

EFL students' difficulties in writing a research proposal

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate EFL students' difficulties in writing a research proposal by using Swales' Create-A-Research-Space (cars) model and try to find out the students' problems. This study was used as a qualitative research design. The subject of this study are twenty students and the instrument are students writing the research proposal, interview for the students and lecturer. The result of this research is the students' problem in writing for their introduction for move 1 (75%) and for move 2 (55%), there are 4 (four) students having problems how to face the criteria for inclusion and exclusion from review was not justified and the literature review was not topic focused. Related to methodology, the choice of paradigm, methodology, data collection, and data analysis was not justified to answer the research questions (20%). Next, a detailed description of the research procedures, as well as an explanation of the reason for doing so, was not provided (15%). Continued to the detailed description of procedures and materials was not provided to allow for replication (15%). Moreover, a component of methodologies such as the research design, research site, and participants, data collection techniques, and data analysis is not included (15%). The last, for the references, were all student writing research proposals less to completed the way how to write a reference, such as uncompleted detailed related to sources. The biggest problem related to the students' ability to write a research proposal for the introduction. Some students face some difficulties in how to compose the background well, including introducing and reviewing items of previous research in the area, how to find a gap in the previous research and student's fewer references to quote.

Keywords:

EFL; academic writing; research proposal.

1 INTRODUCTION

Before doing writing a thesis, students are required to start with writing a research proposal. Nasution (2009) said that the proposal aims to study the efficiency of the time, money and effort if a comprehensive thesis proposal should be rejected entirely. Before conducting the research, it is required to begin considering the study design. The proses of writing research proposal start by identifying a general idea or research and then focused on the research question to be answered. Planning research is the beginning of activities in research that include an introduction to the issues and the background, purpose and benefits of the research, the premise to solve the problems, Yusuf (2013). The next step is the implementation of research activities includes data collection, data processing and data presentation conclude with activities beginning. In a research proposal, the final part of making the report does not constitute the scope of the research proposal.

Hilsden and Verhoef (2001), such as the overall quality of the study, quality of the proposal, quality of the presentation. There are some keys to success in how to write a good proposal (Ecoggins, 2016). There are 10 steps to writing an academic research proposal. determining the general topic; performing a literature review on the topic; identifying a gap in the literature; identifying a problem highlighted by the gap and framing a purpose of the study; framing research hypothesis and or research questions to investigate or guide the study; writing an introduction to the study; determine the method of investigation; outline the research design; define the sample size and the characteristics of the proposed sample; describe the procedures to follow for data collection and data analysis;

Some research related to the students' research proposal, firstly, Yusuf (2013) was conducted research related to the students' problem in writing a research proposal. The result was 3 (three) kinds of problems faced by the students such as introduction, review literature and methodology. The highest problems with methodology, about 73,3%. The second is a review of related literature about 60%, and the last 46,6% of students faced problems in the introduction. Secondly, Retya (2010) researched the problems faced by the students of the English Department in Writing Thesis at University of Muhammadiyah Malang. The objectives of the study are to reveal several students' problems in writing a thesis, especially nonlinguistic aspect. The result of the research was the learners' factor covered by students' motivation and personality. Moreover, the advisors applied for some role; the students who were lazy, pessimistic, worry and fearful influenced their willingness to finish their thesis quickly. Thirdly, Msanjila (2005) found some problems in writing in Kiswahili, such as capitalization and punctuation, inexplicitness or fuzziness, poor organization or illogical sequence, spelling and grammatical order. The study argues that most of their writing problems arise from pedagogical reasons. The last, Manchishi et. al. (2015) found some students' mistakes in writing the proposal such as, broad and unclear topics, failure to state the problem, failure to identify the gap in the literature, using the wrong methodology, misunderstanding research terminology, wrong referencing style and plagiarism.

The importance and complexity of writing a research proposal and arouse the curiosity of researcher interested in conducting in-depth research and know about research proposal writing especially in element that are the research proposal. This study aimed to investigate problems faced by the students writing a research proposal, but also the possible causes of the problems in writing a research proposal faced by the students. This study used Swales' genre analysis offer an approach to the teaching of academic and research setting, including a research proposal. Since 1990s, genre focused on applied linguistics. Writing research proposal elaborated with the theory of genre analysis, as one of academic text, especially some elements of a research proposal. There are four areas, firstly, associated with a research proposal as one of academic texts that describes the aims and major elements of research proposal (Fraenkel, 2003). Secondly, associated

with the first chapter of a research proposal, example when they write introduction. Students write the aims of the introduction, the criteria to evaluate and its linguistic features (Swales & Feak, 1994). Thirdly, the areas combined with the second chapter of a research proposal, for example, literature review. And the last, combined the third chapter of a research proposal for example, methodology. That discusses the aims, elements and linguistic features of the methodology chapter.

Research proposal is one of academic writing, Al-Badi et al. (2015) found some problems related to academic writing difficulties of ESL Learners. His research result suggested that the subjects tend to have similar difficulties in academic writing regardless of their previous educational contexts. Others are related to writing own voice, finding relevant topics and sources, and the last less problematic one is referencing and citation. There are some factors causing the academic writing difficulties, such as students might come from different cultural backgrounds where they are fully dependent on teachers. They afraid to be critical thinker and have low expectations themselves for their second language learners (Chou, 2011). Another side, Krathwohl (2015) stated that a proposal should have a key element involving in designing a complete research study and each component should be informative. In a research proposal, there are major elements or schematic structure required to be included in thesis writing method. The major elements of the research proposal can be seen at table 2.1.

Table 1. The major elements of a research proposal and the purpose

Elements	Purpose
Table of contents	To give an overview of the scale and anticipated organization of the proposal
Introduction	To create a research space (CARS)
Literature Review	To show that the student is familiar with the previous research and opinion on the topic and understand their relevance to the study being planned
Methodology	To describe how the research will be conducted, and how the data will be obtained and analyzed
References	To provide detailed references and bibliographic support for the proposal

As Swales and Feak mentioned in CARS model, the organizational structure of introduction can be said to move from a fairly general overview of the research terrain to the particular issues under investigation through three key moves which capture the communicative purpose of the introduction, such as (1) to establish a research territory /move 1, (2) to identify a niche or gap in the territory /move 2, (3) to then signal how the topic in question occupies that niche /move 3. Stapa (2013) analyzed the student's introduction written concluded that, 50% of the students have included all the 6 moves suggested by Dudley-Evans. However, for moves 4,5 and six most of the students did not employ all the sub-moves. Kheryadi (2018) found the students' ability and problems in writing introduction of research proposal that most of students faced difficulties in presenting arguments in terms of justification and most of students were not aware that there are standard models in writing a research proposal, especially in terms of its elements and linguistic feature. This study aims to investigate EFL students' difficulties in writing research proposal by using Swales' Create-A-Research-Space (cars) model, and try to find out the students' problems.

2 METHOD

The researcher was used descriptive qualitative. Descriptive research study is designed to obtain information concerning the current status phenomena. In qualitative research, there is little or no statistic. Arikunto (2006) stated that case study has the characteristics as stated by the experts as a study that is conducted intensively, detailed and depth toward an organization, institution or certain phenomenon. The subject of this research is the students at fifth semester at English Department of STKIP PGRI which consisted 20 (twenty) students. The researcher used two instruments to collecting the data, they are documentation and interview. (1) Documentation of students' text research proposal. Documentation is the investigation, collection, control, preservation, preparation, use and supply of documents, with a view to obtain description and enlightened knowledge and evidence. Arikunto (2002) reveals that documentation explaining the technique is to look for data about things or variables in the form of notes transcripts, books, newspapers, magazines.

The first method of data collection was the documentation of the students' text research proposals. The research proposal was then analyzed in the term of elements to identify the students' problems in writing a research proposal based on their work. (2) Interview. Interview is a method of data collection with the question and answer systematic. Moleong (2002) states that interview is a conversation with a purpose. The conversation was conducted by the two parties, namely the interview (interviewer) is asking the interviewee (interviewee) that provides an answer to that question. The researcher use interview guided consists a series of questions and face to face interaction between the interviewer and respondents. After collecting the data, the next process is data analysis.

Table 2. The major elements in students' writing research proposal

Elements	Problems			
	Introduction	Literature Review	Methodology	References

Identify the students writing research proposal which is each chapter of the research proposal contained of introduction, Literature review, methodology and references was analyzed to see its elements. After described the data, the researcher found some problems found by the students, and found the possible causes of problems based on their work.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher found some problems based on the students' research proposal text analysis. Here the table of the result of text analysis.

Table 3. The result of text analysis

Problems									
Elements	Table of Content	Introduction	Students number	Literature Review	Students number	Methodology	Students number	References	Student number
	Students number			Students number				Students number	
Table of content was not included	None	Move 1: Establishing a research territory c by introducing and reviewing items of previous research in the areas (obligatory).	1,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,16,18,19	A coverage: 1.The criteria for inclusion and exclusion from review was not justified 2. The literature review was not topic focused 3. The main sources were not the current one	4,8,11,18	1.The choice of paradigm, methodology, data collection, and data analysis employed was not justified to answer the research questions	4,8,11,18	References were not included	8,11,14,18
		Move 2: Establishing a niche, a by indicating a gap in the previous research, raising questions about it, or extending previous knowledge in some way (obligatory)	1,2,4,6,8,9,10,11,13,14,16	B. Synthesis 1.The topic was not analyzed in term of justification to be correlated to the present study 2. Previous research was reported; however, the main findings of previous research were not focused to be correlated to the present study	4,8,11,18	2.The research site was not included	4,8,11,18		
		Move 3: Occupying the niche, a by outlining purposes/aims, or stating the nature of the present research or research questions/hypothesis (obligatory) C by indicating the structure of the thesis and providing mini-synopsis (preview) or each subsequent chapter (obligatory)	18			3.A detailed description of the research processes and procedures as well as explanation of the reason for doing so was not provided	4,8,18		
						4.A detailed description of procedures and materials was not provided to allow for replication	4,8,18		
						5.Component of methodology such as the research design, research site and participants, data collection techniques, and data analysis is not included	4,8,18		

3.1 Table of Contents.

The researcher found all the student expose table of contents.

3.2 Introduction

Students number 1,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,16,18,19 (75%) deal with some problems that do not include the introduction specially related to establishing a research territory c. by introducing and reviewing items of previous research in the area. Some students found difficulties related establishing a niche by indicating a gap in the previous research, students' number 1,2,4,6,8,9,10,11,13,14,16 (55%). For the occupying the niche by outlining purposes/aims, or stating the nature of the present research or research questions/hypothesis, student number 18 (5%). Then indicating the structure of the thesis and providing mini-synopsis (preview) of each subsequent chapter, student number 4,8 (10%)

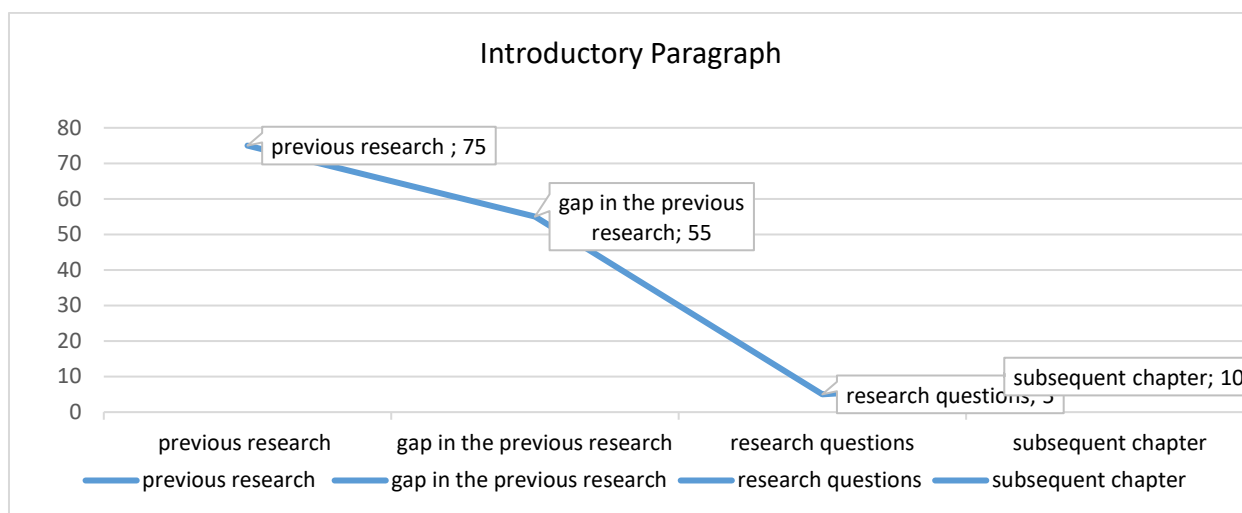


Figure 1. Text analysis results on Introductory Paragraph

3.3 Literature Review

Related to Coverage, there are 4 (four) students having problems how to deal with the criteria for inclusion and exclusion from review was not justified, students number 4,8,11,18 (20%) And 4 (four) student deal with the literature review was not topic focused, students number 4,8,11,18 (20%). From 20 (twenty) students' text research proposal, only 1 student, number 18 (5%) difficult to find the main sources were not the current one. About synthesis, the topic was not analyzed in terms of justification to be correlated to the present day, students' number 4,8,11,18 (20%). And the last, the previous research was reported, however, the main findings of previous research were not focused to be correlated to the present study, the problems were found on the students' text research proposal, students' number 4,8,11,18 (20%)

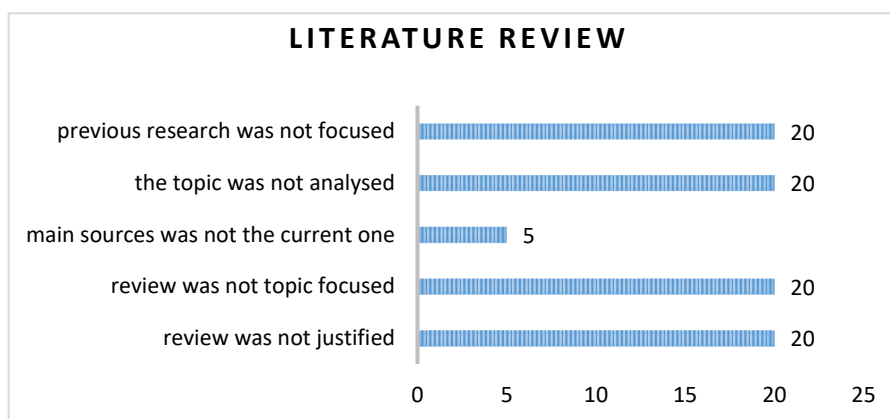


Figure 2. Text analysis results on Literature Review

3.4. Methodology

As the researcher also as the lecture of teaching thesis writing method, students challenge for the drafting of research proposal, so many revises before they submitted their final product. Related to methodology, the choice of paradigm, methodology, data collection, and data analysis was not justified to answer the research questions, student number 4,8,11,18 (20%). About the research site was not included, 4 (four) students could not do it well, students' number 4,8,11,18 (20%). Next, about detailed description of the research procedures as well as explanation of the reason for doing so was not provided, students number 4,8,18 (15%). Continued to detailed description of procedures and materials was not provided to allow for replication, students number 4,8,18 (15%). And component of methodology such as the research

design, research site and participants, data collection techniques, and data analysis is not included, students' number 4,8,18 (15%).

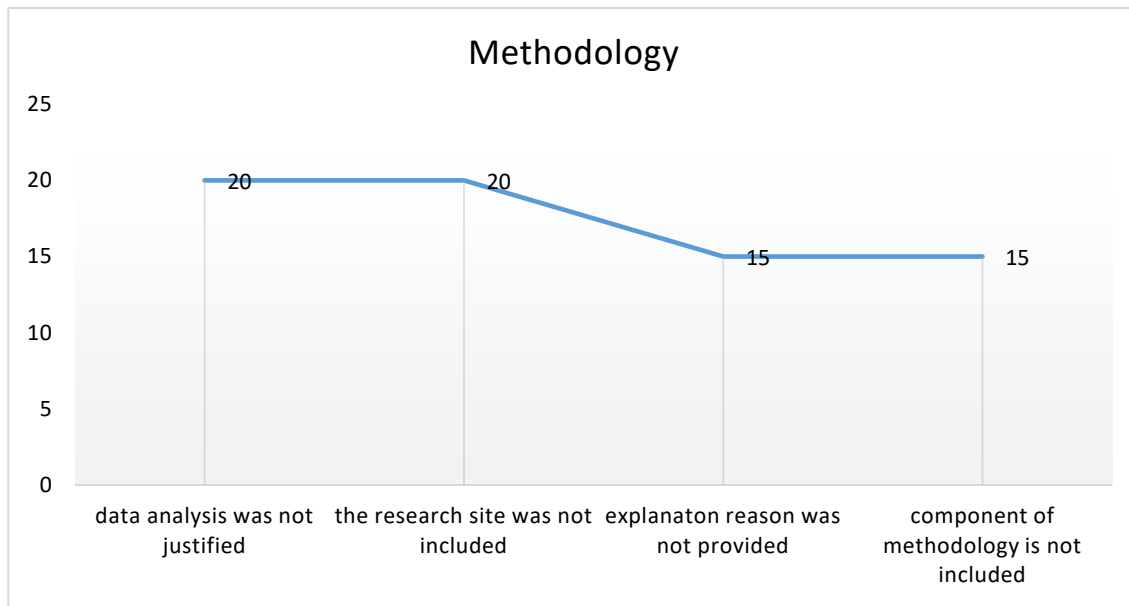


Figure 3. Text analysis results on Methodology

3.5 References

For the references were not included (students' number 8,10,11,14,18) but for all student writing research proposal less to completed the way how to write a reference, such as uncompleted detailed related to sources.

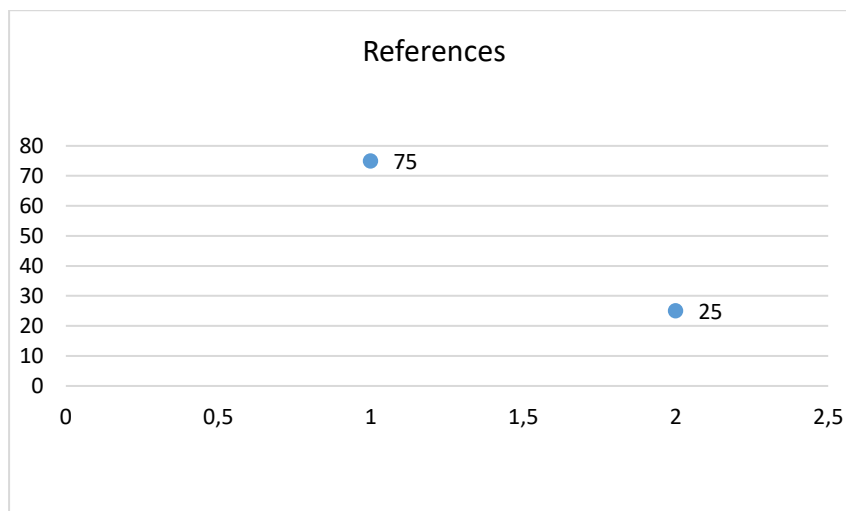


Figure 4. Text analysis results on References

Based on the interview results in Table 4 below, all students know how to write table of content. The biggest problem related to the student's ability to write research proposal for introduction. Some students deal with some difficulties how to compose the background well, included introducing and reviewing items of previous research in the area. Also, how to find a gap in the previous research. From the table 4 below, all students know how to write table of content. The biggest problem related to the student's ability to write research proposal for introduction. Some students deal with some difficulties how to compose the background well, included introducing and reviewing items of previous research in the area. Also, how to find a gap in the previous research. Continued to the student's problems related how to review literature, most of students only rewrite the expert statement without any comment or paraphrase and out of the topic focused and the students lazy to read many sources or references. In methodology, students deal with a problem related to get the research design. In writing research proposal, the implementation of teaching writing follows some steps, such as: drafting, revising, editing, revising, final product. So, students challenge to revise the lecturer notes/revision.

Table: 4. The students' problem in writing a research proposal

No	Students Problems	N	Percentage
1.	Students know how to write table of content	20	100%
Students did not know or confused how in writing introduction:			
2.	1. Difficult to compose the background well	10	50%
	2. Students never revise the lecturer's notes	5	25%
	3. Lecturer explained the material less clearly enough	4	20%
Students' did not know or confused in review literature:			
3.	1. Less references to quote	10	50%
	2. Never revise the lecturers' notes	7	35%
	3. Lecturer explained the material less clearly enough	4	20%
Students did not know or confused in methodology:			
4.	1. Less to read kinds of methodology	5	25%
	2. Never revise the lecturers' notes	5	25%
	3. Lecturer explained the material less clearly enough	4	20%
Students did not know or confused in references:			
5.	1. Students less to read references	2	10%
	2. Students did not know how to write a reference	2	10%
	3. Lecturer explained the material less clearly enough	1	0,5%

Diyana et al. (2016) was used Swales' create-a-research-space (cars) model, found that students problems in writing their introduction for each move especially for move 2, which consists of counter claiming, indicating research gap, raising questions from previous research and continuing tradition. Fudhla et al. (2014) used CARS model to analyzed the students' research proposal introduction, found that establishing the territory (move 1) is too wide and unsuitable with research problem and reviewing sentences and confusing with another move, and then the research problem was stated at background unsuitable with the criteria of establishing the niche (move 2) so the result cannot found at the students paper. The last, the aims and the research questions on occupying the niche (move 3) unsuitable with the research problem. Qasem (2019) explored the students' problem in writing research project, showed that around 70% of the participants who are writing research or conducting research projects in English is one of the predominant challenges for them. And around 50% prefer to conduct their research in L1. Included dealing with difficulty in deciding the topic for research, lack of good knowledge of the methodology, inability of finding modern, specialized and related references, lack of interest in research, lack of understanding of the subject matter, lack of time and research guiding. The researcher concluded that the students weaknesses related to writing research proposal are composing the paragraph the background of the study well, and how to motivate the students to read some references to support the quotations and how to find a gap in the previous research and revise the drafting soon. The researcher suggested to the lecturer to give more overview related how to writing research proposal and gave more time for revision.

4 CONCLUSION

The researcher concluded that the students weaknesses related to writing research proposal are composing the paragraph the background of the study well, and how to motivate the students to read some references to support the quotations and how to find a gap in the previous research and revise the drafting soon. The researcher suggested to the students to read more references and learned how to quote, also understanding the chronological order how to write research proposal. Next, for the lecturer to give more overview related how to writing research proposal and gave more time for revision.

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