

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

The use of Google Docs is constantly increasing since the COVID-19 pandemic (Fathimah et al., 2020; Romero-Ivanova et al., 2020), and the new way of supervision through which Google Docs employed as the medium of giving feedback has become a controversial issue among students. The pandemic influenced learning and teaching activities, particularly the supervision of undergraduate thesis writing (Aristovnik et al., 2020). In Indonesia, undergraduate students who are writing their thesis during this pandemic time encounter different circumstances and customs in undergraduate thesis writing supervisory activity which was usually done offline—with spoken feedback being the most common method. The new supervision activity focuses on giving written feedback on the undergraduate thesis document uploaded to Google Docs. The way the students overcome and adapt to the new online supervision activity requires intellectual skills. Therefore, it is important to know the students' cognitive perceptions about this issue so that we can know the effectiveness and efficiency of Google Docs for online supervision activity.

The new way of supervision activity utilized Google Docs to replace offline or face-to-face supervision temporarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Google Docs is a free and web-based word processor program published by Google (Hofer, 2012; Kessler et al., 2012 in Alwahoub et al., 2020). It includes functions ranging from basic to advanced document editing. Its multi-user sharing feature allows those who have access to the document to view, give suggestions, or edit the document. In addition, since it is web-based, free, and shareable with other people, it is also able to edit the document collaboratively in real-time (Alwahoub et al., 2020; Romero-Ivanova et al., 2020). Meaning that it can simulate offline face-to-face collaborative writing although limited to only written kind of communication.

In the English Education Department of a university in Indonesia, Google Docs is used by several supervisors to facilitate undergraduate thesis writing supervisory activity since the spread of COVID-19. The supervisory activity starts when students enroll in the undergraduate thesis course. The supervisory activity watches the students' progression starting from writing a tentative research plan, research proposal, and undergraduate thesis. The procedure of supervision was: (1) students wrote the draft of their writing, (2) sent it to the folder that had been created by the supervisor(s) in Google Drive, (3) students gave confirmation to the supervisor(s) that a file had been uploaded to the folder, (4) the supervisor(s) gave review and feedback to the students file, (5) students resolved the review and feedback. The focus of this research is to investigate what were the students' cognitive perceptions upon receiving written feedback from their supervisor(s).

Studies about the use of Google Docs for academic writing have been investigated by many researchers (Alharbi, 2019; Alsubaie & Ashuraidah, 2017; Ebadi & Rahimi, 2017; Jeong, 2016; Mudawe, 2018; Seyyedrezaie et al., 2016; Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014). Most of them incorporate collaborative writing as their main concern. Mainly referencing Mudawe's (2018) paper, he discussed the potential and promises, and the instructional capabilities of Google Docs in the light of interactivity and collaborativeness "in enhancing EFL/ESL students' writing dissertation" (p. 192). However, the previous study did not state the kind of perception in particular. To complete the previous study's findings, the current study investigated the students' cognitive perception when they received written feedback from their supervisor during online supervision activity through Google Docs.

## **1.2 Formulation of the Problem(s)**

One research question focused on this study is "What are the undergraduate students' cognitive perceptions when they received supervisors' written feedback in writing their undergraduate thesis through Google Docs?"

### 1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid misinterpretation of this research, several terminologies are meant as follows:

**Google Docs** : A free web-based word processing program that is used to compose students' undergraduate thesis.

**Online Written Feedback** : The kind of feedback being concerned is the constructive feedback that is given by supervisor(s) through Google Docs.

**Thesis Writing Supervision** : Thesis writing supervision is the supervisory activity performed by supervisor(s) and student(s) when students are enrolling in an undergraduate thesis writing course. The activity includes guiding, supervising, and discussing the student's thesis writing. Supervisory activity in this study is performed online through Google Docs.

**Students' Cognitive Perceptions** : Students' opinion, view, and/or experience about an event or phenomenon as seen from a cognitive perspective. Specifically, the cognitive perspective here refers to Gagne's (1970) intellectual skills. It includes discriminating, chaining, concepting, rule using, and problem-solving.

### 1.4 Aim of the Study

The current study intends to investigate undergraduate students' cognitive perceptions towards supervisors' written feedback in writing their undergraduate thesis in Google Docs.

## **1.5 Significances of the Study**

### **1.5.1 Empirical Uses**

The present study contributed empirical evidence of undergraduate students' cognitive perceptions towards supervisors' online written feedback in writing their undergraduate thesis through Google Docs.

### **1.5.2 Practical Uses**

This study provided the readers, especially supervisors, with a practical insight of feedback-giving supervisory activity using Google Docs. Furthermore, teachers are able to apply written feedback-giving practices in writing courses that utilize Google Docs.