses because they lack fundamental knowledge of the thesis writing process and its components, such as the literature review. For example, students frequently scrawl irrelevant information in the literature and fail to integrate the required information in their theses. They do not value the time supervisors devote to delivering feedback and are oblivious to their responsibilities (Hardling, 2004). According to a study by Brause (1999), the most challenging characteristics of master's thesis writers are their educational background, grammar, and cultural differences, which can result in despondency, loneliness, and isolation. According to a different study by Hyland (2019), postgraduate students, particularly those who are second language learners, have difficulty using citations in their master's thesis. He further adds that a major problem faced by second-language students in thesis writing is their inability to organize reference material in the research report.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the general difficulties students face when writing thesis. But, the specific generic problems faced by students while writing thesis have been exposed very little. The present study attempts to explore the generic challenges faced by master's level EFL students in writing theses in English Education from the point of view of the supervisors in the Nepalese context. Discovering the supervisors' perspectives on the student's writing would deepen our comprehension of the writing challenges faced by EFL students in the Nepalese context. This study would also aid students in being cognizant of the supervisors' interests and comments. By investigating

supervisors' perceptions, students may be able to reduce their writing errors by adhering to the supervisors' advice. Thus, this research is crucial for bridging the gap in the research study.

Literature Review

Thesis writing in M.Ed. in English Education is a form of academic writing that addresses topics or elements in the discourses of linguistics and EFL instruction. It must be supported by research. Research studies reveal that research students often face lexical, syntactic, and discursive writing challenges while writing the thesis at the master's level (Nimulola, 2018). Lexical challenges include students' inability to choose precise and proper words, overuse and misuse of linking adverbials, and inappropriate use of articles and prepositions. Similarly, students' limited knowledge of academic vocabulary is also one of the main challenges for students in writing a thesis (Lovitts, 2007). On a syntactic level, students often use run-on sentences, sentence fragments, paraphrasing, and sentence patterns. An academic paper requires sentence variety, but students very often cannot maintain sentence variety in their thesis. Similarly, challenges in discourse contain discourse ambiguities, mixtures of discourse categories, subject shifting in discourse, inconsistency, and overgeneralization of discourse (Wang, 2004). Students' incomplete knowledge of grammatical items, carelessness in academic writing, lack of the habit of revising and editing the draft, a casual attitude towards uncertainties, and interference from their mother tongue are other challenges in thesis writing (Peng, 2018). These linguistic challenges are associated with meta-discourse challenges in thesis writing rather than content and other generic challenges (Swales, 1990). As mentioned by Parry (1998), supervisors experienced that the students struggled to organize consistent and balanced information for certain chapters of the thesis due to their unfamiliarity with research activities. Supervisors also remark that students struggle to frame their arguments in reference to the literature due to a failure to employ a proper

model of the thesis (Thompson, 1999). According to Thompson (2009), students struggle with writing hypotheses, literature review, methodology, results, and discussion and hypothesis and referencing research works that they have reviewed. Armstrong (2004) asserts that nearly fifty percent of students are unable to conclude their dissertations due to three distinct factors: personality, professionalism, and organization. Examples of the personality factor include distinctions in interpersonal language and work style. Organizational factors include student responsibilities and inadequate departmental provisions. Ignorant students and a lack of research interest are examples of the professional factor.

In addition to challenges at the linguistic level, numerous studies have identified additional challenges directly related to the genre of theses in terms of the introduction, literature review, research techniques, and discussion. Qiao (2013) investigated the English major students' difficulties in writing the introduction of their thesis at six institutions in northern China. The research shows that the probability value of the qualified samples is somewhat low, and there are significant differences in the relative frequency of the required moves used in writing the introduction section of the thesis. The study further emphasized that some students lack adequate awareness of the genre structure, social functions, and cognitive schema of a thesis, which hinders their ability to effectively convey their ideas in their thesis. Samraj (2008) also argues that students mostly focus on the real world instead of focusing on and identifying a niche or gap in the territory.

Similarly, the study conducted by Tahririan and Jalilifar (2004) revealed three challenges that students face while writing the literature review section of their thesis. These challenges include students' inability to construct a theoretical framework, their inability to create a research gap and reinforce the research gap due to their unfamiliarity with moves used in writing literature reviews, and their interest in incorporating the literature of elite authors or publications. According to

Yin (2009), poor academic foundations, a lack of knowledge of plagiarism, and the unavailability of related literature in their institutions are the main challenges faced by students while writing the literature review of their thesis. His study further highlighted that these challenges result from a lack of student autonomy, poor reading habits, and supervisors' negligence. A similar study conducted by Mullins and Kiley (2002) identified students' difficulty in identifying relevant literature and systematizing and categorizing literature in a consistent and logical manner as the main challenges in writing the literature review for the thesis. Their research has further explored personal or external factors that contribute to the difficulty of writing a literature review. Personal obstacles include a lack of English language proficiency, academic aptitude, and reading and writing experience. Limited access to academic materials, the laziness of the students, and the thesis evaluation system are examples of external obstacles.

The issues that advanced EFL students have with writing about research methodologies include data collection and analysis (Zhang, 2013). Those that concentrate on empirical research seem to struggle more with data collection and analysis, which are crucial components of their dissertation. Graduate students are said to struggle with the appropriateness of the research approach and the veracity of the gathered data.

Bitchener and Baskurkmen (2006) have identified three main challenges faced by EFL postgraduate students while writing their theses. The first is the students' poor understanding of the function of the discussion section; the second is the student's inability to review the related literature in an appropriate manner; and the last is their inability to select an appropriate methodology. According to Lan (2015), discussion sections written by EFL academic writers tend to be subjective and unconvincing. So, writing the discussion section of the thesis is its most challenging component.

It is clear from the literature reviewed above that EFL research students

face a variety of linguistic and general difficulties when writing a thesis in English. It must be acknowledged, however, that there is a paucity of literature addressing supervisors' perspectives in the Nepalese context. In addition, the vast majority of these studies tend to be statistically weighted and devoid of qualitative information. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to gather qualitative information from administrators regarding the difficulties master's level EFL students confront when writing their theses.

Methodology

I utilized the qualitative content multiple case research approach since the research focuses on identifying underlying patterns in the materials being analyzed across multiple cases. With this method, data may be gathered and processed in their natural context without being converted into a numerical form for analysis. Case studies allow for the in-depth examination of social phenomena in the natural environment without compromising sensitivity to the complexity and contextual interconnectedness. Participants in the study included eight supervisors who had supervised at least ten master's-level EFL theses written by master's level major English students at constituent campuses under FoE, TU. I selected eight constituent campuses utilizing a simple random sampling technique and, then I identified the English language teachers with the help of the campus chiefs of respective campuses; and then I selected the eight most experienced supervisors, one supervisor from each campus, using purposive sampling. Teachers' experience was determined based on the number of theses they have supervised rather than the number of years they have taught on campus. I wrote the names of selected participants in alphabetical order and coded their names from S1 to S12 according to alphabetical order. I employed a semi-structured interview technique to collect the data. A consent letter was sent to each of the participants via email, and after receiving their consent, I started to conduct the interview. Self-designed interview protocols were piloted with three supervisors to assess the quality of questions, the

range of potential responses, and the validity of questions. All interviews were conducted in English using Zoom, a video and audio conferencing tool. In addition to the pre-planned questions, unanticipated questions also arose from the major questions with either pre-planned or unanticipated probes. Each interview lasted, on average, 35 minutes. Interviews started in May 2022 and continued until August 2022. Four participants were interviewed twice, while the remaining eight were only interviewed once. All interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the constant comparison technique of qualitative data analysis. The interview transcripts were reviewed and coded by examining and comparing instances. Then distinctive recurrent patterns were recognized and synthesized.

To conduct the research in an ethical manner, I made an effort to adhere to all ethical guidelines. I made every effort to prevent bias and preconceived notions throughout the process. The data were anonymized to protect the identities of respondents and to handle any ethical issues that surfaced during the research in the strictest confidence. Participants were informed of the study's objectives, methods, prospective risks, rewards, and uncertainties, as well as other pertinent information.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of the research are presented in themes. Overall, six themes have been identified based on the information from the semi-structured interviews. Each of the themes is presented and discussed separately in the following section.

Students' Lack of Research Knowledge

The majority of supervisors stated that their students had little research-related knowledge required to write the thesis in English Education. Despite the fact that some of them were secondary-level English teachers with outstanding scores in written examinations. The participants stated that the students lacked academic socialization, as shown by their incapacity to conduct a critical literature review and their inability to develop their own theoretical framework for their

study. The following excerpt stated by S5 revealed that supervisors are often unsatisfied with students who are academically dependent.

> Some students score highly in the written test. But it is evident that their personal research skills are very poor. We (supervisors) must use every available method to assist them in selecting topics, searching related literature, preparing proposals, proofreading and editing the thesis written by the students.

Regarding students' research foundation knowledge, three supervisors said that students lack a grounding in thesis writing since they do not understand what research is and are not taught how to create research reports. Similar to S5, S7 mentioned that students lack expertise and background in research writing since the majority of them have no concept of how to look for material independently. S6 also shared that the students can easily find the required resources to write a thesis in English education, but they do not want to search the resources themselves; rather, they ask supervisors to provide books and other materials they require while writing the thesis. The following excerpt mentioned by S3 also supports that the students do not have the sufficient background knowledge required to write a thesis at the master's level. As S3 said:

> Most of the students whom I supervised did not have fundamental knowledge of the thesis writing process. Although they had studied research methodology courses in B.Ed. fourth year and M.Ed. fourth semester, they were quite unfamiliar with terminologies used in thesis writing. They understood the statement of the problem, literature review and discussion terminologies in different ways.

It is evident from the data that supervisors were completely aware of the obstacles postgraduate students in the Humanities encountered and the tactics they used while preparing the literature review for their theses. There were both parallels and differences in the reports of the supervisors. The findings indicate

that supervisors are very dissatisfied with their research students' inadequate use of general thesis writing characteristics despite their good written scores. Students struggle with thesis writing from the beginning, such as when they must choose a subject and compose a research proposal. This seems to support the results of prior studies demonstrating that EFL students from varied cultures and educational systems commonly fail to achieve thesis writing standards. According to Turmudi (2017), preparing the literature review for the thesis is challenging for students. Students' writing anxiety is referenced in the thesis writing study due to a scarcity of relevant past studies.

Difficulties in Integrating and Generalizing Related Literature

The majority of the participants stated that the difficulty pertaining to the literature review section was mainly centered on the theoretical framework, author identity, argument support, and move development. The supervisors mentioned that the student's inability to integrate and generalize related literature is the main problem for students. As S1 explained:

> I gave three model theses to a student who was writing theses under my supervision. Then I told him to write a proposal as soon as possible. After a few days, he told me that he did not have much time to study many theses, so he asked me to provide another sample thesis that could really help him write the proposal. When I told him to search for the model thesis in the library himself, he told me that he could not write the thesis himself. He also asked for the name of any institute that could write a thesis for him. Two days later, he came to see me again. The second time, I handed him two more sample theses and advised him to write a proposal based on the model thesis that I had given him.

All the supervisors mentioned that the skills of integrating existing literature and identifying research gaps were the most difficult tasks for the students during thesis writing. The participants further stated that the students felt

difficulty finding the relevant literature. Whenever they find the literature, they cannot summarize, paraphrase, or generalize it. The participants said that the students copied the literature into their theses without changing even a single word. As evidenced by the following statements made by the S8:

> Their literature review is often like a shopping list: person A says this, person B says that, and if you ask them what patterns can be observed from these, they are quite poor in this respect, which is a major worry of mine.

Two of the participants reinforced this claim by asserting that the students' literature reviews were distinct from their own study. The lack of a critical perspective was at the heart of the issue, which led to the poor formulation of study questions. Their literature study was wide since it did not expressly relate to their own investigation. He elaborated:

> Literature reviews must first be related to their own theme; they cannot be like two pieces of cake that have been sliced and are lying there independently. Many of the literature review articles I have read seem uncomplicated, yet, what literature review-related questions prompted the authors to do this research? This section's initial purpose is to explain the origins of the authors' inquiries. They should introduce their questions by referencing prior research, and there should be a strong relationship. Now, they are separated sometimes.

So, the literature review and the report of their own study in theses had two different styles, which showed a difference between what could be written and what could be shown, as he said:

> They often replicate the original texts. In their theses, there are two distinct styles: the literature review section is well written since some of it is borrowed, but when it comes to their own research, such as participants, instruments, conclusions, and debates, there are several errors.

Thus, students were deemed incapable of producing evaluative literature evaluations in accordance with their supervisors' expectations. They were simply

permitted to reproduce or retell what was written without commentary on what they had read. Moreover, the students are unable to integrate, generalize, and organize the existing literature from several sources, which is considered a fundamental research competence. They can read and write individual chapter summaries or book reports, but they lack perspectives on what they have read. When evaluating sources, all they can do is describe or replicate the actual content of the book. As a result, their writing is more narrative than evaluative. The data show that students lack critical thinking abilities. To participate effectively in the advanced academic literacy process, students must enhance their research competency, which includes comprehension, problem-finding, problem-solving, and generalizing skills. Despite the general characterization of the writing of the thesis literature review as a challenge in the present study, consistent with the literature (e.g., Haider, 2012; Hayes & Flower, 1986), it is evident that issues such as the availability of classical texts and endnotes and footnotes were not only significant but also discipline-specific. As shown by the literature (Bilal et al., 2013), faculty members were worried about the difficulty faced by the students while synthesizing and critiquing the related literature. It was frequently difficult for graduate students to comment on the limits or relevance of different results (Allison et al., 1998).

Difficulty in Constructing Their Own Conceptual Framework

The participants stated that as a consequence of their failure to generalize the literature, students were unable to develop their own conceptual framework in their research thesis. In this regard, S5 shared:

> They (the students) are not proficient in generalizing the findings of the previous research studies. This is a problem that all students face during the research proposal defense stage. They can only write research papers and cannot create a conceptual framework. In my opinion, the main challenge in thesis writing in English Education is students' inability to

integrate and generalize similar concepts from the literature and develop their own conceptual framework.

One of the participants mentioned that students cannot answer their research questions because they do not have the idea of framing a conceptual framework, which is deemed the most important aspect of thesis writing. As S7 accurately stated:

> Research outcomes are secondary, as findings. It is the capacity to identify issues, integrate current material, and construct one's own framework that matters throughout one's whole writing process. I believe that access to literature, materials, articles, and books, particularly current research papers and books, is often a huge issue. As a result, the applicant will devote the majority of his time to studying extremely irrelevant literature so they cannot prepare conceptual framework and establish strong theoretical foundations of the thesis.

The findings revealed that the students were unable to develop their own conceptual framework based on a broad variety of previous literature by posing their own queries. They fail to identify the connections between prior research and their own study and, hence, fail to construct their conceptual framework. They are also unsure of how to conduct research. Finally, their supervisors must assume responsibility for bringing the thesis up to an acceptable level. This is for many students, not just one. To summarize, students are thought to depend extensively on their supervisors academically in terms of literature review and conceptual framework owing to their inadequate English writing foundation and research skills, regardless of their ability to do well on admissions tests.

Difficulties in Selecting the Appropriate Methodology

All the supervisors argued that the student's lack of experience, training, and competence in research techniques caused them difficulty in selecting appropriate methodologies that suit their topic of the thesis. For instance, S5

clarified that students write without understanding the methods they are learning in their course. Additionally, S7 stated:

> They face issues with data collection, tool design, and suitable tool selection. They cannot generally employ qualitative research because producing the conclusions section calls for much imagination and thought.

The participants stated that students have trouble integrating the literature review, knowing how to construct their questions, and defining the tools, goals, and framework. S1 added:

> Discussing the findings properly and coherently is a significant problem. They lack the ability to defend the outcomes. They have several difficulties while outlining the steps they take to study the issue and the outcomes of their empirical investigation in the methodology chapter.

> Therefore, a large number of participants recommended that students

require additional training in research methods and that merely providing one brief session may not be sufficient. Wadison (2021) agrees with these results, noting that the methodology section might be difficult for students to master since they must thoroughly research and comprehend the proper technique, instrument, and data analysis.

Difficulties in Citing and Referencing the Sources

Supervisors noted a variety of issues with students' improper usage of references and in-text citations. S2 said, for instance:

> Many students find it difficult to follow the APA style guidelines for in-text citations and referencing sources, such as a book, an online resource, a link, and so on. Students are unfamiliar with electronic citation and reference tools. Not utilizing computerized and modern techniques of citation and references, such as Mendeley, Endnote, or other citation software, presents another obstacle for the students.

Referencing or citation procedures were often cited as a problem by the interviewing supervisors. The majority of the participants said that students struggle with the complexities of reference. The literature review is primarily concerned with citations, and it is not uncommon to see students referencing incorrectly. As S4 stated, the students were quite unfamiliar with style manuals, so they experienced difficulties in citing and referencing. He further believed that this was something teachers should be able to examine and provide feedback on. In a similar manner, S2 added:

> Even when it comes to citing, it is sometimes disappointing; a master's level student does not know how to handle footnotes, endnotes, and in-text citation. Yes, sometimes they do not go beyond secondary sources such as books, but not journal papers, etc.

Citing or referencing sources is the most critical aspect of writing. It permits authors to recognize the thoughts or words of others in order to prevent plagiarism. In addition, it displays that the author is familiar with the relevant literature and can cite the opinions of experts to support his argument. Even if it is inadvertent, failure to correctly cite the material gained from the authors of any sources, such as the Internet, books, magazines, journals, newspapers, etc., is deemed plagiarism. This finding of the study is in line with the study conducted by Divsar (2018), which concluded that the students faced problems in writing authors' names and references, as well as a lack of indentation. A similar study by Lan (2015) also highlighted that, due to their lack of awareness of the significance of citation, they tended to use one citation pattern and were reluctant to use the other patterns. Furthermore, they lacked a critical eye toward references and had trouble using the correct reference forms.

Linguistic and Academic Difficulties

Supervisors agreed that students needed to improve their academic writing abilities. They further claimed that some students struggle with the mechanics of

writing. They have poor English language competency and have a limited comprehension of the fundamentals of the research process. As S7 said:

> Some students write poorly and lack basic academic writing skills. They frequently write poorly formed sentences, incorrect punctuation, and disorganized paragraphs. Originality and inventiveness are necessary for a thesis. They face linguistic obstacles at all stages, from drafting the proposal to writing the thesis.

In essence, students seemed to experience a wide range of issues with writing mechanics, tenses, ungrammatical sentences, punctuation mistakes, language choice, rephrasing, and information synthesis in larger chunks of speech. Evidently, they were not adequately prepared for the refined academic writing needed for a master's thesis that had been accepted. Similar to S7, S2 also shared:

> The main challenge faced by students is that they are unable to synthesize ideas, maintain arguments, use suitable academic language, and maintain consistency and cohesiveness. In my experience, I have not met any student who can write consistently and cohesively.

Supervisors are concerned about the use of language from the micro to the macro level and are unwilling to take on the role of a proofreader. According to the evidence presented, students have trouble writing a thesis, particularly in terms of their English proficiency and time management. They face challenges in thesis writing since their English is still inadequate and restricted, which prevents them from writing an effective thesis. This phenomenon may occur because English is distinct from Nepali; as a result, individuals may have challenges with language comprehension and effective writing. According to Hyland (2019), the majority of academic writing students lack the necessary English language capability, such as deficiencies in tenses, ambiguous or loose sentence construction, unparalleled sentence construction, flaws in the surface and deep structure of sentences, poor

vocabulary and expression (style of language), and the inability to transform or rephrase texts for synthesizing information as a member of written discourse.

Conclusion

From the standpoint of supervisors, this preliminary study gathered an in-depth contextual understanding of the prevalent general challenges in the thesis writing of master's-level EFL research students. The interview data analysis about the difficulties master's-level EFL students faced revealed some intriguing results. These results imply that writing a thesis is related to more entrenched and observable issues. In most cases, the students are unaware of the different techniques to address the types of problems they experienced in their thesis writing. Both supervisors and respective departments can assist in addressing the concerns found in this issue. In the case of generic difficulties in writing theses, supervisors may assist students in identifying relevant areas of the thesis and in finding related literature for those areas. The results mentioned above have educational implications as well, necessitating ongoing supervision of supervisors as well as students when it comes to preparing theses. Specific guidance on how to write a thesis literature review might be beneficial to them since some students may not be able to acquire what they need to know on their own. Supervisors and respective departments can work with departments throughout the campus to identify the unique issues that these students encounter while writing their theses in order to better satisfy their requirements as master's level students. The FoE can also modify academic writing courses to take student needs, progress, and input from supervisors into account. Supervisors may participate in seminars and training on cutting-edge methods of instruction and support for students as they manage their thesis writing.

It is crucial to recognize the limits of our research at this stage. The conclusions of this study need to be tested on research participants from other disciplines, especially from other faculties, since the research participants (i.e.,

supervisors) are all from the FoE. Furthermore, the study's participants were male, so future studies in the field will need to include the perspectives of female supervisors. This study at least demonstrates the need for more research on supervisors in certain institutional, cultural, and disciplinary contexts and their experiences in helping students learn to write theses. More ethnographic research is needed in departments from both education and other settings to examine supervisor perception and assistance for students writing other high-stakes genres of theses, such as methodology, analysis, and discussion. Future research will also need a triangulation of student interviews with supervisor interviews.

References

Allison, D., Cooley, L., Lewkowicz, J., & Nunan, D. (1998). Dissertation writing in action: The development of a dissertation writing support program for ESL graduate research students. *English for Specific Purposes, 17*, (8),199-217.

Armstrong, S. J. (2004). The impact of supervisors' cognitive styles on the quality of research supervision in management education. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *74*(4), 599-616.

Bilal, H. A., Tariq, A. R., Din, N., Latif, H., & Anjum, M. N. (2013). Investigating the problems faced by the teachers in developing English writing skills. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, *2*(3), 238- 244.

Bitchener, J., & Basturkmen, H. (2006). Perceptions of the difficulties of postgraduate L2 thesis students' writing the discussion section. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5(1), 4-18.

Brause, R. S. (1999). *Writing your doctoral dissertation: Invisible rules for success*. Routledge.

Carson, J. E., Carrell, P. L., Silberstein, S., Kroll, B., & Kuehn, P. A. (1990). Reading-writing relationships in first and second language. *Tesol Quarterly*, *24*(2), 245- 266.

Carson, J. E., Carrell, P. L., Silberstein, S., Kroll, B., & Kuehn, P. A. (1990). Reading-writing relationships in first and second language. *TESOL Quarterly*, *24*(2), 245- 266.

Daly, J. A. (1978). Writing apprehension and writing competency. *The Journal of Educational Research*, *72*(1), 10-14.

Divsar, H. (2018). Exploring the challenges faced by Iranian TEFL students in their doctoral dissertation writing. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*, 6(3), 195-203.

Dong, Y. (1998). Non-native graduate students' thesis/dissertation writing in science: self-reports by students and their advisors from two US institutions. *English for Specific Purposes, 17*, (5),369-390

Haider, G. (2012). An insight into difficulties faced by Pakistani student writers: Implications for teaching of writing. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, *2*(3), 17-17.

Hardling, C. (2004). *Planning and organizing a master's thesis*. Study mates limited.

Hayes, J. R., & Flower, L. S. (1986). Writing research and the writer. *American Psychologist, 41*(10), 1106- 1113.

Hyland, K. (2019). What messages do students take from teacher feedback? In K. Hyland & F. Hyland (Eds.), Feedback in second language writing (2nd ed., pp. 265–284). Cambridge University Press.

Lan, F. (2015). A case study into the writing of Chinese postgraduate students in a UK academic environment. *English language Teaching*, *8*(9), 86-95.

Lovitts, B.E. (2007). *Making the implicit explicit: Creating performance expectations for the dissertation.* Stylus.

Mullins, G., & Kiley, M. (2002). It's a PhD, not a Nobel Prize: How experienced examiners assess research theses. *Studies in Higher Education*, *27*(4), 369-386.

Nimulola, M.A. (2018). Examiners' comments on masters' theses at the Islamic University in Uganda. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education, 1*(2), 186-2017.

Oshima, H. (1998). *Writing academic English (3rd ed.)*. Longman.

Paltridge, B. (2002). Thesis and dissertation writing: An examination of published advice and actual practice. *English for Specific Purposes, 21*(2), 125-143

Parry, S. (1998). Disciplinary discourse in doctoral education. *Higher Education, 36*(4),273-299.

Peng, H. (2018). Supervisors' views of the generic difficulties in thesis writing of Chinese EFL research students. *The Asian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 5(1), 93-103.

Qiao, L. W. (2013). *A study of the language errors in MA thesis of English majors.* [Master's thesis, Soochow University].

Richards, K. (2003). *Qualitative inquiry in TESOL*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Samraj, B. (2008). A discourse analysis of Master's theses across disciplines with a focus on introductions. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 7*, (6), 55-67.

Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge University Press.

Swales, J. M. (2004). *Research genres: Explorations and applications*. Cambridge University Press.

Tahririan, M. & Jalilifar, A. (2004). Generic analysis of thesis and dissertation abstracts:Variation across cultures. *Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *7*(3), 121-143.

Thompson, P. (1999). Exploring the contexts of writing: Interviews with PhD supervisors. In P. Thompson (Ed.), *Issues in EAP writing research and instruction* (pp. 37–54). Center for Applied Language Studies, University of Reading.

Thompson, P. (2009). Literature reviews in applied PhD theses: Evidence and problems. In K. Hyland & G. Diani (Eds.), *Academic evaluation and review genres* (pp. 50-67). Palgrave Macmillan.

Todd, M.J., Smith, K., & Bannister, P. (2006). Supervising a social science undergraduate dissertation: Staff experiences and perceptions. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *11*(2), 161- 173. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562510500527693

Turmudi, D. (2017). Rethinking academic essay writing: Selected genres in comparison. *Premise: Journal of English Education*, *6*(2), 119-137.

Vos, L. (2013). *Dissertation study at the postgraduate level: A review of the literature*. Higher Education Academy.

Wadison, E. (2021). Students' difficulties in writing thesis at English education study program of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. *Kependidikan*, *1*(30), 41-48.

Wang, D. N. (2004). *Discourse error inquiry into the English thesis writing of postgraduates majoring in linguistic and applied linguistics.* [Master's thesis, Northeast Normal University].

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Sage.

Zhang, X. (2013). *Difficulties English postgraduates encounter in academic writing and attributing factors.* [Master's thesis, Central China Normal University].