



Factors Affecting Undergraduates' Difficulties in Writing Thesis

M.S.M. Rizwan¹, A.R. Fahmithah Naas²

¹Department of English, Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education (SLIATE), Advanced Technological Institute, Sammanthurai.

²Department of Accountancy and Finance, Faculty of Management and Commerce, South Eastern University, Oluvil.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.2022.3.10.14>

ABSTRACT

Undergraduates faced difficulties when the students were in the process of writing a thesis in order to obtain a bachelor's degree. This study was aimed to examine the factors affecting undergraduates' difficulties in writing thesis and identify the dominant factors. This study based on the primary data gathered through questionnaire survey based on a five point Likert scale from a sample of 80 undergraduates of Faculty of Management and commerce of South Eastern University of Sri Lanka academic year 2014/2015. Descriptive quantitative design was used in this research. For the data analysis, this study used descriptive analysis and graphical presentation by using SPSS software and Excel to analyze. The result revealed that mainly, there are three factors affecting undergraduates' difficulties in writing thesis, they are Psychological, Socio-cultural and Linguistics factors. (1) undergraduates' difficulties in psychological factors 3.55 as a mean value., (2) undergraduates' difficulties in sociocultural factors 3.25 as a mean value. (3) undergraduates' difficulties in linguistic factors 3.48 as a mean value. From the three factors it is concluded that psychological factor is the highest difficulties faced by undergraduates. Finally, it was found that first, dominant score of psychological factor is the self-esteem (35.14%) and they were difficulty in gaining the data of thesis (3.79) and difficulty in choosing the title of thesis (3.71). Second, dominant score of socio-cultural factor is the students-lecturer relationship (34.32%), and they were communication problems with supervisors (3.39). Third, dominant score of linguistic factor is the diction (34.64%), and they were difficulty choosing the right vocabulary (3.65) and difficulty using punctuation, capitalization (3.61).

Key words: writing thesis, personality factors, sociocultural factors, linguistic factors

1. Introduction

Writing might be the most complicated skill among the other skills (listening, speaking, and reading). Writing makes our thinking and learning visible and permanent. By writing, we can share our idea, feeling, or everything in our minds. Brown (as cited in Irwandi et al 2019) mentions type of writing involves three points: academic writing, job related writing and personal writing. However, writing an academic writing is more difficult than only writing other kinds of writing. Oshima and Hogue (2007) added that academic writing is formal, so the writer should not use slang or contractions. In addition, the writer should take care to write complete sentences and to organize them in a certain way. Thesis is one of the academic writing that has to be written by undergraduates as requirement for their accomplishment of university life.

Writing an essay or small research is easy for undergraduates but it is difficult to carry out the steps of the thesis writing for them. Students don't have the clear idea about arranging the orders of thesis writing such as starting the background of the research, writing the literature review, methodology part, data collecting and analyzing, writing the findings and discussion. Undergraduates face different kind of difficulties in conducting thesis writing. Tiwari (2019) also say that students face a lot of challenges while writing or even getting prepared for writing thesis. A research conducted by Claudius (2016) found that the challenges of writing thesis include inappropriateness in presenting different chapters of the reports and lack of academic writing skills.

In addition, there are factors influence undergraduates' difficulties in writing their thesis. Research conducted by Sariyanto et al (2015) concluded student's problem with psychological problem, such as low of motivation, anxiety, low of confident. According to Emilia (2009), several aspects must be considered before conducting research, namely readiness to face challenges, building self-confidence, and self-evaluation. Al Fadda (2012) found that the main challenges ESL students encounter are differentiating between written and spoken words and phrases, reviewing grammar including subject-verb agreement and joining sentences together to make a coherent paragraph. Whereas, Andani and Oktaviani (2018), thesis supervision process plays an important role during the process of completing thesis, considering that the students are not experts in this area. Hartanto (2016), resource and references play an important role in the students' thesis writing process as it can be guide for the students in completing the thesis. However, most undergraduates engage in thesis writing without knowing the basic factors or what difficulties they face. It might be the students' psychological factors itself, or their society and cultural factors, or even the linguistic factors. Based on the descriptions above, this study therefore endeavors to assess about factors affecting undergraduates' difficulties in writing Thesis.

The objectives of this research are to examine the factors affecting undergraduates' difficulties in writing thesis and identify the dominant factors.

2. Literature Review

The difficulties in writing thesis, many undergraduate students have some vary factors of the difficulties they face

2.1 Psychological Factors

psychology is related to a person's mental state, feelings and behavior. The affecting factors which become the psychological factors that will affect the undergraduate students to create good thesis writing namely, Motivation, self-esteem, anxiety which mentioned by Brown quoted in Dwihandini, Marheni, and Suarnajaya (2013). Another problem in psychological factors adopted from the psychologist Williams J. Lamberg in Aragon et al. (2013) above includes lack self-management skills, lack a strategy for composing and have no set of procedures for working through a writing assignment from beginning to end, fail to understand and follow directions, write poorly organized papers and sometimes fail to select a topic, their papers lack introductions, and they have problems in understanding and accepting the teachers' criticism.

2.2 Socio-cultural factors

Society and culture have an impact on every aspect of our life. A society is influenced by its culture. Culture, in turn, is influenced by the society. socio and cultural values feelings, attitudes, tradition, thoughts, beliefs, interactions, and behaviors of individual groups. As Brown (2007) claims that culture becomes strongly important. Stated by Dwihandini et al (2013), the focus factor on sociocultural factors that will be arisen in this study of the difficulties in writing thesis are bold in three aspects namely learned the related subject, relationship and communication among each student, relationship and communication with the lecturer and relationship and communication with the advisers.

2.3 Linguistic factors

English has become the major international language for research and publication. Problem faced by undergraduates learning English as second language may encounter them difficult to write a thesis also that is might their first experience as an undergraduate. Payne and Turner (1999) and Strickland, et.al (2002) explained in Josephine (2012) students with writing problem have difficulties in writing to communicate their ideas. They may present difficulties in making sentences, using punctuation in sentences and using grammatically accepted vocabulary and paragraph organization. While Ibrahim (2015) explains that there are some problems that effect students to effective writing in thesis writing.it includes grammatical problems, sentence structure problems and problem of word choice (diction).

Previous study

There are related studies, which has been done by the other researchers. Dwihandini, et al. in 2013 conducted research entitled examined factors affecting undergraduate students' difficulties in writing thesis. finding of the research showed that First, psychological factors that comprised lack of confidence in deciding thesis title, having prior knowledge due to thesis topic, and writing a good thesis. Second, sociocultural factors that covered ability to connect and form each. Furthermore, there is a research which was constructed Puspita in 2021, conducted research entitled the factors that affecting students' difficulties in writing thesis at English Study Program of Institute College for Islamic Studies. The data showed significant finding there are 82% or 40 students have difficulties in personality factors. Second, here are 83% or 41 students have difficulties in sociocultural factors. The last there are 86% or 42 students have difficulties in linguistic factors. Moreover, conducted research entitled Suyadi et al. in 2020 undergraduate students' difficulties in writing a thesis. The result revealed that there are four factors which faced by the students when writing a thesis proposal, they are psychological, socio-cultural, linguistics, and cognitive factors became main problems. As the solution, students should prepare their readiness and ability before writing a thesis.

3. Methodology of Research

This research employed a descriptive quantitative method. A quantitative study, consistent with the quantitative paradigm was an inquiry into social or human problems based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers, and analyzed (Creswell, 1994).

This research used a questionnaire to collect the data. A questionnaire is a set of question for gathering information from individuals. It can administer by mail, telephone, using face-to-face interviews, as handouts, or electronically (Taylor, 1998). The researcher decided to use closed-ended questionnaires with designed by five point Likert scale. Respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement by Strongly Agree, Agree, Moderate, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire created by using the google form and send through online, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Messenger and Email. The populations of this research were 80 undergraduates in Department Accountancy and Finance, Department of Management and Department of Management and Information Technology of the Faculty of Management and commerce of South Eastern University of Sri Lanka. They were undergraduates in academic year 2014/2015.

4. Result and Discussion

Results

In order to measure the validity or reliability of this research, reliability test was performed to ensure the internal consistency and reliability of measures.

Basically If Cronbach's Alpha value is higher than 0.7 meaning that the factors used in the study are suitable and can be accepted as a measurement. (Sekaran, 2003). The reliability of this research construct in the acceptable level as 0.914. It is illustrated in table 1

Table 1 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.914	24

Each finding has discussions of the data that is presented in relation to the research objectives. They are

a. The factors affecting undergraduates' difficulties in writing thesis

To examine the factors affecting undergraduates' difficulties in writing thesis descriptive statistic table was used. Below table shows the overall results. Most of the undergraduates were gave positive responds to the survey. The first, undergraduates' difficulties in psychological factors the data showed that was 3.55 as a mean value. Second, undergraduates' difficulties in sociocultural factors the data showed 3.25 as a mean value. Third, undergraduates' difficulties in linguistic factors the data showed 3.48 as a mean value. Based on the survey result, the researcher concludes that the most difficult factors in writing thesis is undergraduates' difficulties in psychological factors due to the fact that the mean value is the highest. And the second and third factors following linguistic factors and socio-cultural factors.

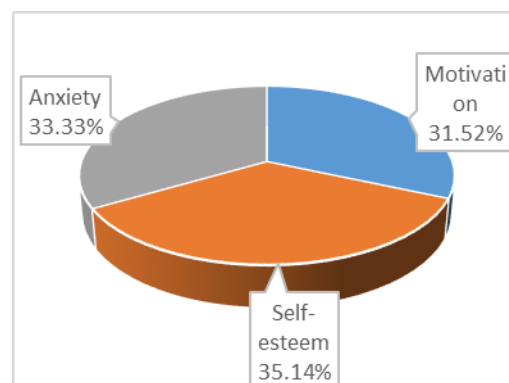
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Psychological	80	1.00	5.00	3.5500	.78293
Socio-cultural	80	1.50	5.00	3.2500	.71351
Linguistic	80	1.13	5.00	3.4859	.78252
Valid N (list wise)	80				

b. Identify the dominant factors

Psychological factors

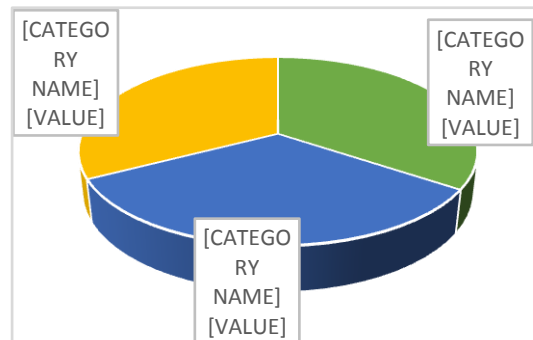
There were 8 items of questionnaires' statements refer to psychological factors. It can be seen that the results of the highest score of psychological factors affecting undergraduates' difficulties in writing thesis is the self-esteem. The mean value of self-esteem is 3.69, and percentage 35.14%. Self-esteem in psychological factors consisted of 4 statements (Statements 3-6). Statement 5 has first highest mean value 3.79 (Having difficulty in writing gaining the data of my thesis). Statement 3 has the second highest mean value 3.71 (Having difficulty in choosing the title of thesis). Statement 4 has the third highest mean value 3.64 (Having difficulty in writing a proper literature review). Statement 6 has the fourth highest mean value 3.63 (Having difficulty in writing the findings of my thesis)



The anxiety was the second position after self-esteem. The mean value of anxiety is 3.5, and percentage 33.33%. Anxiety in psychological factors consisted of 2 statements (Statements 7,8)). Statement 7 has first highest mean value 3.51 (Having fears or worries about doing thesis). Statement 8 has the second highest mean value 3.50 (Feeling doubtful/pessimistic about the abilities when working on and completing thesis). Motivation was the last position. The mean value of motivation is 3.31, and percentage 31.52%. Motivation in psychological factors consisted of 2 statements (Statements 1,2). Statement 1 has first highest mean value 3.55 (There is no prior knowledge about doing thesis). Statement 2 has the second highest mean value 3.08 (There is no support from parents or family in working on and completing the thesis)

Socio-Cultural Factors

There were 8 items of questionnaires' statements refer to socio-cultural factors. It can be seen that the results of the highest score of socio-cultural factors affecting undergraduates' difficulties in writing thesis is the Students-Lecturer Relationship. For more details, we can see in chart 4.8 below. The mean value of Students-Lecturer Relationship is 3.35, and percentage 34.32%. Students-Lecturer Relationship in socio-cultural factors consisted of 2 statements (Statements 9,10). Statement 9 has first highest mean value 3.39 (Having communication problems with supervisors, for example, lecturers are difficult to contact, lecturers reply to messages in a long time or do not reply to messages). Statement 10 has the second highest mean value 3.31 (Having problems with supervising lecturers, for example, lecturers' writings/scribbles on thesis sheets can or can't be read clearly)

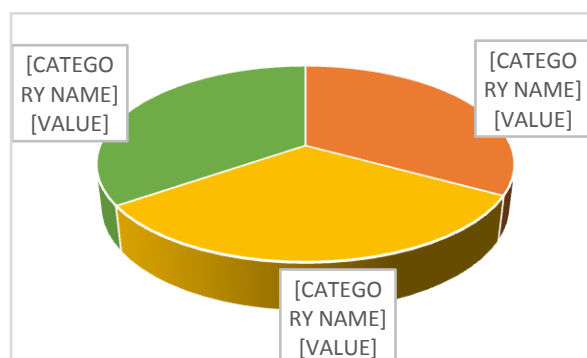


The learning the related subject was the second position after Students-Lecturer Relationship. The mean value of is 3.23, and percentage 33.09%. Learning the related subject in socio-cultural factors consisted of 4 statements (Statements 11,12,13,14)). Statement 11 has first highest mean value 3.36 (Difficulty finding references related to thesis titles taken on the internet, for example, similar research/thesis, books, or related research journals).Statement 14 has the second highest mean value 3.34 (Having technical problems on devices such as laptops/computers when working on and completing thesis). Statement 12 has the third highest mean value 3.20 (In the campus library, there is no complete reference sources, either books or research journals, or scientific works (final project or thesis).Statement 13 has the fourth highest mean value 3.04(In campus library, there is no access to digital libraries (digital-library).

The Among Students Relationship was the last position. The mean value of motivation is 3.18, and percentage 32.58%. Among Students Relationship in socio-culture factors consisted of 2 statements (Statements 15,16). Statement 15 has first highest mean value 3.20 (Finding difficulty in discussing about the thesis writing with undergraduate students. For example, seniors, super seniors). Statement 16 has the second highest mean value 3.16 (There is no support from parents or family in working on and completing the thesis).

Linguistic factors

There were 8 items of questionnaires' statements refer to linguistic factors. The highest score of linguistic factors affecting undergraduates' difficulties in writing thesis is the Diction. For more details, we can see in chart 4.8 below. The mean value of Diction is 3.62, and percentage 34.64%. Diction in linguistic factors consisted of 3 statements (Statements 22-24). Statement 22 has first highest mean value 3.65 (Having difficulty choosing the right vocabulary in writing a thesis correctly). Statement 24 has the second highest mean value 3.61 (Having difficulty using punctuation, capitalization in writing the thesis correctly). Statement 23 has the third highest mean value 3.59 (Having confusion on words with similar spelling/ pronunciation.).



Based on the table above it can be seen that the Grammatical was the second position after Diction. The mean value of Grammatical is 3.45, and percentage 33.01%. Grammatical in linguistic factors consisted of 2 statements (Statements 17,18). Statement 18 has first highest mean value 3.48 (Having difficulty in minimalizing the error of the grammar on my thesis writing. For example, articles, preposition). Statement 17 has the second highest mean value 3.43 (Having difficulty in writing sentences or paragraphs according to English grammar correctly for example tense, subject verb agreement). The Sentence Structure was the last position. The mean value of motivation is 3.38, and percentage 32.34%. Sentence Structure in linguistic factors consisted of 3 statements (Statements 19,20,21). Statement 19 has first highest mean value 3.45 (Having difficulty in paraphrasing sentences from the sources to my thesis writing). Statement 21 has the second highest mean value 3.43 (Having difficulty differentiate formal and informal word or sentences when writing paragraph.). Statement 20 has the third highest mean value 3.26.

Discussion

The research finding shows that the most affecting psychological factor of undergraduate students' difficulties in writing thesis was self-esteem which has the highest mean score and percentage. In line with that, a research conducted by Dwihandini et al (2013) on undergraduate students in the English Department of Mahasaraswati University found that the most caused in psychological factor affecting students' difficulties in writing thesis was self-esteem of the students; Moreover a study by Qasem and Zayid (2019) entitled on the challenges and problems faced by students in the early stage of writing thesis in L2, University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia, undergraduates faced several challenges such as difficulty in deciding topic, gaining the data of thesis. Bocar (2013) also found that the major challenge that the students encountered in the thesis writing is that the students are less-cooperated with respondents.

Linguistic factor is in second position. Dominant factor affecting linguistic factors of undergraduates' difficulties in writing thesis was diction. In line with that a research conducted by Suyadini et al (2020) on undergraduate students' difficulties in writing a research proposal found that the major problem in linguistic factor is problem of word choices or vocabulary (diction) and problems in punctuation, capitalization. Socio- culture factor is in third position. Dominant factor affecting Socio- culture factors of undergraduates' difficulties in writing thesis was student lecturer relationship. In accordance with this, a study by Asmawan (2016) also showed the same result. He revealed that one of the external factors that influence the students in writing thesis is the thesis supervision process, in which the students were difficult meeting up the supervisors and had a communication problem with them. As stated by Berndtsson et al (2008), revealed If the students hand in material that is carefully proofread, well-structured and clearly written, it means that the supervisor can spend less time on commenting presentation details.

5. Conclusion

Based on the research finding in can be concluded all of the factors that affect undergraduates' difficulties in writing thesis faced by the students. The most dominant factors in writing thesis is undergraduates' difficulties in psychological factors due to the fact that the mean value is the highest. They were difficult in self-esteem such as they were difficulty in gaining the data of thesis and difficulty in choosing the title of thesis. And the second and third factors following linguistic factors and socio-cultural factors. In linguistic factor, they were difficult in diction such as they were difficulty choosing the right vocabulary in writing a thesis correctly and difficulty using punctuation, capitalization in writing the thesis correctly. In socio cultural factor, they were difficult in students-lecturer relationship such as communication problems with supervisors.

Reference

- Asmawan, M.C. (2016). Analisis Kesulitan Masahisa Menyelesaikan Skripsi. *Journal Pendidikan Ilmu Sosial* 26, No. 2.
- Berndtsson, M. et al. 2008. *Thesis Projects: A Guide for Students in Computer Science and Information Systems*. Second Edition. London: Springer-Verlag London Ltd.
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching: Fifth Edition*. United States of America: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* 4th ed. The United States of America: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Dwihandini, L.A., Marhaeni, A.A.I.N., & Suarnajaya, I.W. (2013). The Analysis of the Factors Affecting Undergraduate Students' Difficulties in Writing Thesis in the English Department of Mahasaraswati University, *Ganesha e-Journal*, 2 (8), 3
- Fauziah, F., Zaiturrahmi, Z., & Jamaliah, J. (2021). The analysis of students' difficulties in completing thesis during the pandemic period. *International Journal of Education, Social Sciences and Linguistics*, 1(1), 122–129.
- Hardling, C. 2004. *Planning and organizing a master's thesis*. United Kingdom: Study mates limited.
- Ibrahim, M. Alfaki. (2015). *University Students' English Writing Problems: Diagnosis and Remedy*. Sudan: Nile Valley University, Atbara.
- Irwandi, I. (2019). The students' problems in writing an undergraduate thesis: A case study at English language teaching program of Muhammadiyah University of Mataram. *Linguistics and ELT Journal*, 5(2), 37–42.
- Lestari, D. M. (2020). An analysis of the students' difficulties in writing undergraduate thesis at English education study program of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. *Premise: Journal of English Education and Applied Linguistics*, 9(1), 17–29.
- Oshima, A and Hogue A. 1999. *Introduction to Academic Writing: Second Edition*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman

Puspita, C. (2021). Factors affecting students' difficulties in writing thesis: A mixed-methods research at eighth semester of English study program in IAIN Curup. *English Language and Literature International Conference (ELLiC) Proceedings*, 3(0), 13–22.

Qasem and Zayid (2019) The Challenges and Problems Faced By Students In The Early Stage Of Writing Research Projects In L2, University Of Bisha, Saudi Arabia , *European journal of special education research* vol. 4, No. 1

Rahmah, S. (2020). The factors affecting undergraduate students' difficulties in writing their thesis in English at Islamic State University Raden Fatah Palembang (Diploma paper UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia).

Sariyanto, IwanSupardi&SyarifHusin. (2013) An Analysis on Factors Causing Undergraduate Students' Difficulties in Writing Thesis, *Journal English Education Study Program of Language and Arts Education Department*, 1 (4), 2-4

Suyadi, Husnaini, Elvina (2020) Undergraduate Students' Difficulties In Writing A Research Proposal: A Case Study, *International Journal Of Scientific & Technology Research*, ISSN 2277-8616 Volume 9, Issue 03

Tambengi, H. I. (2017). An analysis on students' difficulties in conducting thesis (A Study Conducted in English Department Study Program). *SkripsiUniversitas Negeri Gorontalo*, 1(321411150).

Taylor powell, *Questionnaire Design: Asking question with a purpose*, (University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension,1998), p.2

Tiwari H P (2019) Writing Thesis in English Education: Challenges Faced by Students, *Journal of NELTA Gandaki (Jong)*, ISSN 2676-1041, Vol I, P 45-52

Yanto, Y., &Sulistiyo, U. (2019). Students' difficulties in writing their thesis in English at English Education study program Jambi University. *International Seminar and Annual Meeting BKS-PTN Wilayah Barat*, 1(1), 763-765

Appendix 1

Table 1 Percentages of undergraduates' Difficulties in Psychological factors

Psychological factors	Statements	Percentage(%)					Mean
		S A	A	M	D	SD	
Motivation	1 There is no prior knowledge about doing thesis	25.0	35.0	18.8	12.5	8.8	3.55
	2 There is no support from parents or family in working on and completing the thesis	12.5	30.0	25.0	17.5	15.0	3.08
Self esteem	3 Having difficulty in choosing the title of thesis	26.3	38.8	20.0	10.0	5.0	3.71
	4 Having difficulty in writing a proper literature review	20.0	42.5	23.8	8.8	5.0	3.64
	5 Having difficulty in writing gaining the data of my thesis	32.5	28.7	25.0	12.5	1.3	3.79
	6 Having difficulty in writing the findings of my thesis	17.5	43.8	26.3	8.8	3.8	3.63
Anxiety	7 Having fears or worries about doing thesis	21.3	30.0	28.7	18.8	1.3	3.51
	8 Feeling doubtful/ pessimistic about the abilities when working on and completing thesis	17.5	35.0	32.5	10.0	5.0	3.50

Table 2 Percentages of undergraduates' Difficulties in socio-cultural factors

Socio-Cultural Factors	Statements	Percentage (%)					Mean
		SA	A	M	D	SD	
Students-Lecturer Relationship	9 Having communication problems with supervisors, for example, lecturers are difficult to contact, lecturers reply to messages in a long time or do not reply to messages	22.5	30.0	21.3	16.3	10.0	3.39
	10 Having problems with supervising lecturers, for example, lecturers' writings/scribbles on thesis sheets can or can't be read clearly, as well as can or can't be understood.	18.8	30.0	26.3	13.8	11.3	3.31
Learning The Related Subject	11 Difficulty finding references related to thesis titles taken on the internet, for example, similar research/thesis, books, or related research journals	16.3	32.5	31.3	11.3	8.8	3.36

	12 In the campus library, there is no complete reference sources, either books or research journals, or scientific works (final project or thesis)	13.8	26.3	33.8	18.8	7.5	3.20
	13 In campus library, there is no access to digital libraries (digital-library)	12.5	26.3	26.3	18.8	6.3	3.04
	14 Having technical problems on devices such as laptops/computers when working on and completing Thesis	16.3	32.5	26.3	18.8	6.3	3.34
Among Students' Relationship	15 Finding difficulty in discussing about the thesis writing with undergraduate students. For example seniors, super seniors	10.0	32.5	28.7	21.3	7.5	3.20
	16 There is no support from peers/classmates or close friends in working on and completing the thesis	10.0	32.5	28.7	21.3	7.5	3.16

Table 3 Percentages of undergraduates' Difficulties in linguistic factors

Linguistic Factors		Percentage (%)					Mean
		S A	A	M	D	S D	
Grammatical	17 Having difficulty in writing sentences or paragraphs according to English grammar correctly For example tense, subject verb agreement	10.0	43.8	28.7	13.8	3.8	3.43
	18 Having difficulty in minimalizing the error of the grammar on my thesis writing. For example, articles, preposition	13.8	43.8	25.0	11.3	6.3	3.48
Sentence Structure	19 Having difficulty in paraphrasing sentences from the sources to my thesis writing	12.5	41.3	28.7	13.8	3.8	3.45
	20 Having difficulty in tying between paragraph to paragraph	8.8	37.5	31.3	16.3	6.3	3.26
	21 Having difficulty differentiate formal and informal word or sentences when writing paragraph.	11.3	43.8	27.5	11.3	6.3	3.43
Diction	22 Having difficulty choosing the right vocabulary in writing a thesis correctly	17.5	47.5	21.3	10.0	3.8	3.65
	23 Having confusion on words with similar spelling/ pronunciation.	18.8	41.3	23.8	12.5	3.8	3.59
	Having difficulty using punctuation, capitalization in writing the thesis correctly	18.8	41.3	25.0	12.5	2.5	3.61