

NAVIGATING THE ACADEMIC JOURNEY: EXPLORING CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES OF EFL STUDENTS IN ACCOMPLISHING THEIR UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

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Abstract: Thematic analysis identified common patterns in their experiences. Challenges were categorized as external and internal. Internal challenges included inadequate academic writing skills, lack of motivation, and poor time management, while external challenges included limited access to academic resources. Despite these difficulties, students employed several coping strategies, such as seeking feedback from supervisors and peers, collaborating with fellow students, scheduling study time effectively, and using online academic tools.

The study concluded that both high- and low-achieving students faced unique challenges but shared some common strategies. This study highlights the importance of self-confidence, discipline, effective time management, technology use, and peer support for successful undergraduate thesis completion. It suggests that EFL students should develop these skills and attitudes to navigate the thesis writing process more effectively.

Keywords: EFL students, undergraduate thesis, academic challenges.

INTRODUCTION

An undergraduate thesis is a scientific paper that presents research findings based on field studies or experiments. According to Pantiyasa (2019), it involves scientific writing derived from experience, research, or case studies. In Indonesia, it is a final-semester course focused on developing students' research writing skills.

Although Tiwari (2019) stated that writing a thesis is not as difficult as it seems, many EFL students still face challenges. These include difficulties in

choosing a topic, structuring ideas, writing coherently, and staying motivated (Wahid et al., 2024). According to Amalia and Jaya (2023), such challenges stem from internal factors (e.g., academic ability, mindset, health, study habits) and external factors (e.g., family, peers, administrative systems, supervisor guidance, and access to references).

Limited English language ability is a significant barrier for EFL students while writing their theses, according to a prior study (Lestari, 2020). This leads to issues with comprehending references, building sentences, and creating content. Both internal and external variables frequently cause challenges for students (Maghfiroh, 2023). Writing strategies are crucial in overcoming these challenges. Mastan et al. (2017) suggest five effective steps: prewriting, planning, organizing, pausing, rereading, and revising. Asnas et al. (2022) suggest technical strategies, including the use of digital tools, connecting the topic to personal experiences, and the importance of maintaining a good relationship with the supervisor.

However, most studies still focus on linguistic aspects without comprehensively exploring the challenges or comparing strategies between high- and low-achieving students, including gender differences. To address this gap, this study employed a qualitative case study approach with participants from two achievement categories (high and low), each consisting of two males and two females. The aim was to identify the internal and external challenges faced by EFL students in writing their theses, explore their strategies, and validate whether external factors still outweigh internal factors or vice versa.

Based on the background above, the researcher formulates the research questions as follows:

1. What are the challenges faced by EFL students in working on their undergraduate thesis?
2. What strategies did EFL students use to overcome challenges in writing the undergraduate thesis?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic writing is a structured and formal style used in higher education to present ideas or research supported by valid evidence (Bailey, 2018). It emphasizes clarity, logic, and objectivity. According to Swales and Feak (2012), its basic structure includes an introduction, body, and conclusion, supported by reliable references.

Unlike creative writing, academic writing is a non-linear process. Oshima and Hogue (2017) note that it involves pre-writing, drafting, organizing, and revising. Writers refine ideas and language throughout. Ahmed (2022) notes that effective academic writing requires planning, outlining, and the use of formal language and credible sources.

After discussing the basics of writing, we now turn to what is meant by an undergraduate thesis. An undergraduate thesis is a scientific paper that students must complete as part of the requirements for earning a bachelor's degree. It demonstrates their ability to conduct systematic research, apply theories, and analyze data related to their field (Laksono, 2014). Writing a thesis involves choosing a manageable topic, finding relevant references, and organizing ideas clearly—often making it one of the most demanding stages of academic study.

Similarly to Creswell (2018), a standard thesis typically includes five main components: introduction, literature review, research methods, results and discussion, and conclusion. While institutional formats may vary, this structure provides a logical flow for presenting academic research effectively.

Writing theses is a challenge for many students, particularly EFL learners, and frequently results in delays. Lack of support, little feedback, and low motivation are some of the difficulties faced by EFL students. Their success is greatly impacted by elements such as personality, learning styles, and surroundings, claim (Muslimin & Suhartoyo, 2024). According to Untari et al. (2022), challenges are typically separated into external variables (academic environment, guidance) and internal aspects (motivation, health, time management). Internal factors are personal challenges that affect thesis writing, including academic ability, psychological state, health, and study habits.

According to Amandus et al. (2018), students need strong academic skills and consistent guidance from supervisors to produce quality theses. However, many still struggle due to writing mistakes and limited supervisory support.

Psychological barriers also play a significant role. Wiza et al. (2018) and Saputra (2023) highlight issues like emotional instability, anxiety, insomnia, and stress caused by academic pressure and deadlines. These conditions can delay thesis completion by 6–12 months. Students also often lack confidence, especially when consulting with supervisors, which further hinders progress (Mora et al., 2021).

Health factors also influence productivity. As noted by Amalia and Jaya (2023), students are becoming more aware of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and mindset to avoid illness that could disrupt their writing process.

Lastly, attitude and study habits are crucial. Anderson (2017) found that poor writing habits and dissatisfaction with writing outcomes often lead to frustration and disengagement. Maulana et al. (2020) and Lestari (2020) add that even English majors face grammar difficulties, boredom when reading sources, procrastination, and a general lack of motivation, indicating a negative attitude toward academic writing.

In addition to internal challenges, external factors also significantly impact students' thesis writing. These factors include family support, social environment, administrative systems, supervisor guidance, and access to references. Family support plays a role in shaping student motivation. Lack of encouragement from parents can lower students' extrinsic motivation, reducing their drive to complete their thesis (Umriana, 2019).

The social environment, especially peers and living conditions, also influences productivity. A noisy or unsupportive boarding house and unmotivated peers can disrupt focus (Amalia & Jaya, 2023). Administrative systems on campus affect thesis progress as well. Inefficient or disorganized thesis management services can hinder students from completing administrative requirements smoothly (Amalia & Jaya, 2023).

Supervisor-related issues are another obstacle. Delays in feedback, lack of guidance, and poor communication with supervisors often lead to demotivation and thesis delays (Azila-Gbettor et al., 2015; Diasti & Mbato, 2020).

And the last problem in external problems is in the form of problems is a lack of reference materials. Many students struggle to find the books or journals they need due to limited library resources, which hampers their research (Safitri et al., 2021). Among the many difficulties experienced by EFL students when working on their theses, several subsequent studies also discussed strategies for solving the problems experienced by EFL students when working on their undergraduate theses.

Writing a thesis presents various challenges, but students can overcome them through effective strategies. These include setting personal writing targets, joining a supervisor's research umbrella (Laksono, 2014), and applying structured writing processes such as prewriting, planning, organizing, pausing, and revising (Mastan et al., 2017).

Students also use specific techniques like free writing, outlining, using online tools (e.g., Grammarly, Google Translate), and seeking feedback (Abas & Aziz, 2018; Asnas et al., 2022). Language difficulties and the quality of mentorship are closely linked; a supportive supervisor can significantly aid student progress (Strauss, 2012). Ultimately, strategies vary depending on each student's challenges—whether in finding references, understanding methods, or managing time. EFL students in non-English speaking nations face a variety of challenges when writing their theses, including linguistic, methodological, psychological, and institutional difficulties (Dwihandini et al., 2013). Grammar, integrating ideas, anxiety, and a lack of supervisor support are common challenges (Ahmed, 2019; Khusniyah & Ismiatun, 2024). This study investigates the internal and external challenges EFL students face in writing their theses, as well as the strategies they use, by comparing high-achieving and low-achieving students from a gender perspective. This research also seeks to uncover new factors that have not been widely studied.

METHOD

This study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the difficulties faced by EFL students and the strategies they employ in completing their undergraduate theses. This study employed a qualitative method with a multiple-case case study design to explore the challenges faced by EFL students during undergraduate thesis writing and the strategies they employed to overcome them. The research was conducted at a private university in East Java, Indonesia, specifically in the English Language Education Department. The focus was on eighth-semester students who were actively working on their theses.

Four participants were selected purposively based on their academic performance in writing-related courses. Two participants were high-achieving (grades A–B) and two were low-achieving (grades C–E), with equal representation of gender. Selection was based on questionnaires and academic transcripts, followed by a random draw from qualified candidates. Participants were aged between 20–25 years, and their identities were kept confidential.

Data collection involved in-depth interviews and document analysis. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian, either face-to-face or online (Zoom/WhatsApp), each lasting about an hour. Ten validated interview questions adapted from Maghfiroh (2023) guided the discussion. To support the interview findings, participants submitted parts of their thesis drafts, including supervisor comments or revision notes.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on Clarke & Braun (2017). Steps included transcribing interviews, coding responses, forming themes, reviewing them, and interpreting the findings. This process revealed both internal and external challenges—such as a lack of confidence, time management issues, and limited academic writing skills—and strategies like peer discussion, supervisor feedback, and the use of digital tools.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

These findings are presented to answer the two questions in this study as follows: 1)What are the challenges faced by EFL students in working on their undergraduate thesis? 2)What strategies did EFL students use to overcome challenges in writing the undergraduate thesis?

A)What are the challenges faced by EFL students in working on their undergraduate thesis?

Based on interviews with participants, the authors identified various obstacles encountered during the thesis writing process. These obstacles fall into two main categories: internal factors originating from within the students themselves, and external factors originating from the external environment. The data obtained indicates that all participants experienced both types of challenges. However, to determine which factors were more dominant in influencing the writing process, an in-depth discussion will be presented in the following section.

Internal factors

As explained, the problems experienced by EFL students are divided into two, namely internal problems and external problems. In this discussion, we will explore internal problems, which are interpreted as issues that originate within ourselves. This will be discussed in more depth as follows.

Table 1 Internal challenges faced by EFL students in working on an undergraduate thesis

Name	Lack of motivation	Lack of self-confidence	Lack of knowledge	Total
MHA	1	0	1	2
FHA	2	1	3	6
MLA	1	1	5	7
FLA	1	1	2	4
Total	5	3	11	19

*MHA: Male High Achievement

*FHA: Female High Achievement

*MLA: Male Low Achievement

*FLA: Female Low Achievement

Based on Table 1, it can be said that more participants experienced the examined internal issues. In this case study, we selected the discussion theme and also chose thematic analysis to process the data. The researcher will further discuss the challenges categorized into several themes, namely lack of motivation, lack of self-confidence, and lack of knowledge. In several predetermined codes, the researcher provides the following details.

Table 2 Three categories in the internal challenge contained some of the codes found

		Codes	P	Amount
Internal challenges	Lack of motivation	Lazzines	4(all participants)	4
		Lack of enthusiasm	1(FHA)	1
	Lack of knowledge	Lack of understanding of grammar	1(MLA)	1
		Have no experience in writing a thesis	1(MHA)	1
		Difficult in translating	2(FHA, MLA)	2
		Lack of ideas	2(FHA, MLA)	2
		difficulty constructing sentences	1(FHA)	1
		Lack of understanding of research	2(MLA, FLA)	2
		Difficulty finding a reference	2(MLA, FLA)	2
	Lack of self-confidence	Losing confidence in writing	1(FLA)	1
		Forming the mindset	1(MLA)	1
		Un-confidence	1(FHA)	1
	Total			19

*P: Participant

*MHA: Male High Achievement

*FHA: Female High Achievement

*MLA: Male Low Achievement

*FLA: Female Low Achievement

Based on Table 2, researchers grouped internal challenges into three main categories. First, lack of motivation, such as laziness and low enthusiasm. Second, limited knowledge, including difficulties with grammar, organizing ideas, writing sentences, understanding research, and translating. Third, lack of self-confidence, which includes feelings of doubt and negative thinking patterns. Further details are presented in the next section.

1. Lack of Motivation

Based on interview data, the first internal challenge that emerged was a lack of motivation, specifically characterized by laziness and a lack of enthusiasm. All participants, both those with high and low grades, male and female, admitted to experiencing laziness while writing their theses.

MHA: "Because the most important thing is laziness. I'm too lazy to continue writing."

FHA: "We started it ourselves, so we have to fight that laziness."

MLA: "My biggest enemy in writing my thesis is laziness."

FLA: "Internal problems also include excessive laziness."

Furthermore, a lack of enthusiasm was also acknowledged as a barrier:

FHA: "I certainly lost my enthusiasm while writing my thesis."

From these quotes, it can be concluded that laziness and a lack of enthusiasm were common obstacles experienced by all participants in the thesis-writing process.

2. Lack of self-confidence

Based on the table, three out of four participants experienced a lack of confidence when writing their thesis. FHA, the participant with high grades, admitted to losing motivation and confidence due to personal issues that disrupted his focus:

FHA: "Of course, you lose motivation, you also lose confidence."

The participant with low grades, MLA, also stated:

MLA: "I had difficulty forming a mindset, which made me lose confidence."

FLA felt similarly:

FLA: "The issue of losing confidence in writing caused my motivation to decline."

The participants felt that their writing outcomes were unsatisfactory, leading them to doubt their ability to complete the thesis on time. They also worried whether their writing was academically sound. In contrast, MHA demonstrated a different attitude:

MHA: "I have high motivation and confidence."

This indicates that confidence levels vary significantly among individuals, whether they are high-achieving or low-achieving students. Confidence plays a crucial role in the thesis writing process, as it can influence motivation, focus, and belief in the quality of one's writing. With strong confidence, students tend to be more consistent, optimistic, and able to manage stress while completing their final assignments.

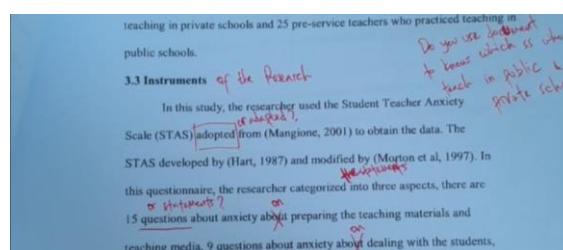
3. Lack of knowledge

Based on Table 1, all participants experienced internal problems in the form of a lack of knowledge, particularly in grammar and translation. Of the four participants, one person had difficulty with grammar, two had difficulty with translation, and one participant, MHA, had no difficulty at all. MHA stated:

MHA: "Personally, I have no difficulty with grammar, because I already have a background in English for several years."

MHA felt that his experience studying in an English-speaking village helped him, so he did not encounter any obstacles in terms of grammar or translation when writing his thesis. Another participant, FHA, also did not experience any difficulties with grammar, but still faced challenges with translation. FHA said:

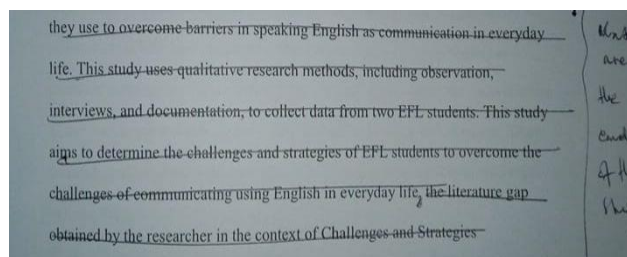
FHA: "But for grammar, I didn't encounter any difficulties at all, seriously. When it comes to translation, yes."



Picture 1 FHA student's draft undergraduate thesis

Picture 1 shows that FHA, an EFL student, had difficulty writing a thesis, particularly in translating and arranging words.

Meanwhile, another participant, FLA—who is a low-achieving student—did not experience any difficulties with grammar or translation. FLA stated: FLA: “Actually, these two things are not obstacles for me in writing my thesis because I am confident that I have mastered them well enough.” (In-depth interview)



Picture 2 FLA student's draft undergraduate thesis

FLA believed she did not experience serious difficulties with grammar and translation when writing her thesis. This differed from MLA, another low-achieving student, who reported experiencing challenges in constructing vocabulary and translating academic terms.

MLA: “Determining vocabulary and translating things are difficult in writing scientific papers.”

Another difficulty arose from a lack of experience. MHA, a high-achieving student, found it difficult because it was her first time writing a scientific paper.

MHA: “I have no experience at all. This is my first time, and I think it's very challenging.”

FHA also experienced similar challenges, especially in finding ideas and structuring sentences.

FHA: “Sometimes I still have difficulty finding ideas... and structuring sentences.”

The problem of a lack of ideas was also experienced by MLA and FLA.

MLA: "It's normal to have difficulty finding ideas and understanding research material."

FLA: "Yes, I have a little difficulty mastering the material."

Lack of literacy and understanding the lecturer's explanations were the main causes. Furthermore, FLA and MLA also experienced difficulty finding references. FLA: "It's sometimes difficult when asked to find 5-10 references from department lecturers."

MLA: "I struggle when asked to find a large number of references."

The difficulty in finding appropriate references, both in terms of quantity and their relevance to the thesis topic, is a particular obstacle. MLA feels this challenge arises from having to find sources relevant to the topic she's discussing, while FLA experiences difficulties because the required references are the results of lecturers' research, which is sometimes difficult to access or find openly.

External Factors

The next discussion regarding the problems experienced by EFL students when working on their undergraduate thesis is external factors, which as is known, external factors are problems that arise from outside ourselves, such as from friends, the environment, and others. This will be discussed in more depth as follows.

Table 3 External challenges faced by EFL students in working on an undergraduate thesis

Name	Friends and lecturers	Finance	Family	Total
MHA	1	0	0	1
FHA	1	0	0	1
MLA	0	1	0	1
FLA	0	0	1	1
Total	2	1	1	4

*MHA: Male High Achievement
 *FHA: Female High Achievement
 *MLA: Male Low Achievement
 *FLA: Female Low Achievement

Based on Table 4.3, external problems are experienced less frequently compared to internal problems. The external challenges faced include issues related to friends and lecturers, finance, and family. These problems are considered external issues that are also experienced and become obstacles during the thesis writing process, which produces three codes as follows.

Table 4 Three categories in the external challenge contained some of the codes found

		Codes	P	Amount
External challenges	Friends and lectures	Friendship problem	1(MHA)	1
		Difficult meeting lecture	1(FHA)	1
	Finance	Economic problem	1(MLA)	1
	Family	Problem in the family	1(FLA)	1
	Total			4

*P: Participant
 *MHA: Male High Achievement
 *FHA: Female High Achievement
 *MLA: Male Low Achievement
 *FLA: Female Low Achievement

According to the Table 4, it is explained that the author found three codes for external problems experienced by EFL students in completing their thesis writing, namely problems with friends and lecturers which have two aspects of friendship problems and also difficulties meeting lecturers or supervisors, the second is financial problems which have aspects of economic problems and the

last is code family with aspects of problems that exist in the family. Here, the author will explain what the interviewed participants experienced as external problems.

1. Friends and lecturers

Based on the data in Table 4.3, two participants with high academic scores faced external obstacles related to their social environment and the academic guidance process. The first participant, MHA, reported facing challenges from peers and lecturers.

MHA: "Externally, from friends, from lecturers. But I still managed to overcome them all."

MHA explained that despite pressure and obstacles from her social and academic environment, she was still able to manage them well. She also mentioned receiving support from several lecturers, who helped expedite the thesis writing process. This demonstrates that despite external challenges, MHA could overcome them and remain focused on completing her final project.

Meanwhile, FHA, another high-achieving participant, reported that she experienced a more specific external obstacle, namely in the process of validating her research question with her primary supervisor.

FHA: "In terms of external factors, there were only a few problems with validation from her primary supervisor."

This obstacle arose due to limited time spent with her supervisor, which resulted in delays in receiving important feedback. As a result, FHAs often feel uncertain about compiling certain sections of their theses, particularly ensuring that the data and analysis meet the expected standards. This communication barrier is one of the factors that slows down the overall thesis writing process.

2. Finance

Moving on to the second code, namely, external problems experienced by EFL students, namely financial issues. As stated:

MLA: "Funding sources are one such issue. The availability of funds can limit or expand the scope of research."

Finance issues limit access to essential resources such as literature, printing costs, and supporting activities like seminars. Furthermore, inadequate financial conditions force students to balance their time between study and work, slowing down the thesis writing process.

3. Family

Based on interview data, students also face external problems originating from their families.

FLA: "Several problems in my family bothered me when writing my thesis."

FLA experienced internal conflicts within the family, pressure to graduate quickly, and a lack of emotional support. This made her feel stressed, lose motivation, and struggle to complete her thesis on time. The impact was not only on productivity but also on mental health, including excessive stress and anxiety.

Overall, external factors such as social relationships, professors, finances, and family significantly influence the thesis writing process. The impact varies depending on the resilience and support available to students. High-achieving students tend to be able to overcome these challenges, while others may face greater obstacles. Therefore, the academic environment needs to provide support so that all students can complete their final assignments successfully.

B) What strategies did EFL students use to overcome challenges in writing the undergraduate thesis?

After analyzing the problems experienced by EFL students who are writing their undergraduate theses, the researcher also analyzes the strategies used to overcome problems in writing undergraduate theses, which also include two strategies, namely strategies for internal problems and strategies for external problems.

Internal factors

The following is a summary of the strategies used by EFL students in solving internal problems that occur when writing their undergraduate thesis. These include the problems of lack of motivation, lack of self-confidence, and lack of motivation, as explained in the table.

Table 5 Internal strategies used by EFL students in working on an undergraduate thesis

Challenges	Strategies	Participants
Lack of motivation	• Remember your initial goals for going to college.	FHA
	• Fighting the feeling of laziness that exists within us	All Participants
Lack of self-confidence	• Building relationships and networks.	MLA
	• Pursue the goals that will be aimed at next.	FHA
	• Discuss with people around you to regain motivation and confidence in writing your thesis.	FLA
Lack of knowledge	• Using existing tools such as Grammarly.	MLA
	• Use several tools for translation, such as Google Translate.	FHA, MLA
	• Discuss with the lecturer or supervisor	FHA
	• Read often, often look for other sources.	MHA
	• Read more articles that are relevant to our thesis.	MLA, FLA

1. Lack of motivation

Based on the interview data in Table 5, one of the main internal challenges faced by EFL students is a lack of motivation, particularly in the form of laziness. This problem is experienced by all participants, regardless of their academic performance, as well as by both male and female students.

FHA: "We must remember our purpose for attending college."

The strategy used by FHA to overcome laziness is to recall the initial purpose of pursuing higher education, which is to complete studies and obtain a bachelor's degree. Recalling this purpose serves as a motivational driver to continue writing the thesis.

MHA: "To overcome this, you must be able to fight the laziness, even though it feels very difficult."

According to MHA, laziness is a major obstacle that must be consciously faced. If not fought, laziness will continue to linger and hinder the thesis writing process. Thus, it can be concluded that both students with high academic achievements and those with lower achievements alike recognize that motivation and self-discipline are key factors in completing their final thesis. Regardless of their academic background, the ability to maintain enthusiasm and consistently manage oneself has proven to be the primary determinant in overcoming various challenges throughout the thesis writing process.

2. Lack of self-confidence

When writing their undergraduate theses, students frequently struggle with a lack of confidence, which was the second problem that surfaced in the research table. This is typical of those who lack confidence in themselves. The participants discussed three ways to get around this.

According to FHA, boosting self-confidence requires keeping them motivated and reminding students of their college objectives:

FHA: "The way I approach it is that we have to remember our goal for studying because if we lose that motivation, we will still be lazy about writing our thesis, and we also have to keep pursuing the goals we want to go to next."

FHA claims that having a post-college objective keeps her inspired and self-assured while finishing her final project.

FLA shared a different strategy, relying on social interaction to restore her enthusiasm and confidence.

FLA: "Discuss with people around you to regain motivation and confidence in writing your thesis."

Speaking with friends who are also working on their thesis and exchanging experiences can help FLA gain perspective and boost her confidence to keep writing.

MLA: "Building relationships and networks is very necessary to improve the quality and have a more varied scope so that it becomes a spirit in itself."

MLA also stressed the significance of creating a pleasant environment. He asserts that having wide-ranging connections and networks can boost motivation and broaden viewpoints during the thesis writing process.

3. Lack of knowledge

The final internal problem experienced by EFL students in writing theses is summarized in one broad category: lack of knowledge. This category encompasses various aspects such as a lack of understanding of grammar, inexperience in writing theses, difficulty translating, lack of ideas, difficulty structuring sentences, lack of understanding of research, and difficulty finding references. One participant, MLA, employs technology to get around grammar restrictions.

MLA: "I also use online tools to correct grammar problems."

MLA uses programs like Grammarly because he believes his knowledge of grammar is still rudimentary. Her inability to translate is another issue. Both MLA and FHA make use of internet resources.

FHA: "Yes, sometimes I use DeepL translator because it helps me when it comes to translating, because if I translate myself, I still waste a lot of words."

MLA: "Using online tools to correct grammar problems and also translate."

The tools were beneficial to both participants because they not only expedite the translation process but also simplify and make texts easier to understand. To overcome other knowledge barriers, such as a lack of ideas or references, participants used various strategies.

MLA: "Start by reading articles, books, or journals that are relevant to the topic of interest. This can provide inspiration and deeper understanding."

MHA: "Read often. Okay, read often, and often look for other sources. So, look for sources on the internet or from books, hard files, or soft files."

FHA: “So, I usually coordinate with the lecturer.”

Reading a wide range of sources is a key strategy for MLA and MHA, whether in the form of articles, journals, or books. This helps them broaden their understanding and generate writing ideas. Meanwhile, FHA relies more on direct discussions with lecturers to gain direction and clarify their research concepts.

External problem

The next discussion will discuss strategies regarding external problems experienced by EFL students when writing undergraduate theses, which will be discussed as follows.

Table 6 External strategies used by EFL students in working on an undergraduate thesis

Challenges	Strategies	Participants
Friends and lectures	•Don't worry too much about friendship	MHA
	•Ask the supervisor again	FHA

1. Friends and lectures

When dealing with external issues while writing their thesis, such as friendships and lecturers, students have their own strategies. MHA faces issues from friends, but chooses not to dwell on them so as not to disrupt their focus on writing.

MHA: “If it's external, it's from friends. But I can still manage everything. There's no need to think too much about it, as it might interfere with writing our thesis.”

Meanwhile, FHA faces challenges in communicating with its (Abas, 2018) thesis advisor, particularly regarding research validation. The strategy employed is to take the initiative to contact the advisor again to request a meeting time and clarification.

FHA: “The strategy is usually to ask again when I can meet and also ask him for validation.”

This strategy demonstrates that students strive to remain proactive and focused despite facing external obstacles.

Comparison between high achievement and low achievement in writing problems

Based on the results of a data survey through in-depth interviews with high and low achieving students, researchers obtained comparative data regarding various problems experienced by participants in writing undergraduate theses.

Table 7 Total internal problem comparison

Internal problems	Participant high achievement	Participant low achievement
Lack of motivation	3	2
Lack of self-confidence	1	2
Lack of knowledge	4	7
Total	8	11

Table 8 Total external problem comparison

External problems	Participants high achievement	Participant low achievement
Friends and lectures	2	0
Finance	0	1
Family	0	1
Total	2	2

According to the study's data, students who are classified as low achievement participants typically have more internal factors than students who are classified as high achievement. Students who struggle academically may have internal issues such as low self-esteem, erratic motivation, and trouble handling time and stress when writing their theses. High achievers, on the other hand, typically possess superior cognitive skills, more effective learning techniques, and

experience in dealing with academic difficulties; as a result, they are better equipped to handle any internal barriers that may arise. To put it another way, while high achievers are not immune to issues, their greater intelligence and capacity for self-control give them a firmer basis on which to confront and overcome any internal issues that may come up when writing their theses.

DISSCUSSION

The data obtained in this study shows that EFL students, both high and low achievers as well as both male and female, equally experience various challenges in writing their undergraduate thesis. Each participant faces unique difficulties influenced by internal and external factors. Internal problems include lack of motivation, low self-confidence, and limited academic knowledge. Externally, students struggle with social relationships, inadequate support from supervisors, financial issues, and pressure from family. Despite these varying challenges, all participants identified internal struggles—particularly battling laziness and staying consistent—as the most dominant and recurring obstacles.

These findings align with previous studies. Amalia (2023) also categorized thesis writing difficulties into internal and external factors. Internal issues often included psychological barriers, grammar difficulties, and problems in accessing references. External challenges involved family pressure, peer distractions, and inadequate guidance. Similar to Dwihandini (2013), this study also found that many students lacked confidence in their writing skills, especially when selecting a topic. The fear of making mistakes and the feeling of inadequacy often hindered progress. Tiwari (2019) additionally emphasized that difficulty in finding relevant references is a recurring issue, and this study confirms that many students find the search process time-consuming and unproductive due to limited academic resources.

However, unlike Amalia (2023) who emphasized health and habits, this study found laziness to be the most prominent internal issue. High-achieving students generally coped better with external pressure, while low achievers

struggled more with financial and family-related burdens. This indicates that students' academic standing may influence how they handle external stressors.

To cope with these challenges, participants applied various strategies. In facing internal problems like lack of motivation, students kept themselves focused by remembering their academic goals and fighting off laziness. To address low confidence, they prioritized building strong relationships with friends and supervisors and engaged in open discussions with peers. For limited knowledge, they increased reading of relevant sources and used digital tools such as Grammarly and Google Translate to improve writing quality.

Externally, students managed distractions from friendships and surroundings by limiting social worries and maximizing the benefits of thesis consultations. Actively asking questions and clarifying doubts with supervisors became key strategies. These findings are in line with Abas & Aziz (2018) and Asnas et al. (2022), who found that students rely on feedback, academic support, and digital tools to improve their writing.

Even so, some differences were noted. While previous studies discussed general academic writing strategies like free writing and idea generation, this study focuses specifically on strategies used in thesis writing, which often requires greater discipline, emotional resilience, and planning. Furthermore, other research such as Muslimin & Suhartyo (2024) emphasized broader factors like learning environments and learning strategies, while this study narrows the focus to EFL thesis-writing contexts.

In conclusion, writing an undergraduate thesis is a complex and multifaceted challenge, particularly for EFL students. It requires not only academic skills but also emotional strength, strong self-management, and effective support systems. Each student brings a unique set of experiences and backgrounds that shape both the challenges they face and the strategies they adopt. Addressing both internal and external barriers through personalized and institutional support is key to helping EFL students succeed in their academic journey.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study addresses two main issues: the challenges EFL students face in writing a thesis and the strategies used to overcome them. The results showed that students faced two types of challenges, namely internal and external. Internal challenges include lack of motivation, confidence, knowledge, and difficulties with grammar. External challenges include pressure from friends, lecturers, family, as well as financial limitations.

The researcher found that internal challenges were the most influential factor in the thesis writing process. To overcome them, students used various strategies, such as keeping academic goals in mind, improving discipline, establishing support with peers, seeking motivation, using tools such as Grammarly and DeepL Translator, and reading more and consulting academic resources. The research also noted that internal problems were more common among students with low academic performance, which had a significant impact on their study success.

Researchers want to provide advice to final semester students, supervisors, and future researchers.

1. Final Semester Students

For EFL students currently writing or about to write a final project a thesis, it is important to develop a positive and enthusiastic mental attitude towards the writing process. Students need to convince themselves that they are capable of producing good scientific work by increasing their motivation and confidence in completing their final project. One step that can be taken is to create a realistic and structured personal schedule or deadline to avoid procrastination and foster discipline in writing. Furthermore, students are advised to constantly remind themselves of their initial goals in pursuing undergraduate studies to stay focused and not give up easily.

In this era of increasingly advanced technology, students are also expected to utilize various tools or applications to support academic writing, such as Grammarly, DeepL Translator, and various other digital reference sources. Improving digital literacy is crucial to support a more effective and efficient

writing process. Furthermore, students should expand their social networks and build relationships with classmates, lecturers, and other members of the academic community. By building good relationships, students can share experiences, solutions, and emotional support throughout the thesis writing process. This collaborative approach has been shown to reduce stress and increase enthusiasm for completing their studies.

2. Supervisor

As a crucial figure in assisting students during the thesis writing process, the supervisor is expected to provide support not only academically but also emotionally. Ideally, the supervisor should be an inspiring and communicative figure, capable of providing constructive, honest, and timely feedback. Careful feedback will help students build self-confidence and maintain high motivation in completing their final assignments.

Furthermore, the supervisor should be open and easily accessible to students, both through in-person meetings and online communication. The supervisor's availability for discussion and clear guidance will reduce the potential for misunderstandings or confusion that can hinder the writing process. By creating a supportive and collaborative mentoring environment, the thesis writing process can run more smoothly and productively.

3. Future Research

This study has revealed various challenges faced by EFL students in writing theses and the strategies used to overcome them, including the importance of support from their environment. Future researchers are advised to expand this study further by examining in more depth the influence of cultural factors, institutional environments, or educational backgrounds on students' experiences in writing their final assignments. Furthermore, further research could focus on the effectiveness of specific interventions, such as academic writing training, technology-based mentoring, or peer tutoring programs, in improving EFL students' writing skills.

Comparative research across institutions or countries would also provide new insights into how social and academic contexts influence students' success in writing theses. Thus, the results of this research can be used to design more effective and relevant pedagogical approaches, particularly in improving the quality of academic writing among EFL students.

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