

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

This chapter introduces the methodology used in this study. This chapter outlines seven parts of the research procedure, namely research method, research focus, setting and participant, data collection technique, data analysis technique, research steps, place and time of research. More details are described below.

3.1 Research Methodology

3.1.1 Research Design

This research used qualitative research with a case study design. This research design was chosen because of its advantages, which could reveal specific and detailed matters. Qualitative research involves researchers concentrating on descriptive data rather than quantitative data during data collection and analysis. It entails observing how individuals think, feel, and influence the world they live in. It involves various methods and approaches to find out more about human experiences and perspectives (Hammersley, 2012). Qualitative research always seeks to find the issue of concern in its everyday context, and by means of interviews and/or observations and/or accessing text, it hears the voices of those closely involved (Smythe et al., 2007). Meanwhile, a case study was a comprehensive description of an individual case and its analysis, including the characterization of the case and the events, as well as a description of the discovery process of these features, which was the process of the research itself. It had the characteristic that the investigation was broad and open, allowing participants to raise issues that were most important to them (Choy, 2014). Case studies were often used to explore new things that were not yet known, creating new ideas or explanations for them. However, Gammelgaard (2017) suggests that case studies can also be used to test theories by making general statements using logic and deduction. Nevertheless, every case study was special and unique in its own way.

Those characteristics of qualitative case study research were in accordance with the aim of the researcher to reveal the phenomenon that was raised in depth.

Qualitative case study research could offer a more comprehensive and detailed view of the happenings. Moreover, the selection of the research design was based on the specific goals of the study in order to effectively represent the phenomena under investigation. Apart from that, the phenomenon raised by the researcher directly involved students' perspectives, in which there were various uniqueness and characteristics possessed by each participant.

3.1.2 Research Setting and Participants

This research was conducted in one of the universities in Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia. This research setting was chosen based on the research phenomena that occurred in this place. Numerous students encounter difficulties in drafting research proposals, which can hinder their graduation. In some cases, writing a research proposal for their thesis proves to be a difficult task for many students, causing them to struggle for an extended period of time. Furthermore, this research aims to find solutions to the problems that arise in this particular area.

The participants in this study were six students (three males and three females) from the English Education Department at a university in Tasikmalaya. All participants had completed their research proposal seminar, meaning they had finished writing chapters 1 to 3 and undergone regular supervision with their advisors. On average, they worked on their research proposal for approximately two to three months.

Their research topics varied across different areas of English education, including: (1) the use of digital games as a tool for vocabulary learning, (2) the influence of an online learning platform on students' motivation, (3) cultural content analysis in English textbooks for elementary school, (4) the use of flashcard-based activities for young learners, (5) student teachers' experiences in teaching English during a professional development program, and (6) issues related to speaking anxiety in language learning.

These participants were selected because they had firsthand experience in completing the research proposal writing process and had encountered various

challenges during topic selection, proposal development, and supervision. Therefore, they were considered suitable sources of data for this study. They are referred to as S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, and S6 throughout the report. This research was conducted online using the Zoom Meeting application due to its flexibility in scheduling and its ability to accommodate participants from different locations.

3.1.3 Data Collection

The primary data were obtained by conducting interviews with the participants. Bryman (2001), as cited in Edward (2013), posits that interviews are characterized by a continuum that spans from structured to unstructured, including semi-structured or focused interviews. In the present study, the methodology employed by the researcher for the interview was a semi-structured interview. The aim of this approach was to enhance the flexibility of the interview process, whereby the researcher could formulate queries based on the feedback received from the respondents. Semi-structured and unstructured scales offer varying degrees of flexibility and organization when conducting interviews (Edward, 2013). The use of semi-structured interviews requires a certain level of previous study in the research topic area. The main advantage is that the semi-structured interview method has been found to be successful in enabling reciprocity between the interviewer and participant Galletta (2012) and Kallio (2016) allowing the interviewer to improvise follow-up questions based on participants' responses and to provide space for participants' individual verbal expressions.

The development of the interview questions in this study was informed by several theoretical frameworks related to students' challenges and strategies in writing research proposals. To explore the kinds of difficulties commonly encountered during proposal writing, the researcher referred to the works of Peng (2018), Hyland (2003), and Richards and Renandya (2002), who highlight that students often struggle with selecting research topics, identifying relevant theories, organizing academic arguments, and understanding research methodology as part of the academic writing process. The questions examining which components of the

proposal were particularly challenging were guided by Creswell's (2012, 2014) explanation of the essential elements of a research proposal, including the introduction, research problems, research questions, literature review, and methodology. Furthermore, to investigate how students managed or overcame their difficulties, the researcher drew on Oxford's (1990) theory of language learning strategies and Harris and Graham's (1996) framework of self-regulated writing strategies, both of which provide insight into the cognitive, metacognitive, and self-regulatory techniques that learners employ during demanding writing tasks.

While the theoretical frameworks above informed the content of the questions, the overall structure, formulation, and sequencing of the semi-structured interview were guided by the methodological recommendations of Kallio et al. (2016). Their guideline outlines five stages in developing a high-quality semi-structured interview: identifying the prerequisites for adopting the method, retrieving and applying existing knowledge, drafting a preliminary interview guide, conducting pilot testing, and finalizing the complete version. By following these stages, the researcher ensured that the interview guide was methodologically sound, coherent, and flexible enough to allow participants to elaborate on their experiences.

The first phase was to identify the prerequisites for using semi-structured interviews. The aim of this phase was to evaluate the appropriateness of the semi-structured interview as a rigorous data collection method in relation to the selected research question. The second phase of the development was retrieving and using previous knowledge. The aim of this phase was to gain a comprehensive and adequate understanding of the subject, which required critical appraisal of previous knowledge and the possible need for complementary empirical knowledge. The third phase of the development was formulating the preliminary semi-structured interview guide. The fourth phase of the development was pilot testing the semi-structured interview guide, the aim of this phase was to confirm the coverage and relevance of the content of the formulated, preliminary guide and to identify the possible need to reformulate questions and to test implementation of it. The fifth and last phase of the

development process was presenting the complete semistructured interview guide in the study paper. The aim was to produce a clear, finished and logical semi-structured interview guide for data collection

3.1.4 Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, this study employed thematic analysis as its analytical framework. Braun and Clarke (2006) posit that thematic analysis serves as an analytical approach for the evaluation, organization, portrayal, and communication of underlying themes inherent within a given dataset. More specifically, the researcher chose to utilize a thematic analysis approach because it afforded greater flexibility in data interpretation and enabled the researcher to efficiently process large datasets by grouping them according to themes. In practical research, the thematic analysis process involves several sequential steps, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Familiarising the data

This was the first phase in which the researcher read all the data from the interview results in order to find meanings and patterns or themes that occurred within the data. This process entailed the transcription of data followed by a thorough examination of the transcribed material. Ultimately, the data were recorded in the form of interview transcripts. During this initial stage, the researcher meticulously examined the recorded information derived from the conducted interviews with the purpose of identifying meaningful coherences, patterns, or themes that were inherent in the data.

2. Generating Initial Codes (Coding)

The next stage of this research was to identify all relevant parts of the data in order to answer the research questions. The researcher used a color-coding system to mark the data that matched the purpose of the study. Specifically, the codes that were considered relevant and important were highlighted with certain colors to make the analysis and interpretation easier.

Table 3.1 *Generating Initial Codes (Coding)*

Transcription	Initial Codes
<p>S2: Well, regarding the background preparation, I remember that there are several challenges. The first is of course the theoretical basis of what we are going to research... because there aren't many people who use the same theory as me, so I can't look at references from theses in the library.</p>	<p>Hard to Find the Exact Research Theory</p>
<p>S4: When it came to research methodology, I faced difficulties because my knowledge was limited. I have studied it before, but it turns out that in my opinion, the original proposal is broader than what I studied.</p>	<p>Limited Understanding of Research Methodology</p>
<p>S5:indeed, it is a challenge, especially since we are not native speakers, so we are still learning grammar even though we are majoring in English language education.</p>	<p>Struggling with English Grammar</p>
<p>S1: The difficulty is in arranging the words, then... the cohesion and coherence, the most important thing is arranging the words.</p>	<p>Struggling With Academic Phrasing</p>
<p>S4: It was also quite difficult to choose the right words to represent my study.</p>	<p>Difficulty in Selecting Appropriate Words</p>
<p>S6:before he was replaced, he was studying abroad, so it was difficult for me to meet him. And after replacement my new supervisor was also sometimes difficult to meet, because he also often went out of town.</p>	<p>Unpredictable Supervisor Schedule</p>

S5: Another obstacle was that sometimes for several weeks the supervisor didn't open online guidance sessions.	No Online Consultation Option
S5: Yes, there was, especially accessing international journals, that was quite difficult.	Unable to Access the Journals
S2:the ARCS framework, it was quite difficult to find because it is rarely used in an EFL setting, especially in studies that use both frameworks together.	Hard to Find the References for Specific Topic
S6: If it's rated from 1 to 5 in terms of difficulty, maybe it's around 3. In my research, some sources were really old, like from the 1980s if I'm not mistaken.	Hard to Find the Newest References
S5:if we talk about daily schedule, I didn't always plan a specific day for working on the research proposal. But when I did, if not in the afternoon, I preferred at night, before going to bed.	Unstructured Proposal Writing Schedule
S2:I was a bit distracted, maybe, because at that time I was really focused on my hobbies, maybe it would make money or something.	Distraction due to Hobbies
S6:I was asked by my parents or other family members to help them with something. So, during the day, my writing process was often interrupted.	Distraction due to Other Activities
S3:I was doing an internship at an elementary school, working on the <i>kampus mengajar</i> program projects.”	<i>Kampus Mengajar</i> Activity
S4: Because of the fatigue factor and other factors, at that time PLP was	Teaching Practice Activity (PLP)

until 1 or 2 in the afternoon, so it finally disturbed my focus.

S2: ...honestly I lost motivation, that was the first thing. Then from that came... laziness. So, because there was no motivation, automatically I became too lazy to continue.

Loss of Motivation

S5: When I try to develop ideas, sometimes I already have some sentences arranged, but the wording doesn't feel right, or when I get stuck and can't find the right ideas, I use ChatGPT

Using chatGPT

S2: For access itself, of course, I used Google Scholar, then Sci-hub to bypass payments or premium access.

Using google scholar

S6: The solution was to look for references from various sources, such as Google Scholar, Academia, Elsevier, and many others

Using Academia and Elsevier

S5: Sometimes, when I search on Google Scholar, I can't find references that truly match what I'm looking for, so I often use Perplexity AI instead.

Using Perplexity AI

S1:if the journal couldn't be accessed directly, I needed to use an alternative platform, such as Sci-Hub, to open it.

Using Sci-Hub

S6: When using Mendeley, I often use the edit citation and reference feature, which functions to readjust author data from journal articles.

Using Mendeley

S4: I used assistance from several digital tools such as Grammarly to check whether the sentences I

Using Grammarly

constructed followed English language rules.

S3: deepL is for translating, and we can choose the translation for each word, as there are alternative word options. I usually use deepL to search for more academic words, because when we translate

Using DeepL

S1: I overcame it by attending supervision sessions often. Just don't skip it whenever the supervisor opens a session. I could spend almost 30 minutes in supervision until I really understood.

Consulting With Supervisors

S5: I also read the thesis belonging to my senior who took the same method. Apart from that, I also read the thesis belonging to my senior who took the same method.

Referring to Seniors' Theses

S4: I just read and reread again and again. Reading also takes a lot of time.

Reinforcing Understanding by Re-Reading

S2: And also the lecturers, sometimes they said things like, 'Hurry up, finish it by tomorrow, next week you can have the defense.' Or sometimes what boosted my spirit was when a lecturer said, 'Oh, this is already ready, just revise a little and then register, then report to me.' That really became a booster for me.

Support from the Supervisors

S4: ...sometimes I get confused about whether I should use "a" or "the." If I Google it, I don't understand, so I end up asking someone more knowledgeable.

Consulting With Peers

S5: The thing that can be done is to set

Setting a Personal Schedule

a timer, like making a schedule.	
S1: I forced myself, like when I had to finish it in three days. I pushed myself, like when I was lying down I had to get up and remember the work. Oh, just a little more, just a little more...	Being Proactive in revising the proposal
S2:so, the point is, I found something I wanted to pursue, maybe you could call it a dream or a goal, and that became my internal motivation to keep going, to continue writing with even more enthusiasm than before.	Finding Motivation Through Personal Goals
S5: There are actually two supporting factors. In my opinion, one comes from my parents because I see that my parents have financed me at least I have to be able to complete my research proposal on time.	Motivated by Parents

Table 3.2 *List of codes and their frequency*

Initial codes	Frequency
Hard to find exact research theory	2
Limited understanding of research methodology	6
Struggling with English grammar	4
Struggling with academic phrasing	3
Difficulty in selecting appropriate words	2
Unpredictable supervisor schedule	2
No online consultation option	1
Unable to access journal	2

Initial codes	Frequency
Hard to find the references for specific topic	2
Hard to find the newest references	2
Unstructured proposal writing schedule	4
Distraction due to hobbies	1
Distraction due to other activities	2
<i>Kampus Mengajar</i> activity	2
Teaching practice activity (PLP)	2
Loss of motivation	3
Using ChatGPT	4
Using Google Scholar	6
Using Academia and Zenodo	1
Using Perplexity AI	1
Using Sci-Hub	2
Using Mendeley	4
Using Grammarly	5
Using DeepL	5
Consulting with supervisors	6
Referring to seniors' theses	4
Reinforcing understanding by re-reading	3
Support from the supervisors	2
Consulting with peers	2
Setting a personal schedule	2

Initial codes	Frequency
Being proactive in revising the proposal	2
Finding motivation through personal goals	2
Motivated by parents	5
Total:	96

3. Searching for themes

In this stage, the researcher identified patterns or recurring ideas from the information that had been organized and categorized. This process involved carefully reviewing the interview transcripts to find important and interesting points in the data based on the research questions.

Table 3.3 *Searching for themes*

No	Initial Codes	Sub-theme	Theme
1	Hard to find exact research theory	Limited Understanding of Research Concepts and Methodology	Challenges in Writing Research Proposal
2	Limited understanding of research methodology		
3	Struggling with English grammar	Limited Proficiency in Academic Writing and Language Barriers	
4	Struggling with academic Phrasing		
5	Difficulty selecting appropriate words		
6	Unpredictable supervisor schedule	Challenges in Supervisor Availability and Accessibility	
7	No online consultation option		
8	Unable to access journals	Limited Access to Resources and References	
9	Hard to find references for specific topic		
10	Hard to find newest references		

11	Unstructured proposal writing schedule	Time Management Problems	
12	Distraction due to hobbies		
13	Distraction due to other activities		
14	<i>Kampus Mengajar</i> activity		
15	Teaching practice activity (PLP)		
16	Loss of motivation	Emotional and Psychological Pressure	
17	Using ChatGPT	Using Digital Tools	Solution for
18	Using Google Scholar		Overcoming
19	Using Academia and Zenodo		Challenges
20	Using Perplexity AI		
21	Using Sci-Hub		
22	Using Mendeley		
23	Using Grammarly		
24	Using Using DeepL		
25	Consulting with supervisors	Active Learning and Use of Academic Support	
26	Referring to seniors' theses		
28	Reinforcing understanding by re-reading		
29	Support from the supervisors	Supervisory and Peer Support	
30	Consulting with peers		
31	Setting a personal schedule	Self-Management and Motivational Strategies	
32	Being proactive in revising the proposal		
33	Finding motivation through personal goals		
34	Motivated by parents		

4. Reviewing themes

In this fourth stage, the researcher reviewed and refined the themes that had been identified in the previous step. This stage was an important part of the process where the themes were improved and developed further. The researcher conducted a thematic review to decide which themes were the most appropriate for the study

5. Defining and naming themes

The fifth stage was defining and naming the themes. Through this process, two main themes were confirmed: (1) Challenges in Writing Research Proposal and (2) Solutions to Overcome the Challenges. The first theme consists of six sub-themes and the second contains four, and their names were adjusted and clarified to best capture the patterns emerging from the participants' responses.

Table 3.4 *Defining themes*

Sub-theme	Theme
Limited Understanding of Research Concepts and Methodology	Challenges in Writing Research Proposal
Limited Proficiency in Academic Writing and Language Barriers	
Challenges in Supervisor Availability and Accessibility	
Limited Access to Resources and References	
Time Management Problems	
Emotional and Psychological Pressure	
Using Digital Tools	Solution for Overcoming Challenges
Active Learning and Use of Academic Support	
Supervisory and Peer Support	

