

**Thesis Writing Challenges and Strategies of Master's Students in Social Sciences at
an English Medium of Instruction (EMI) University in Kazakhstan**

Ulpan Nurlan

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

In

Multilingual Education

Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education

May 2024

Word Count: 22673

AUTHOR AGREEMENT

By signing and submitting this license, I Ulpan Nurlan (the author) grant to Nazarbayev University (NU) the non-exclusive right to reproduce, convert (as defined below), and/or distribute my submission (including the abstract) worldwide in print and electronic format and in any medium, including but not limited to audio or video.

I agree that NU may, without changing the content, convert the submission to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation. I also agree that NU may keep more than one copy of this submission for purposes of security, back-up, and preservation.

I confirm that the submission is my original work and that I have the right to grant the rights contained in this license. I also confirm that my submission does not, to the best of my knowledge, infringe upon anyone's copyright.

If the submission contains material for which I do not hold copyright, I confirm that I have obtained the unrestricted permission of the copyright owner to grant NU the rights required by this license, and that such third-party-owned material is clearly identified and acknowledged within the text or content of the submission.

IF THE SUBMISSION IS BASED UPON WORK THAT HAS BEEN SPONSORED OR SUPPORTED BY AN AGENCY OR ORGANIZATION OTHER THAN NU, I CONFIRM THAT I HAVE FULFILLED ANY RIGHT OF REVIEW OR OTHER OBLIGATIONS REQUIRED BY SUCH CONTRACT OR AGREEMENT.

NU will clearly identify my name(s) as the author(s) or owner(s) of the submission, and will not make any alteration, other than as allowed by this license, to your submission.

I hereby accept the terms of the above Author Agreement.

Author's signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Date: 31.05.2024

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material that have been submitted for the award of any other course or degree at NU or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgment is made in the thesis. This thesis is the result of my own independent work, except where otherwise stated, and the views expressed here are my own.

Signed:



Date: 31.05.2024

ETHICAL APPROVAL



53 Kabanbay Batyr Ave.
Astana 010000
Republic of Kazakhstan
Date: 11th of October, 2023

Dear:

Dear Ulpan Nurlan

This letter now confirms that your research project titled

Master's Students' Challenges and Their Strategies in Writing a Thesis at an EMI University in Kazakhstan

(a) has been approved by the Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee of Nazarbayev University.

Yours sincerely,

Sulushash Kerimkulova

On behalf of:

Dr Syed Abdul Manan, *PhD*
Chair, GSE Ethics Committee
Graduate School of Education
Nazarbayev University

Block C3, Room M027

Office: +7(7172)6016

Mobile: +77079240053

email: syed.manan@nu.edu.kz gse.irec@nu.edu.kz

CITI Training Certificate



Completion Date 23-Aug-2023
Expiration Date 23-Aug-2026
Record ID 57743736

This is to certify that:

Ulpan Nurlan

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of
certification through CME.

Students conducting no more than minimal risk research

(Curriculum Group)

Students - Class projects

(Course Learner Group)

1 - Basic Course

(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Nazarbayev University

CITI

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

101 NE 3rd Avenue, Suite 320

Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US

www.citiprogram.org

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wf92c1a8a-d544-47f1-b8ea-fe5ff95bb903-57743736

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The story of my time at NU GSE began at the end of the summer year 2022 and will end soon. It seems like yesterday that I first arrived at Nazarbayev University.

Everywhere I look, there are memories, and wherever my heart goes, there is the past. I feel so grateful to have this short section to express my appreciation for the people and places that I have encountered.

Thesis writing is an uncharted journey full of discoveries and new experiences. I would like to sincerely express my gratitude to my thesis supervisor Professor Sulushash Kerimkulova. It is impossible to finish this unknown journey without her careful guidance, rigorous attitude to research, and profound professional knowledge. At the same time, I would also like to thank every professor who inspired me and supported me throughout my thesis writing journey. I am especially grateful to my EAP instructors Jeremy Richard Spring, Ainur Almukhambetova, and Anita Jayachandran for their meticulous guidance on the grammar and formatting of my thesis throughout the journey. I also greatly appreciate Dr Adina-Camelia Arvatu and Dr Helen Johnson's support at the Writing at NU. As the Chinese proverb goes "A day as a teacher, a lifetime as a father." [一日为师, 终身为父]. You are all precious and revered in my heart as my parents.

I also feel gratitude to grow among young people who are so diligent, talented, and kind, which also inspired me during this journey. My dear peers, each of you is unique and

special. I learned so much from you and became who I am now. Let us keep our passion alive, strive towards our dreams, and meet again at higher places.

Finally, I would like to thank my spouse for supporting me and sharing more of my responsibilities throughout this journey. He always encourages me in challenging situations and believes in me, allowing me to devote myself wholeheartedly to my academic life. His dedication and support have enabled me to complete my thesis and have made me feel truly fortunate.

ABSTRACT

Thesis Writing Challenges and Strategies of Master's Students in Social Sciences at an English Medium of Instruction (EMI) University in Kazakhstan

Master's theses are important because they communicate students' research skills and signify their key contributions to the field. However, thesis writing poses challenges for many students, particularly non-native English graduates. Evidence from a Kazakhstani EMI University's 2023 exit survey supports this by revealing that 40% of graduate students struggled with thesis writing (Graduate Exit Survey Reports, n.d.). This study is significant because identifying and addressing students' challenges can help to introduce and improve effective practices and policies in EMI HEIs. Another significance is that few studies have been conducted in Kazakhstan on students' thesis writing challenges and little is known about the causes of these challenges. Thus, the present study aims to explore the challenges faced by second-year master's students with thesis writing at an EMI university, the causes of these challenges, and their coping strategies. Drawing on prior theories, this study used a qualitative phenomenological research design and conducted one-to-one semi-structured interviews with 11 master's students. The findings revealed that graduate students encountered rhetorical, emotional, behavioral, and social challenges while writing their theses. They attributed these challenges to competing commitments and poor time management skills, lack of prior knowledge and experience, language-related causes, and

cultural differences. The findings also revealed that students employed cognitive, affective, metacognitive, and social strategies to overcome these challenges. The findings suggest that administrators, supervisors, and English instructors should play a more active role in supporting master's students in the thesis writing process. These findings also highlight the need for systematic pedagogical and psychological support for students studying in EMI programs throughout their thesis writing process.

Keywords: thesis writing, challenges, strategies, EMI University, Kazakhstan

Аңдатпа

Қазақстандағы Бір Ағылшын Тілді Университеттің Әлеуметтік Ғылым Бағдарламасы Бойынша Білім Алатын Магистранттардың Диссертация Жазудағы Қиындықтары Және Стратегиялары

Диссертация жұмысы студенттердің зерттеу дағдысы қалыптасып, өз саласына үлес қосуына жол ашылады. Алайда диссертация жұмысын ағылшын тілінде жазу көптеген студенттерге, әсіресе ана тілі ағылшын тілі емес студенттерге қиындық тудырады. Қазақстандағы бір ағылшын тілді университеттің бітірушілердің шығу сауалнамасында магистранттардың 40% диссертация жазуда қиындықтарға тап болғандығын көрсеткен. Сауалнама нәтижесі ойлантарлық әрі шешуді қажет ететін күрделі, кезек күттірмейтін мәселе екенін айғақтайды. Аталмыш зерттеу өте маңызды, себебі диссертация жазу барысындағы қиындықтарды анықтаумен жоғары оқу орындарындағы ағылшын тіліндегі білім беру саясатын жетілдіруге ықпал етеді. Айта кетерлік жайт, бұл тақырыпқа байланысты отандық зерттеулер саны аз, сондықтан диссертация жазуға байланысты туындайтын қиындықтардың себептері туралы нақты мәліметтер табу қиынға соқты. Сондықтан аталмыш зерттеуімізде Қазақстандағы бір ағылшын тілді университеттің әлеуметтік ғылым бағдарламасы бойынша білім алып жүрген магистранттардың диссертация жазудағы қиындықтарын, олардың себептерін және қиындықтарды шешуге бағытталған стратегияларын анықтауды көздейді.

Зерттеуде сапалы феноменологиялық зерттеу тәсілі қолданылды. Зерттеу деректері 11 респонденттен терең сұхбат жүргізу арқылы жиналды.

Зерттеу нәтижесінде студенттер риторикалық, эмоционалдық, әдеттері

мен қарым-қатынастағы қиындықтарға тап болатыны анықталды. Студенттер бұл қиындықтарды жауапкершіліктің көптігімен уақытты басқару дағдыларының жетіспеуімен, білім мен тәжірибенің жетіспеуімен, тілге байланысты себептермен және мәдени айырмашылықтармен байланыстырды. Магистранттар диссертация жазудағы қиындықтарды жеңу үшін когнитивтік, аффективтік, метакогнитивтік, және әлеуметтік стратегияларды қолданатындығы да анықталды.

Зерттеу нәтижелері диссертация жазу барысында университет жетекшілері, әкімшілері және ағылшын тілі оқытушыларының студенттерді қолдауы қажет және маңызды екенін көрсетті. Зерттеуші зерттеу нәтижесіне негізделіп, ұсыныс ретінде ағылшын тілді университетте оқитын студенттерге жүйелі психологиялық және педагогикалық қолдау көрсетуге кеңес береді.

Түйін сөздер: Қазақстан, ағылшын тілді университет, диссертация жазу, қиындықтар, стратегиялар

Аннотация

Трудности и Используемые Стратегии Магистрантов Социальных Наук Одного из Университетов Казахстана с Английским Языком Обучения при Написании Диссертации

Дипломная работа отражает исследовательские навыки студентов и их вклад в выбранную область. Однако, написание диссертации представляет трудность для всех студентов, особенно для тех, кто не является носителем английского языка. Данные опроса выпускников одного университета с английским языком обучения за 2023 год показывают, что 40% магистрантов сталкивались с трудностями при написании диссертации (Отчет об Опросе Выпускников, н.г.). Выявление и решение данных трудностей имеет решающее значение, поскольку значимость данной проблемы связана с тем, что ее решение позволит внедрить и усовершенствовать практику и политику преподавания на английском языке в высших учебных заведениях. Однако, в Казахстане существует недостаток исследований, посвященных проблемам студентов в написании дипломных работ, и мало что известно о причинах этих трудностей. Таким образом, настоящее исследование направлено на изучение трудностей, с которыми сталкиваются магистранты второго года обучения при написании диссертации в одном из университетов Казахстана с английским языком обучения, чтобы получить более глубокое понимание этих трудностей, причин их возникновения и стратегий преодоления. Основываясь на существующих теориях, в данном исследовании использовался качественный феноменологический дизайн исследования и были проведены индивидуальные углубленные интервью с 11 магистрантами. Результаты показали, что студенты столкнулись с риторическими, поведенческими,

эмоциональными и социальными трудностями. Эти трудности они связывали с наличием противоречивых обязательств и плохо развитыми навыками тайм-менеджмента, отсутствием предварительных знаний и опыта, языковыми барьерами и культурными различиями. Соответственно, студенты используют когнитивные, метакогнитивные, социальные, и аффективные стратегии для преодоления этих трудностей. Результаты исследования показывают, что администраторы, научные руководители и преподаватели английского языка должны играть более активную роль в поддержке магистрантов в процессе написания диссертации. Результаты исследования подчеркивают необходимость систематической педагогической и психологической поддержки магистрантов, обучающихся на английском языке, на протяжении всего процесса написания диссертации.

Ключевые слова: написание диссертации, трудности, стратегии, университет с английским языком обучения, Казахстан.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AUTHOR AGREEMENT	ii
DECLARATION	iv
ETHICAL APPROVAL.....	v
CITI Training Certificate	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	vii
ABSTRACT	ix
Андатпа	xi
Аннотация	xiii
LIST Of TABLES.....	xviii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Background to the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	3
The Research Purpose and Research Questions	6
Significance of the Study	6
Outline of the Thesis	7
Chapter 2: Literature Review	9
The Concept of Thesis Writing.....	9
Theoretical Frameworks.....	11
Paltridge and Starfield’s Four Clusters of Issues in Thesis Writing	11
Language Learning Strategies	13
Master’s Students Challenges in Thesis Writing.....	15
Psycho-Affective Challenges.....	15
Behavioural Challenges.....	17
Rhetorical Challenges.....	18
Social Challenges	19
Causes of Thesis Writing Challenges	20
Inadequate Academic Preparation.....	20
Lack of Dedication and Effort	21
Cultural Differences	22
English Language Deficiency	23
Strategies for Overcoming the Thesis Writing Challenges	25
Summary.....	26
Chapter 3: Methodology	27
Research Approach and Research Design.....	27

Research Sample and Research Site	30
Research Sample	30
Research Site.....	32
Data Collection Instrument and Procedures	33
Data Collection Instrument.....	33
Data Collection Procedures	34
Data Analysis.....	36
Ethical Considerations.....	37
Summary.....	39
Chapter 4: Findings.....	40
Introduction	40
Master’s Students’ Thesis Writing Challenges.....	40
Rhetorical Challenges.....	40
Emotional Challenges.....	44
Behavioural Challenges.....	46
Social challenges	48
The Perceived Causes of Challenges	50
Competing Commitments and Poor Time Management Skills	50
Lack of Prior Knowledge or Experience	52
Language-Related Causes.....	53
Cultural Differences	55
Strategies for Overcoming Challenges.....	56
Cognitive Strategies	56
Metacognitive Strategies	58
Social Strategies.....	60
Affective Strategies	62
Conclusion.....	64
Chapter 5: Discussion	65
RQ1: What are the Challenges That Master’s Students Identified in Thesis Writing at an EMI University in Kazakhstan?.....	65
RQ2: What are the Causes of These Challenges as They Perceived Them?	74
RQ3: What Strategies do Master’s Students use to Overcome These Challenges?	79
Conclusion.....	81
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	83
Main Conclusions of the Study.....	83
Limitations and Further Implications.....	85
Recommendations.....	86

Personal Reflection	88
References	90
Appendices	106

LIST Of TABLES

Table 1. Demographic Information about Participants 31

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background to the Study

Completion of a thesis is a prerequisite for obtaining a master's degree in most graduate programs (Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). The master's thesis writing process also serves as preparation for future PhD dissertations, marking an initial step for aspiring researchers (Bui, 2013) and thus a milestone for graduate students (Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021).

Universities in Central Asia and beyond have prioritized developing students' research capabilities, particularly in the context of increasing internationalization (Montgomery et al., 2019). This emphasis on cultivating research skills underscores the importance of thesis writing in higher education.

Unlike an undergraduate term paper, thesis writing is demanding because it requires students to independently conduct, replicate, or critically evaluate empirical research. It helps novice researchers communicate their research. This process involves posing research questions, developing a literature review, selecting appropriate research methods, collecting and analyzing data, reporting and discussing research results, and stating the study's implications.

However, thesis writing is challenging for most students, and for those whose first language is not English, the challenge is even greater (Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). Master's students enrolled in English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs are required to complete

their theses in English, which is not their first language. This creates a significant layer of difficulty in students' thesis writing.

Given its importance and challenges, it is essential to explore the EMI context in Kazakhstan. The implementation of EMI in higher education institutions (HEIs) is growing, including in Kazakhstan (Dearden, 2014). After independence in 1991, Kazakhstan has been seeking a new HE system that moves beyond the Soviet legacy to a unique educational system (Montgomery et al., 2019). Initially, Kazakh is the state language (The Constitution of Republic of Kazakhstan, August 30, 1995), then both Kazakh and Russian are given status as languages for communication amongst different nationalities of the country and are being used in governmental organizations (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1997). English was initially accepted by a segment of the youth, particularly among young professionals, but it was not introduced as a medium of instruction in the early 90s (Gerfanova, 2018).

The initiative of the Trinity of Languages (Kazakh, Russian, and English) was proposed by the first President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 2004 (Aubakirova et al., 2019). Later, in his annual speech in 2007, the president confirmed the status of English as a tool for integrating into the global market (Gerfanova, 2018). Following these initiatives, the status of English was highlighted on the national level.

To modernize its educational system and improve competitiveness, Kazakhstan signed the Bologna Declaration in 2010 (Jumakulov et al., 2019; Montgomery et al., 2019; Seitzhanova, 2015). Framed by the Roadmap for Trilingual Education Development for 2015-2020, trilingual education has been proposed to be implemented in each step of the educational system. The gradual transition to English Medium of instruction was later

proposed in Step 79 of the Nation's plan "100 Concrete Steps" (Irsaliyev et al., 2017, as cited in Aubakirova et al., 2019). All these initiatives fostered the implementation of EMI in HEIs in Kazakhstan. By 2016, one-third of universities implemented EMI in universities in Kazakhstan (Seitzhanova et al., 2015; Yessenbekova, 2022); by 2019, among 131 universities, 70 universities implemented EMI programs (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2020). The current study was conducted in one of these universities.

EMI offers several advantages, such as enhancing students' English proficiency, providing access to a broader range of academic resources, and aligning local education with global standards (Seitzhanova et al., 2015). On the other hand, some challenges emerge during the implementation of EMI. Seitzhanova et al. (2015) pointed out that these challenges include language proficiency, cultural adaptation due to cultural differences, management differences in HEIs, lack of literature in English for some courses, and lack of professional training for non-native English speaking teachers. Any of these challenges can negatively impact the thesis writing process.

Statement of the Problem

Thesis writing is significant in graduate education in EMI programs at HEIs because the quality of graduates' thesis not only serves as an indicator for assessing the implementation of the EMI policy in HEIs but also a reflection of students' research skills and their potential contribution to their field (Demb & Funk, 1999). Meanwhile, thesis writing is essential for graduate students because it helps to communicate research findings, develop critical thinking and analysis skills, and facilitate collaboration (Bakhou & Bouhania, 2020; Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). A good-quality thesis is a prerequisite for obtaining a master's

degree. Conversely, failure to complete a qualified thesis will lead to serious consequences that students cannot graduate successfully.

However, as mentioned earlier thesis writing is a challenge for all students, particularly for those whose first language is not English (Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). The exit survey of one of the typical EMI universities in Kazakhstan demonstrates that over 40% of graduate students in one school reported thesis writing challenges (Graduate Exit Survey Reports, 2023, p. 9). According to Hyland (2016), although students can conduct worthwhile research, it is usually difficult for them to convince their readers of the significance of their research. Meanwhile, thesis writing is a daunting task for novices with its required length of around 20,000 words. It requires a skill set encompassing planning, critical thinking, research, interpersonal communication, etc., making it even more demanding (Bakhou & Bouhania, 2020). Therefore, university administrators, supervisors, and English language instructors in EMI universities need to acknowledge graduate students' thesis challenges to better support them.

Given the importance of thesis writing for graduate education in EMI universities, there has been a significant scholarly effort to explore the thesis writing experience globally.

Some researchers found that students face linguistic challenges associated with the usage of appropriate vocabulary and grammar to convey ideas precisely (Bakhou & Bouhania, 2020; Divsar, 2018; Gürel, 2011). There are also sociocultural difficulties that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) students face, for example, the unsatisfied relationship between supervisor and supervisees, or lack of support from peers or family. The most common challenge is the limited support from supervisors or differences

in expectations from both sides (Bakhou & Bouhania, 2020; Divsar, 2018; Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021; Huang, 2007; Khozaei Ravariet al., 2022; Peng, 2018; Yu, 2019). Students also face rhetorical difficulties like being unable to integrate their voices while writing a thesis because of cultural differences (Khozaei Ravariet al., 2022). Students whose first language is not English have difficulties in integrating and generalizing skills because of linguistic deficiency, or underdeveloped critical thinking abilities (Peng, 2018). While some researchers investigated difficulties that students face during different thesis writing stages (Bakhou & Bouhania, 2020), some focused on the strategies to overcome thesis writing challenges (Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021; Marhaban et al., 2021).

However, only a few studies in Kazakhstan have investigated thesis writing challenges. Hajar and Ait Si Mhamed (2021) adopted a sociocultural perspective to explore the postgraduate students' thesis writing challenges and their strategy use in an EMI university in Kazakhstan. Their research findings revealed that students encounter two main difficulties: differences in expectations between supervisors and supervisees, and psychological difficulties. Ablazimova's (2022) research was an initial endeavour to investigate academic writing challenges, and her research findings revealed that students in EMI face linguistic challenges related to vocabulary and grammar, difficulties in developing arguments, and formatting, which are caused by a lack of prior knowledge and ineffective communication with instructors. To address these academic writing challenges, remedial strategies were used by students. Another study conducted by Tajik et al. (2022) investigated graduate students' experiences with EMI in Kazakhstan. The findings from their study indicate that over 70% of participants faced challenges in using genre-specific conventions in English. They concluded

that ecological mismatches exist between EMI policy aspirations and enactment conditions in the Kazakhstani educational context.

The reviewed literature in the Kazakhstani context identified social, psychological, and cultural issues that affect students' thesis writing at EMI universities, while issues associated with writing conventions in thesis writing, the causes for different challenges, and coping strategies have not been deeply investigated. This shows that there is still space for further research. Therefore, this study aims to achieve the following research purpose and address the corresponding research questions.

The Research Purpose and Research Questions

The current study aims to explore the master's students' thesis writing challenges, the causes of these challenges, and the strategies they use to overcome the challenges while writing a thesis at an EMI university in Kazakhstan.

Three research questions framed this research:

1. What are the challenges that master's students identified in thesis writing at an EMI university in Kazakhstan?
2. What are the essential causes of these challenges as they perceived them?
3. What strategies do master's students use to overcome these challenges?

Significance of the Study

This research may benefit a variety of stakeholders. First, master's students studying at EMI University could share their challenges while writing their thesis, reflect on their needs, and share their strategies. By openly discussing their challenges, participants may have felt

empowered to seek out resources, assistance, or strategies to overcome obstacles in their thesis writing journey. Moreover, by participating in interviews regarding this research topic, they were provided with an opportunity to reflect on their thesis writing challenges and develop a deeper understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, and areas where they may need additional support. This self-awareness can be valuable for their academic development. Furthermore, the strategies they use might benefit future cohorts.

Second, this study might bring some benefits to faculty members and university administrations of EMI universities. By gaining a deeper understanding of master's students' challenges in thesis writing, they can enhance the existing thesis writing process to provide better thesis writing support. Besides, enhancements to thesis writing support can positively influence the university's image and attract more international and EMI students.

Third, the research might provide possible pedagogical implications for academic English classrooms in EMI universities. For example, by identifying writing challenges in English, instructors of English for Academic Purpose (EAP) courses can develop and amend their instruction to corresponding challenges. Lastly, the research findings might benefit researchers who are interested in the domain of education, especially in the contexts of EMI programs and language education, by acknowledging the updated situation and promoting discussion in the field.

Outline of the Thesis

This chapter provided the background to this study, stated the problem in thesis writing in the EMI context of Kazakhstan, and research questions that guided the research and outlined the study's significance. Chapter 2 presents the review of current literature on

academic writing challenges, especially the thesis writing challenges of students whose first language is not English, the causes of challenges, and strategies for overcoming them. Chapter 3 is the methodology chapter that explains the study's research design, sampling strategy, data collection instruments, and data analysis procedures. Then Chapter 4 presents the findings. Chapter 5 discusses the findings with previous literature on the topic. Chapter 6 presents the conclusions of the study's findings and acknowledges the implications of the findings. Limitations of the study, suggestions for further research, and personal reflection are also outlined in the last chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As the previous chapter discussed, the present study aims to explore the thesis writing challenges of master's students at a Kazakhstani EMI University, the causes of these challenges, and coping strategies. To fulfill its purposes, this study aims to answer three research questions:

1. What are the challenges that master's students identified in thesis writing at an EMI university in Kazakhstan?
2. What are the essential causes of these challenges as they perceived them?
3. What strategies do master's students use to overcome these challenges?

In this chapter, I will first cover the definition of thesis writing as the key concept. Then, to build a theoretical foundation for the study, I develop the theoretical basis for this research by combining Paltridge and Starfield's (2020) four clusters of issues of thesis writing for non-native speakers and Oxford's (1990) language learning strategies (LLSs) for EFL/ESL learners. After that, I review previous studies conducted globally and locally with a specific focus on thesis writing challenges of students whose first language is not English, the causes of these challenges, and the strategies that students use to overcome these challenges. It will end with a summary of the key ideas of the chapter.

The Concept of Thesis Writing

Thesis writing is the phenomenon that is central to this study. Therefore, to establish the theoretical context and build a foundation for the review of previous literature, this section discusses the definition of the concept of thesis writing.

Although the terms “dissertation” and “thesis” are used synonymously within many educational institutions (Huang, 2007), they are used slightly differently. Woodrow (2019) differentiates these two terms based on the definitions in the Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary. The term dissertation is used for graduates in Britain and Australia for a master’s degree and the thesis is used for doctoral degrees, whereas in America, these two terms are reversely used, graduates write theses and doctors produce dissertations (Woodrow, 2019, p.1). As the current research will be conducted among graduates in a typical EMI university in Kazakhstan, which adopts research terms used in America, the term “thesis” will be used throughout the present study. In the current context, a thesis refers to a document that reports a piece of research with a length of around 20,000 words that follows the writing and formatting conventions of the American Psychological Association—7th edition (APA 7). In the context of this study, thesis writing is one of the requirements for the successful completion of the graduates’ academic programs (Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021).

From a broad perspective, thesis writing is typical academic writing. Therefore, it has the attributes of academic writing and follows the requirements of academic writing. First, the writing process involves an individual’s construction of their knowledge and insights by searching for and reading complex texts, comprehending disciplinary concepts, as well as interpreting and presenting the insights (Irvin, 2010). Moreover, producing high-quality writing requires skill sets of paraphrasing, organizing, summarising, and proofreading (Turner, 2011, as cited in Singh, 2019).

Second, academic writing is a social practice in an academic community, which is more than just a tool of communication (Burke, 2010, p. 41). Therefore, thesis writing as

academic writing demands high social interactive skills between both the supervisor and the supervisee and the writers' social relationships in the research community.

Third, thesis writers are required to operate within the boundaries set by conventional norms governing the structure, style, and formatting, and determine the extent to which these norms should be adhered to (Thompson, 2016).

Having acknowledged the key concept of this study, it is essential to apply a theoretical lens to effectively comprehend the multifaceted nature of thesis writing challenges, their causes, and students' coping strategies. The following section will discuss the theoretical frameworks of this study.

Theoretical Frameworks

The presented literature in this study is framed and interpreted through two main theoretical frameworks, which are adapted and developed to answer three research questions of this research. The two frameworks are Paltridge and Starfield's (2020) four clusters of issues associated with writing a thesis in English and Oxford's (1990) language learning strategies (LLSs) for non-native students. The former discusses four types of issues in thesis writing in English and the latter is about the learning strategies that non-native students use for overcoming these challenges.

Paltridge and Starfield's Four Clusters of Issues in Thesis Writing

According to Paltridge and Starfield (2020), four issues impact on thesis writing of a second-language speaker: psycho-affective issues, behavioral issues, rhetorical issues, and social issues. Psycho-affective issues refer to imposter syndrome, which can be a lack of

confidence, fear of failure or refusal, or anxiety about seeking perfection. When it comes to lack of confidence, the most common barrier is language deficiency which might erode confidence, making non-native students hesitant about their ability to express themselves effectively in a thesis. This lack of confidence can hinder their academic progress. Further, the fear of being misunderstood or misjudged can create anxiety and prevent them from expressing their ideas freely. Perfectionism can also be overwhelming for non-native students because it can lead to excessive stress and a constant feeling of falling short of language expectations.

Paltridge and Starfield (2020) stated that behavioural issues like procrastination happen because some student writers consider writing as a creative practice and wait to be inspired. Waiting for inspiration can lead to missed deadlines and increased stress. Paltridge and Starfield (2020) suggest writing early and writing often as a coping strategy. Therefore, this requires student writers to manage their schedules skilfully and overcome difficulties with effective strategies.

Rhetorical issues mean the way “language and the conventions of thesis writing are used to persuade the reader of the validity of the writer’s arguments” (Paltridge & Starfield, 2020, p. 43). The choice of precise vocabulary and expression is fundamental in establishing a persuasive tone. Conventions assist in effective communication and enable readers to anticipate the progression of a written work (Thompson, 2016). This requires thesis writers to ensure that the thesis is presented precisely and logically for readers following the progression of ideas and arguments easily. This aspect is crucial for convincing the readers of the soundness and credibility of written work.

Thesis writing is more than individual work. Student writers must also demonstrate a level of connection with a specific academic field or community (Thompson, 2016). This is another challenge for thesis writers, especially for non-native students. Social issues happen when students lack interpersonal skills, which causes a lack of opportunity to seek feedback for thesis improvements from supervisors or peers. To solve social issues, Paltridge and Starfield (2020) suggest building a supportive rapport by giving critiques and comments to each other in the writing group.

Paltridge and Starfield's (2020) four clusters of issues when writing a thesis in English are chosen as one of the theoretical frameworks because they logically cover the academic challenges that non-native students meet, which closely matches the research goal and the research sample of the present study (Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). It will guide the whole research process and explain the challenges logically (Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

Language Learning Strategies

Oxford's (1990) language learning strategies (LLSs) are used as the second theoretical framework for understanding EMI master's students' strategies for overcoming their thesis writing challenges.

The origin of the term "strategy" can be traced back to the ancient Greek used as *strategia*, mainly used for warship plans and practices (Oxford, 1990; Oxford, 2011, as cited in Griffiths, 2013). The term then evolved as a learning strategy (LS) in the educational field, aiming to assist effective learning (Rubin, 1975). For early researchers, learning strategies (LSs) are the methods/techniques that a learner uses to acquire knowledge (Rubin, 1975) or enhance their learning (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). For example, to address a challenging task,

a learner seeks assistance from others or encourages themselves. Oxford (1990) defined LLSs as learners' operations or actions to enhance the learning process, making it more self-directed, enjoyable, efficient, and flexible. Griffiths (2015) explained that LLSs are deliberate actions taken by learners to overcome daunting tasks like thesis writing. From these explanations, we can understand that LLSs are language learners' goal-oriented actions that are planned deliberately, either to address challenges or to enhance their learning process, making it more enjoyable and successful.

Out of all the strategies Oxford's (1990) LLSs is the best known and widely used (Griffiths, 2015). It was chosen as the second theoretical framework in this study for the following three reasons. First, the language learning strategies, which have been categorized into six groups are rich and detailed and are suitable for examining students from different linguistic backgrounds and with learning styles. Second, the effectiveness of Oxford's (1990) language learning strategies has been proven in previous empirical studies (Bulqiyah et al., 2021; Ellis, 1994, as cited in Rahimi et al., 2008; Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021; Hsiao & Oxford, 2002; Huang, 2007; Hyland, 2016; Junianti & Wulandari, 2020; Marhaban et al., 2021; Ren & Zhu, 2023; Tardy, 2005, 2012). For example, Ellis (1994) assessed Oxford's (1990) categorization of LLSs as the most comprehensive taxonomy because of its hierarchy and breadth. Later, Hsiao and Oxford (2002) stated that it is the most dependable taxonomy to date based on factor analysis measures (as cited in Rahimi et al., 2008). Third, these LLSs are suitable for either foreign language or second language contexts (Oxford, 1990). This aligns with the participants of the current study who are EMI university students, for whom English might be either a second or foreign language.

Oxford (1990) classified six language learning strategies for EFL or ESL learners. Four strategies (cognitive strategies, affective strategies, metacognitive strategies, and social strategies) are commonly used in prior research. Cognitive strategies refer to learners' ability to manipulate language directly, which can be accomplished through reasoning, note-taking, organizing, synthesizing, summarizing, and outlining. Affective strategies are used for learners to deal with negative emotions and motivate themselves. Metacognitive strategies are used by learners to manage learning processes, by which the learner identifies their learning styles and preferences, creates a learning schedule, monitors and evaluates their learning process, and works on their errors. Lastly, social strategies are related to learners building academic networks to ask for verification and seek help regarding language tasks.

Master's Students Challenges in Thesis Writing

Thesis writing challenges have been explored from different lenses by different researchers in different contexts. This section will examine the thesis or dissertation writing challenges of English non-native-speaker students through the lens of Paltridge and Starfield's (2020) four clusters of influential issues. These issues can be categorized into four groups: psycho-affective issues, behavioural issues, rhetorical issues, and social issues.

Psycho-Affective Challenges

Previous scholars' research findings revealed that students saw various psycho-affective issues (or emotional issues). These psycho-affective issues encompass negative attitudes towards essay writing such as imposter syndromes and anxiety (Bulqiyah et al., 2021; Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021; Nur, 2022), lack of confidence and motivation (Bulqiyah et al., 2021), feelings of confusion and disappointment (Amin et al., 2023; Nur, 2022; Trisdayanti et

al., 2019), or feeling agitated, stressed, and angry (Nur, 2022). Trisdayanti et al.'s (2019) study showed that undergraduate students experienced other negative emotions of rejection after receiving feedback, dissatisfaction, distraction, frustration, and sadness. Amin et al. (2023) explored the sources for both positive and negative emotions. They found that supervisors are the source of students' emotions. Students feel confused when they have disagreements with supervisors and feel disappointed when they receive late or inadequate feedback.

Fear of identity transition from a student to a researcher is another emotional issue. Finding an academic voice in English leads to anxiety about identity transition (Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). The authors argued that finding an appropriate academic voice requires writers to express their perspectives and opinions, which is a common expectation of Western English-speaking institutions (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999, as cited in Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). However, finding this academic voice is challenging for non-native novice writers not only because of the demanding requirements and expectations of supervisors but also the implications for their sense of self or adjusting to a new identity as a researcher (Hajar, 2019; Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021; Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). For example, Paltridge and Starfield (2020) cited the example of Shen, a Chinese student in one of the North American universities. To balance the academic voice and the writer's voice, Shen had to become a new person when writing in English. This required an identity transition from a humble, modest Chinese self to a confident and assertive English self.

Hajar and Ait Si Mhamed (2021) explored postgraduates' thesis writing challenges at an EMI university in Kazakhstan. Their qualitative study collected data with narratives and three subsequent semi-structured interviews with eight participants. Four of them commented on their new experience of writing their theses in English and their expectations of transition

to new identities as novice researchers. A similar experience of insecurity regarding the negotiation of identity can be found in Hajar's research among international students in a UK university (2019).

Researchers highlight that supervisors (or advisors) play a pivotal role in the academic improvement of non-native English speaker students (Hajar, 2019; Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021; Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). Accordingly, supervisors should show empathy for potential issues that might happen related to these identity transitions that might impact thesis writing (Paltridge & Starfield, 2020).

Behavioural Challenges

A wise management of time is essential for thesis writing because students need to allocate time for this daunting task when they have a busy schedule. Some students might face behavioural issues like being unable to manage time properly (Hajar, 2019; Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021; Singh, 2019), a lack of academic writing practice (Gürel, 2011; Khozaei et al., 2022), and academic dishonesty (Singh, 2019).

According to Hajar (2019) and Hajar and Ait Si Mhamed (2021), apart from the emotional issues that graduate students face while writing their thesis, they also confront the challenges of managing time properly. In the latter study, three out of eight participants faced the problem of late submission of thesis work. Students ascribed this to different reasons: their poor time management skills, failure to get access to research sites due to the level of bureaucracy, and their supervisor's negative and late feedback.

Other behavioural issues were found as well. Khozaei Ravari et al. (2022) conducted qualitative research in Iran to explore the factors that hinder non-native MA graduate students' thesis writing from the perspectives of supervisors. The supervisors in this study reported that

non-native graduate students lack dedication to their research project and tend to overly rely on their supervisors.

Rhetorical Challenges

The rhetorical issues of thesis writing are the third concern troubling students whose first language is not English. To achieve the rhetorical aim of the writing, Paltridge and Starfield (2020) suggest that the writer should meet three academic writing conventions. First, it is the writers' responsibility to be clear and produce a well-organized statement by always keeping the reader in mind and structuring the text logically and coherently through meta-discourse and signposting. Second, the writer should find an academic voice in English, which has become a standard expectation in academic settings of Western anglophone universities (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999, as cited in Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). Finding an academic voice requires the writer to express critical perspectives and express their own opinions. Third, the writer should adjust the strengths of claims by hedging (Paltridge & Starfield, 2020, p. 52). In other words, with the readers in mind, the master's students in an EMI context should possess the awareness to keep their claims moderate. According to Hyland (1996), hedging might be problematic for non-native writers because it requires a broad linguistic range to persuade the readers of the reliability, validity, and precision of their research (Hyland, 1996, as cited in Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). Hyland's (2016) study reported that doctoral students in a Hong Kong EMI university faced rhetorical issues like conveying complex ideas and confidently expressing perspectives in a persuasive academic voice.

Other empirical studies have reported rhetorical issues, including difficulties with outlining and organizing writing (Bulqiyah et al., 2021; Junianti & Wulandari, 2020; Peng, 2018), an inability to express ideas appropriately or use academic words properly (Gürel,

2011; Junianti & Wulandari, 2020; Singh, 2019; Sukandi & Rianita, 2020), a lack of critical thinking skills (Huang, 2007), and the absence of students' voices in writing due to perceiving themselves as lacking academic authority (Khozaei et al., 2022).

Social Challenges

Social issues in academic writing or thesis writing refer to students' lack of interpersonal skills within the academic community. These students especially face the expectation differences between supervisors and students, and lack of support from supervisors, research participants, or the research community (Bakhou & Bouhania, 2020; Divsar, 2018; Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021; Huang, 2007; Ma, 2021). These social issues are usually caused by language deficiency, a lack of interpersonal skills, expectation differences between supervisors and supervisees, and a lack of welcoming academic surroundings.

Bakhou and Bouhania (2020) explored the Algerian EFL master's students' thesis writing difficulties, and their study found that students face sociocultural challenges like insufficient support from supervisors and family and lack of cooperation from the participants when collecting data for research. Similarly, some dependent students may be dissatisfied with supervisors' late and brief feedback (Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021). The supervisory relationship has been the focus of more of other studies. For instance, Huang (2007) explored 40 Asian international students' dissertation writing experience in the UK. The participants expressed their difficulties like unpleasant relationships between supervisors and students due to cultural differences and participants' inadequate English language proficiency. Ma's (2021) research explored English as Additional Language (EAL) doctoral students' thesis writing experiences in Australia. The study suggested that students face various challenges including underdeveloped interpersonal skills during thesis writing. Despite studies conducted in various

contexts, students often face social challenges, particularly in their relationships with supervisors. It is crucial to further explore these issues to better support students.

This section reviewed the students' academic/thesis writing challenges through the lens of Paltridge and Starfield's (2020) framework, and the next section will discuss the causes of these challenges in previous empirical studies.

Causes of Thesis Writing Challenges

Identifying the causes of the challenges students face while writing their theses is essential, as this allows for targeted support and efforts to eliminate the impact of these causes. Therefore, this section reviews various causes of students' thesis writing challenges in previous studies. These causes can be categorized into the following four types: inadequate academic preparation, lack of dedication and academic awareness, cultural differences, and deficient English language level.

Inadequate Academic Preparation

A lack of prior academic training, research knowledge, and skills is categorized as the first reason because this often leads to a lack of academic dedication. Multiple studies revealed that a lack of academic training in previous universities/institutions caused writing challenges (Bakhou & Bouhania, 2020; Junianti & Wulandari, 2020; Ma, 2021; Peng, 2018; Singh, 2019; Tajik et al., 2022).

Bakhou and Bouhania's (2020) research suggested that inadequate academic preparation was identified as the major cause of thesis writing challenges that EFL graduate students confronted. Ma's (2021) research further reinforced this notion by highlighting that inadequate preparation had detrimental effects on students' writing efficiency. Peng (2018) explored the Chinese doctoral and graduate students' generic issues in their dissertation/thesis

writing in English from the perspective of supervisors. The findings suggested that the biggest challenges of these students are weakly integrating and generalizing skills because of underdeveloped critical thinking abilities. Their weak critical thinking skills stemmed from a lack of research knowledge and advanced academic skills. Similarly, another study conducted by Singh (2019) explored international EFL graduate students' academic performance (reading and writing) difficulties in one of the Malaysian universities from the perspective of lecturers. Her research indicated that a lack of knowledge and skills in academic writing and research led to various challenges while writing their master theses. To be specific, students faced writing challenges like being unable to express ideas smoothly, a lack of organizing, revising, and proofreading skills, and behavioral challenges like academic dishonesty. Due to a lack of research skills, students had difficulties in formulating research questions, choosing proper research methods, analyzing collected data, etc.

Echoing these sentiments, Junianti and Wulandari's (2020) research regarding EFL students' academic writing issues in an Indonesian HEI underscored students' writing challenges were due to the inability to organize ideas logically and being unable to use academic words properly.

Lack of Dedication and Effort

The second reason for academic writing challenges revealed in the literature analysis is students' lack of dedication and effort (Khozaei Ravari et al., 2022; Sukandi & Rianita, 2020). For example, extensive reading is essential throughout thesis writing. Reading not only helps to accumulate key terms, theories, and knowledge regarding a specific topic (Kwan, 2009) but is also essential for justifying the writer's arguments. Insufficient literature review may result in the exclusion of pertinent studies or run the risk of plagiarism (an unintended replication of

previous research). This can be found in prior research. Sukandi and Rianita's (2020) study revealed that students faced the difficulty of starting their thesis.

A similar finding can be found in other research, for instance, according to Khozaei et al., (2022), students lack dedication to research and over-reliance on their supervisors, which are hindrances to successful completion of their thesis writing.

Cultural Differences

The third cause for academic writing challenges as revealed in literature is cultural differences. Student writers, particularly those from non-Western contexts, may not be able to integrate their voice into the writing, and cultural differences often lead to misunderstandings between supervisors and supervisees (Bian & Wang, 2016; Huang, 2007; Khozaei et al., 2022; Ma, 2021; Singh, 2019). EFL students sometimes fail to comprehend fully the academic writing conventions and expectations from the supervisors and the institution, not only due to their limited linguistic knowledge but also because their previous learning experience and their home culture are different from the new academic settings (Brown, 2008, as cited in Singh, 2019).

According to Khozaei et al. (2022), students' lack of voice in writing may happen because of teachers' perception of authority and sources of power and knowledge in certain cultures, which is consistent with Huang's (2007) study. In an exploration of Asian international students' learning experiences in the UK, Huang's (2007) findings revealed that these students had negative experiences because writing required critical thinking and also due to unpleasant relationships between supervisors and students while writing their dissertations. Asian international students see supervisors as the authority of knowledge and even do not

question them. Similarly, Paltridge and Starfield (2020) explained that addressing professors or supervisors by their first name is unusual for some ESL/EFL learners, while it is common in Western culture. Those EFL learners prefer to use supervisors' titles to show respect as is accepted in their culture. This awareness of respect also emerges during interactions with supervisors in which they always let the supervisor speak first or even keep silent. Similar findings can be found in other studies as well.

For example, Bian and Wang's (2016) study indicated that Chinese EFL undergraduate students face rhetorical difficulties due to differences between Chinese and English. To be exact, according to supervisors in their study, Chinese requires a spiral thinking mode and a roundabout way of writing, while English has linear thinking modes and a direct way of writing. Therefore, these Chinese students face difficulties straightforwardly expressing their thoughts or developing ideas directly while writing. Moreover, these students are weak in critical thinking skills which is necessary when writing certain chapters like the Literature Review and Discussion. Students whose first language is not English are influenced by their home learning culture which also affects their academic writing practices.

These studies validate Fox's (1992) statement that Western education systems value analytical and critical-thinking skills, whereas East Asian education systems value tradition and authority (as cited in Adrian-Taylor et al., 2007).

English Language Deficiency

English proficiency is crucial to the academic success of international students (Soruc, 2021; Wang & Huang, 2023) as it is vital to each step of writing. Previous studies revealed that non-native learners' inadequate vocabulary (Adas & Bakir, 2013; Bakhou & Bouhania, 2020; Bulqiyah et al., 2021; Huang, 2007; Peng, 2018; Singh, 2013, 2015, 2016; Tajik et al.,

2022; Trice, 2003) and limited knowledge in grammar (Bakhou & Bouhania, 2020; Puspita, 2021) caused difficulties in writing.

In an academic context, vocabulary issues include limited lexical range, incorrect use or interpretation of words, incorrect spelling, etc. This can cause different issues in writing. First, linguistic issues in terms of vocabulary and grammar can cause a breakdown of communication in academic settings. According to prior research, international students may face difficulties in obtaining corrective feedback clearly from their professors due to language deficiency in terms of vocabulary and grammar (Brown, 2008, as cited in Singh, 2019) or face communicative challenges due to limited vocabulary (Adas & Bakir, 2013). A similar situation can also be seen in other researchers' findings. For example, Bulqiyah et al.'s (2021) findings suggest that EFL tertiary students in Indonesia also experience writing difficulties in terms of lexico-grammar issues while writing an essay.

Another issue is that students' inadequate linguistic level can cause failure to express ideas properly. To investigate the academic writing problems of international Arab speakers in a Malaysian university, Abdulkareem (2013) conducted quantitative research with 85 respondents. His study shows that around 30% of them have issues with vocabulary, along with sentence structuring problems. Singh (2019) also studied Malaysian students' academic writing challenges from both the perspectives of students and lecturers. Singh's (2019) research findings revealed that poor language proficiency can lead to plagiarism, misinterpreted feedback, and failure to express ideas correctly.

Four main types of causes were reviewed in this section. The following section will present previous studies on the students' coping strategies.

Strategies for Overcoming the Thesis Writing Challenges

Four main strategies (cognitive strategies, affective strategies, metacognitive strategies, and social strategies) have been outlined by researchers for overcoming academic writing challenges among EFL or ESL student writers (Bulqiyah et al., 2021; Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021; Huang, 2007; Hyland, 2016; Junianti & Wulandari, 2020; Marhaban et al., 2021; Ren & Zhu, 2023; Tardy, 2005, 2012; Xu & Zhang, 2019).

Studies indicated that EFL/ESL and international students use at least one of these strategies.

Cognitive strategies were found to be the most widely used in various contexts ranging from using experts' articles as samples and textual mentors to mimic and learn (Hajar et al., 2023; Hyland, 2016; Ren & Zhu, 2023) to using dictionaries, giving attention to the meaning, using structures (Ablazimova, 2022; Junianti & Wulandari, 2020), reading for writing, summarizing, revising, and drafting (Marhaban et al., 2021), following academic conventions (Hajar et al., 2023; Ren & Zhu, 2023), organizing ideas by drawing mind maps (Hajar et al., 2023) as well as analyzing and reasoning (Xu & Zhang, 2019).

Affective strategies like motivating themselves to discuss their research findings and discussing their negative moods with others (Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021; Marhaban et al., 2021), self-rewarding like taking a short break (Junianti & Wulandari, 2020).

Metacognitive strategies are also used differently for monitoring the writing process by setting goals, organizing and planning learning schedule (Ablazimova, 2022; Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021; Hajar et al., 2023; Junianti & Wulandari, 2020; Marhaban et al., 2021), and seeking feedback for identifying errors in writing and evaluating writing results (Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021; Hajar et al., 2023).

Social strategies are used mainly for seeking feedback from supervisors and cooperating with peers and people in the research community (Ablazimova, 2022; Hajar & Mhamed, 2021; Hajar et al., 2023; Hyland, 2016; Junianti & Wulandari, 2020; Marhaban et al., 2021; Ren & Zhu, 2023), empathizing with others (Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021), and proactively attending seminars and taking online courses (Hajar et al., 2023).

Summary

Overall, this chapter started with the definition of thesis writing as the key concept of the study. It then presented Paltridge and Starfield's (2020) four clusters of issues in thesis writing and Oxford's (1990) LLSs for non-native language learners as theoretical frameworks. Last, it synthesized the previous research on the topic globally and locally. The analyzed literature reveals that thesis writing is a challenge for all graduate students, with non-native speakers facing even greater difficulties. Given its importance, this topic has been relatively well-explored globally. Despite research conducted in Kazakhstan (Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021; Tajik et al., 2022), certain aspects remain under-explored. The causes of these challenges and coping strategies have not been deeply explored (Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021; Tajik et al., 2022). This review demonstrates the necessity and value of gaining a broader and deeper understanding of the issue in the Kazakhstani context. The reviewed literature will lay a foundation for further investigation of the issues within the Kazakhstani context. The next chapter will focus on the methodology used in the research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In the previous chapter, I reviewed existing research on the topic identified the research gaps and justified the importance of my research. In this chapter, I will present the methodology used for exploring master's students' thesis writing challenges, the perceived causes, and coping strategies in an EMI university in Kazakhstan. These three research questions guided the current study:

1. What are the challenges that master's students identified in thesis writing at an EMI university in Kazakhstan?
2. What are the essential causes of these challenges as they perceived them?
3. What strategies do master's students use to overcome these challenges?

This chapter discusses the methodology I chose to best answer these questions. Specifically, I justify the appropriateness of the research design, research site, and sampling procedures. Then I present the data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, and end with a conclusion.

Research Approach and Research Design

The present study conducted in a typical EMI university in Kazakhstan, aimed to understand the master's students' thesis writing challenges, their beliefs about the causes behind these challenges, and their strategies.

To do so, I employed a qualitative research methodology because the phenomena of thesis writing challenges and the reasons for these challenges can be complex and interwoven and they cannot be reduced to isolated variables (Yilmaz, 2013). Researchers like Creswell (2013) and Mason (2006) explain that qualitative research is appropriate for exploration,

interpretation, hearing silenced voices, and a complex, detailed understanding of the issue. Moreover, in-depth information can be obtained by reducing the power relationship between respondents and the researcher. Minimizing the power relationship between my participants and me means giving my participants more space to express their inner voices and their perspectives on the research problems (Creswell, 2013, p. 47). This minimized power relationship requires my participants to fully express their ideas and experiences from their perspectives. This could be seen in my research because master's students who participated in this research were able to fully express their challenges in thesis writing, their perspectives regarding what caused those challenges, and their strategies. Hence, qualitative research is more suitable for this research.

In this study, I have chosen to employ a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology was initially introduced by German philosopher Edmund H. Husserl (1913-1954) and was later used as a research method in the fields of social sciences (Patton, 2014). It is the best fit for my research study for the following reasons.

First, the primary goal of this study is to investigate and articulate the master's students' subjective views of lived experiences in their thesis writing process (Hammersley, 2013; Patton, 2014). Lived experiences are first-hand experiences of how an individual directly experiences the actual moments (Patton, 2014, pp. 190-191). Since the participants in this study are second-year master's students in an EMI university who are currently going through the thesis writing process, phenomenological research design was the best fit. The successful completion of a thesis, either individually or within a small group, requires an EMI university student writer to exercise their agency and autonomy throughout the whole process—from choosing a research topic, reviewing previous literature and developing a

theoretical framework, selecting a research method, to discussing and analysing the research findings. In other words, student writers experience the thesis writing process most truly.

Second, phenomenological design is concerned with the subjective meanings and interpretations individuals attribute to their lived experiences (Dukes, 1984; Patton, 2014), which is decided by the philosophical assumption that all knowledge is grounded in an individual's original experience (Hammersley, 2013, p. 27). Therefore, it is a participant-centred method that aims to describe, explain, and interpret a phenomenon, situation, and the immediate experiences that participants understand and perceive (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 300; Dukes, 1984). This can help me to get a more authentic and comprehensive understanding of my participants' perspectives on the phenomenon. In other words, it helps me capture the meanings that master's students in this EMI university attach to the phenomenon of thesis writing challenges, the causes, and strategies.

Third, the phenomenological research design not only identifies the unique experiences of participants but also focuses on understanding the nature and essence of human experiences (Creswell, 2013; Cohen et al., 2018; Patton, 2014), or the "inherent logic and essential structure" of participants' own experiences (Dukes, 1984, p. 198). Thus, this research method has the advantage of capturing and abstracting the common meanings that different participants give to the phenomenon explained earlier.

To conclude, although qualitative research does not aim to generalize the research findings compared to the quantitative research approach, phenomenological research design seemed the most suitable because of its advantages of depicting the essence and nature (common and shared) meanings of the lived experiences of the participants. By

acknowledging the real difficulties that master's students face in the context of EMI university, better support practices can be implemented (Creswell, 2013).

Research Sample and Research Site

This section presents the research sample and site. It provides the number of participants, briefly describes the sampling strategy for recruiting participants for my research, the process used to recruit the participants, and indicates the location of my research site along with a justification for choosing it.

Research Sample

There are two main methods of sampling (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 214): probability (or random sample) or a non-probability sample (or purposive sample, or purposeful sample).

In the present study, purposeful sampling was used because I intentionally selected master's students at this EMI university to explore and understand the central phenomenon of thesis writing challenges (Creswell, 2014, p. 228; Johnson & Christensen, 2019, p. 254).

Within Creswell's (2014) purposeful sampling strategies, I employed the homogeneous sampling strategy for the current research. Homogeneous sampling is used for data collection when participants possess similar characteristics, and the researcher aims to describe the subgroup in depth. To fit the homogeneous sampling strategy requirement, students were chosen according to two criteria: 1) participants must be second-year masters' students currently writing their thesis and 2) all participants must be from a social science discipline. The reasons behind limiting participants to social sciences were twofold. First, compared to hard sciences which tend to focus on skills dealing with facts and figures, social science programs tend to emphasize textual expression (North, 2005). Second, since the focus of this research is specifically on master's students' thesis writing challenges, the causes, and

strategies. Selecting master's students only from the social sciences programs contributes to focusing on a specific academic context that is highly relevant to my research objectives. Therefore, targeting social science programs aligns with my research goals and contributes to a focused, and comprehensive investigation.

Eleven participants from three different master's programs were recruited for the study: three from program D of the Graduate School of Education (GSE), five from program O, and three from program G of the Graduate School of Sciences and Humanities (SSH) (see Table 1) at this university. The programs are coded to reduce the possibility of the interviewees' personal information being leaked. The sample size was decided based on the research design's sampling feature that in a phenomenological study, the number of interviewed participants can be 5-25 individuals who have experienced the phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 1989; Creswell, 2013). Data collection continued until I reached data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). In other words, I increased the sample size until I got enough data.

Table 1

The Demographic Information About Participants

No.	Participant code	Master's Program	School	University where bachelor's degree was obtained (fully EMI/non-EMI)	Interview mode
1	P1	Program D	GSE	non-EMI	In person
2	P2	Program O	SSH	non-EMI	Zoom
3	P3	Program G	SSH	Fully EMI	Zoom
4	P4	Program G	SSH	Fully EMI	Zoom

5	P5	Program D	GSE	Partial EMI	Zoom
6	P6	Program O	SSH	Fully EMI	In person
7	P7	Program O	SSH	Fully EMI	Zoom
8	P8	Program O	SSH	Fully EMI	Zoom
9	P9	Program O	SSH	non-EMI	In person
10	P10	Program D	GSE	non-EMI	Zoom
11	P11	Program G	SSH	Fully EMI	Zoom

As soon as I got approval from the NUGSE Research Committee, I started to reach out to potential participants, which will be introduced in the Data Collection Procedures section.

Research Site

The research was conducted at an EMI university in Kazakhstan. This university has a diverse student body, encompassing both national and international students, thus contributing to a culturally rich academic environment. The university offers a comprehensive range of majors and academic programs, including undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degrees.

This university was chosen as the research site was deliberate due to its potential to contribute substantially to the study's outcomes. This choice stems from two compelling factors: first, this university can be an ideal research site because of its historical and full commitment to EMI practices; second, the alignment of thesis requirements within the social sciences graduate programs of this university offers a unique opportunity to investigate thesis writing challenges comprehensively.

I strategically selected this specific population of students within this research site because I anticipated that these master's students would provide valuable insights and data essential for answering the research questions effectively. Their experiences and challenges associated with thesis writing offered a rich source of information that aligns with the objectives of this research.

Data Collection Instrument and Procedures

This section discusses the data collection instrument that was used and the data collection procedures in my research.

Data Collection Instrument

The present study employed the semi-structured one-to-one interview as the main data collection instrument. There are two reasons behind this. First, an interview is a flexible data collection tool (Cohen et al., 2017). Second, an interview is usually used as the primary tool in phenomenology (Creswell, 2013; Durdella, 2019). The one-to-one interview type was chosen because it allowed the further elaboration of questions to gather detailed answers (Dörnyei, 2007).

Out of the three interview types—highly structured, semi-structured, and unstructured, semi-structured interviews were used for three reasons: first, the number or order of designed questions could be adjusted according to the interview situations because my research aims to ask only the challenges, but also the cause of these challenges; second, it allowed me to keep my participants on the research topic while also giving them enough space to elaborate on their ideas; third, this format allowed me to respond to the situation freely (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

As a returnee from China, my language repertoire does not include Russian. Therefore, the interviews were conducted in English with translanguaging or code-switching between English and Kazakh where needed.

Before the interview, I developed an interview protocol (see Appendix B) with clear instructions for the interview process and relevant questions (Creswell, 2013, p. 165). After that, to address the research questions and to ensure the interview questions were comprehensive, to the point, two pilot interviews were conducted with my peers who were not directly involved in the interview process but could provide feedback. Interview questions were improved after pilot interviews.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection started after obtaining approval from the NUGSE Research Committee. The data collection happened between November and December 2023. Several steps were followed before, during, and after the interview.

First, before the interview, to obtain permission to work at the research site, a letter requesting permission was sent to the school dean with social sciences programs at the chosen university after obtaining their contact information from the university's official website. After receiving their permission, the corporate emails of second-year master's students were requested. After that, I sent a letter of invitation (see Appendix D) to potential participants via email. They contacted me by email or called me directly using the researcher information provided in the recruitment letter. This letter included an explanation of the purpose and procedures of the study, emphasizing the ethical aspects to ensure their privacy and confidentiality, along with my contact information.

Approaching participants was much more challenging than I expected. I sent multiple emails to the gatekeeper to no avail and finally obtained interview permission after several visits in person. After obtaining permission to reach the participants and collect data, contacting the interviewees was not as smooth as well. Within the first week, I sent invitation letters twice to students' corporate emails. However, after more than 10 days, only three expressed their willingness to participate, which was far less than my planned goal of 10 participants. Therefore, I sent the poster version of the invitation letter three times to three different Telegram chat groups of students at the university. After another 10 days, the number of participants reached the expected number, and I had a total of 11 participants from three programs.

Upon receiving responses from prospective participants who expressed their wish to participate in the research, I coordinated the data collection schedule. I sent an email to participants explaining the details of my research and arranged the location, time, and format (online or offline) based on their preferences for the interview. The emails for arranging interview schedules were sent to each participant separately to ensure their confidentiality.

Second, the interviews were conducted after defining the location and time, both via Zoom (with eight participants) and in person (with three participants). To ensure the participants' confidentiality and the quality of the interview, we had interviews at a quiet place, free from any distractions.

Before each interview, the participants were explained the research's objective, the expected duration of the interview, and the potential benefits and risks of the interview. I told my participants that to ensure their anonymity and confidentiality, instead of using their real

names or any other information that can cause identification of them, I would use only codes to identify their responses. Besides, I told them that the secure storage of both physical records and digital files would be ensured. All hard copies would be kept in an access-restricted location and digital files would be password-protected. Moreover, access to collected data would be restricted to me only. I informed my participants that they have the right not to respond to questions that may cause discomfort and they can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I requested to record the interviews and got the participants' permission. Then, each of my participants signed two copies of the consent form (see Appendix C), one for the participant and one for my records. This consent form contained all necessary information about the study and the participant's rights. After signing the consent form, the interview was conducted. For those who had the interviews via Zoom, I sent them an electronic version of the consent form in advance and had their consent via Telegram message or email. Interviews lasted for about 30-40 minutes.

Finally, after each interview, I sent emails to participants in which I expressed my appreciation for their participation.

Data Analysis

I first organized and stored collected data by creating files on my PC (Creswell, 2013, p.p. 190). Then all the collected data were transcribed via the software program Cockatoo. The transcribed data were read carefully more than three times and checked against the original recording. In this step, I also translated all transcriptions that were in Kazakh language into English for further analysis. The partial transcripts of one interview sample are presented in Appendix E.

The Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method is considered the most practical and effective method for analyzing phenomenological collected data (Moustakas, 1994, as cited in Creswell, 2013, pp. 193-194). Moustakas (1994) suggests six simple steps: bracketing, developing significant statements, grouping statements into themes, developing textural descriptions, and developing a structural description of the essence.

Following these six procedures suggested by Moustakas, I depicted my personal experience fully regarding thesis writing challenges and strategies that I have used, which is shown in the Personal Reflection section in the Conclusion Chapter. This step is also called an epoch. To lower the biases, I set aside my own experience in this step (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Second, I identified how my participants experienced the phenomenon, which was done by highlighting noteworthy arguments. They were treated equally important. Third, I categorized the arguments described in the previous step into themes, which are called meaning units in phenomenological analysis. Three main themes (challenges, causes of challenges, the coping strategies) were identified according to research questions. Fourth, I described what the participants experienced, which is also called the textual description of what the participants encountered. In the fifth step, I described how the experience was perceived by the participants. Their reflection based on the context of their experience was presented. Lastly, I presented the essence of the phenomenon by incorporating textual and structural descriptions.

Ethical Considerations

In this section, I describe the approaches I took to ensure ethical considerations were met, particularly how the anonymity and confidentiality of my participants during data

collection and storage were maintained, potential risks to the participants, and the approaches that I used to mitigate these minimal risks.

I used several approaches to ensure the participants' anonymity and confidentiality throughout the study. Apart from myself and my supervisor, I did not provide any information about my participants to any other individuals (e.g., the gatekeeper) or organizations. To ensure my participants' confidentiality, I sent emails individually to those who expressed interest in participating and arranged interview schedules separately with each of them.

During data collection, to ensure the participants' confidentiality and the quality of the interview, I conducted interviews (both in person and online) at quiet places on campus, free from any distractions.

After the data collection, to ensure the anonymity of participants, instead of using participants' names or other information that may cause identification of my participants' identities, participant codes were used. All the collected electronic information was stored in a password-secured laptop that is accessible only to me and hardcopy information was kept in a secure place. Any information that somehow might cause the participants to be identified was not included in this thesis. The collected data will be deleted after I finish the research project and submission of the thesis.

There were some risks for participating students, but these risks were minimal. One potential risk was associated with questions related to psychological issues, such as anxiety and lack of confidence. Some participants might feel uncomfortable when asked about these issues during the interview. To mitigate this risk, I tried to build a welcoming and supportive rapport during interviews by carefully wording my interview questions, emphasizing the

significance of their participation in contributing to the research, and informing them that I would keep their personal information confidential by using codes instead of their names. More importantly, I informed participants about the voluntary nature of their participation and that they have a right not to answer questions that they were unwilling or that they could withdraw from the study at any point without any penalty. The data collection steps followed the instructions that were given to the participants. All the participants participated in the interviews entirely voluntarily. Among 11 participants, one participant refused to answer one interview question, and her wishes were respected. The others answered all interview questions.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology that was used for answering three research questions. It started with the introduction of the research approach and design. Phenomenological research design within a qualitative approach was chosen as it better fits the purpose of the study. The homogeneous sampling strategy was chosen to describe and justify the sampling requirements. The next section discussed the procedures and tools used for data analysis. In the section on Ethical Considerations, I described the approaches for protecting my participants' anonymity and confidentiality, along with the ways of mitigating the possible minimal risks. The next chapter will present the research findings.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the current study findings which were collected through one-to-one semi-structured interviews from 11 second-year students in three different master's programs at two different schools at an EMI university in Kazakhstan. Specifically, it examines students' challenges in thesis writing, the perceived causes, and coping strategies.

The findings of this study address the following three research questions:

1. What are the challenges that master's students identified in thesis writing at an EMI university in Kazakhstan?
2. What are the essential causes of these challenges as they perceive them?
3. What strategies do master's students use to overcome these challenges?

Three main themes will be presented in this chapter: challenges in thesis writing, the perceived causes, and coping strategies.

Master's Students' Thesis Writing Challenges

This section presents the findings on major challenges encountered by second-year master's students in their thesis writing journey. Four themes emerged from data analysis that reflect the type of challenges that second-year master students endure when writing their theses: rhetorical, emotional, behavioural, and social.

Rhetorical Challenges

It was found that all participants acknowledged grappling with rhetorical hurdles throughout their thesis writing endeavours. These challenges manifested in several aspects, including the difficulties associated with finding relevant sources, critically reading,

analyzing, and structuring huge texts, expressing ideas clearly and precisely, establishing an authoritative academic voice, and a lack of knowledge regarding academic writing conventions.

A fundamental aspect of thesis writing lies in the comprehensive search for and critical analysis of relevant literature. However, gathering and discerning relevant literature were found to be difficult among many participants. For instance, this is how one participant pointed out her struggling experience of searching for literature and analyzing:

For me, the most challenging was to find out what issue I wanted to focus on, and about how to gather [literature]. Before I just used to write everything I found, but here I need to find more information, more like proofs and answers to my questions. Pretty much the challenge is [literature] gathering. (P4)

This participant's concern indicated her difficulty narrowing down the topic of interest and gathering literature, which was echoed by two others (P3, P8). Their primary challenge lies in the literature-gathering process, which demands them to refine their search and gather resources that align closely with their research objectives. Analyzing gathered literature is even harder for most participants. Some of them found "reading articles and analyzing them, especially critically analyzing them" (P9, P10) difficult, while others struggled with forming theoretical frameworks (P2) research questions (P8), or research objectives (P11), or writing the literature review chapter (P1, P5).

All the participants were found to struggle with structuring their theses logically and consistently. The participants faced issues in structuring their theses. Some of them

“struggled” with “logically connecting different ideas” and ensuring smooth transitions between them (P3, P5, P9, P11), while others did not use “signposting tactics to guide readers” (P9). Thus, for example, most of them articulated specific challenges such as synthesizing and arranging vast amounts of information into coherent paragraphs or sections. This is how one of the participants outlined this challenge: “My main problem is that I am having trouble with organizing my literature.” (P1) Another participant encountered difficulties in maintaining the overarching structure of a section or chapter while focusing on a specific idea “I get lost sometimes because when you think of the ideas, but then you focus on one idea, and you tend to forget others and there will be like ‘so what was my initial goal to write this idea?’” (P6)

All participants’ responses were found to be unanimous concerning the challenges of effectively conveying thoughts with clarity and precision which is a significant challenge for them. One of the participants expressed this challenge: “For me, it is hard to clearly analyze everything and formulate the sentences clearly. When it comes to expressing, I don’t know how to write it or how to show it in a good way.” (P4) This participant struggled with analyzing and expressing ideas clearly, showing limited proficiency in forming precise sentences. Similarly, another participant noted the challenge of expressing her ideas clearly:

I still have this problem of not clearly expressing my ideas ... English is comfortable for me when I read articles when I study, and when I do what I’m doing right now, but I think generally my brain is the problem because it’s not capable of expressing itself clearly in any language. (P3)

The participant was comfortable with passive English (input) while actively expressing ideas (output) was the challenge.

According to participants, their rhetorical challenges span a spectrum of issues ranging from generating “too complicated sentences” (P2, P3) to struggling with producing broad arguments resulting in a lack of clearness (P5). Additionally, some participants emphasized the challenge of maintaining objectivity in their arguments (P6, P8), whereas others reflected that they endured problems with choosing a proper tone in their writing. For example, one of them was suggested by their supervisors “to put [argument] gently and softly” (P7); others, on the contrary, were afraid to argue “loudly” for not being “too ambitious” in their arguments (P9).

Difficulties in finding their voice were found to be another rhetorical challenge encountered by the majority of participants. Particularly, one participant reported their difficulty in developing a clear and objective academic voice. The following quote expresses this finding well:

If I have other ideas, I tell [my supervisor], but mostly I agree with them. But my foreign classmates do that less often. They don't have this piety over advisors there... because I was trained in very, you know, hierarchical Soviet style studies when you just be disciplined and do whatever you are set to do. I think that affects my attitude towards professors. (P9)

The participant's claim to mostly agree with the supervisor's ideas reflects the influence of prior authoritarian Soviet-style education on her learning. This hinders the enactment of students' agency and independent thinking capabilities.

Apart from rhetorical challenges, emotional challenges were found to be the most endured by students in their thesis writing.

Emotional Challenges

The collected data revealed that the majority of participants experienced various emotional challenges during the thesis writing process including feelings of anxiety associated with uncertainty, feelings of shyness or fear of disappointing supervisors due to unpreparedness or perfectionism, and envy of their peers' supervisor-supervisee relationship.

More than half of the participants expressed feelings of anxiety, particularly when they had feelings of doubt or uncertainty during the thesis writing process. One participant expressed her feelings when emails to her supervisor were unanswered:

I get anxious when I don't know what to do. There was a time when I was writing emails to my professors, I was asking them questions about things that I didn't know yet... and they were not replying...It was very pressuring because like even when I was eating or watching a series or going to sleep I couldn't be in the moment fully because I was always thinking about this thing that I [had] to do but I [didn't] know how to do and I was hating myself. (P3)

The participant was not able to receive instant guidance and support, which resulted in anxiety and feelings of low self-worth and exacerbated her overall emotional distress.

On the contrary, some others experienced stress and anxiety before meetings with their supervisors. As one of the participants expressed: "Sometimes I feel stressed and anxious

before meeting [with supervisor], although [they] did not do anything that caused or increased my anxiety level.” (P10)

Some students associated their reluctance to meet with supervisors with their feelings of shyness, shame, or fear of disappointing supervisors (P3, P6, P9, and P11). They ascribed these feelings of shyness to their unpreparedness or lack of progress in thesis writing or considered themselves as perfectionists. One participant described her feeling of fear of disappointing her supervisor as:

Right now, it’s more of a shame and reluctance. When I go to the meeting [with supervisor] [they] ask me “Okay, what have you done?” Usually, I haven’t done much, that’s why I don’t have a lot of meetings because I know I have nothing substantial to give this person and so I always feel a little bit ashamed and that’s why I don’t like talking to them. (P11)

The participant’s unpreparedness resulted in a feeling of shame and prevented her from meeting their supervisor. Besides, the fear of receiving negative feedback can impact progress and cause stress. This is how one participant explained: “I think I was prolonging it as much as possible because I didn’t want to get the feedback from them. Probably that was the most stressful time for me because I didn’t want to write it.” (P6)

Additionally, the feeling of envy was reported by one participant. She was envious of her peers’ supervisory relationship, which may have enhanced her dissatisfaction with the relationship and her anxiety level. She shared:

I know that my classmate has a super kind [supervisor] and caring...I'm not lucky because I don't have such a relationship with my advisors, and we have strictly email or office appointments. It's sort of once in a month and I never know when they're gonna reply to me and that makes me anxious... [My supervisor] keeps borders with me ... I really envy my friend who has WhatsApp of their professors and can text them directly any time. (P3)

Apart from these emotional challenges above, participants encountered more serious psychological problems. One participant explained that they alleviated stress by beating herself and crying, which reflected a high anxiety level:

Usually, I cry, and sometimes I can be a little bit in bad mode. I don't know what to say, but I'm a little bit psycho, my friends told me. I have these kinds of problems when I don't know what to do [The participant cried] ... Okay, sorry. I don't know what to do. I sometimes beat myself. [The participant cried]" (P4)

In a similar vein, participant 11 described her negative emotions towards thesis writing experience as "exhausting, horrible and confusing" and having "no positive emotions from writing my thesis". Compared to other participants, these two participants' mental state was worrying and demonstrated the struggles in their thesis writing journeys.

Behavioural Challenges

Apart from rhetorical and emotional challenges, some participants also faced behavioural challenges connected with reluctance to write and procrastination. Some

expressed their unwillingness to work on a thesis as “no will to write” (P2) or “don’t want to do it” (P6, P11).

Another behavioural issue relates to “procrastination” (P3, P6). Some made assumptions about their “poor time management” skills (P3, P5, P8, P 10, P11). One participant indicated that she failed to plan and manage time effectively “I start moving when the deadline is about to come” (P3). Another participant shared her struggle with time management while writing her thesis:

I just started working on [my thesis] maybe a day or two before the deadline... so sleepless nights and stuff like that, but you have to finish and complete the task and that’s it. I tried to use some kind of strategies... but none of them were useful, so I just gave up on it and just do the thing that worked for me. (P10)

From this participant’s statement we can see that although she tried to effectively manage her time, it turned out that none of the strategies she tried seemed to work for her. Other causes for their reluctance and procrastination were also reported. For instance, a “lack of enthusiasm and genuine interest” in the topic led to her “postponing” (P11). This postponement worried her, so she had to “force” herself to dedicate herself to the thesis, which she described as something she did not like. All of these resulted in more procrastination and less productivity in her thesis writing. She described the process as “it’s a kind of vicious cycle of repetitive problems” (P11).

Moreover, despite students’ interest in the topic, two of them reported being demotivated by supervisors’ late feedback. A few participants reported their disengagement from their thesis work, resulting in slower progress and less productivity (P2, P3, P6, P11). For example, some participants recognized that they did not have a regular writing habit and

waited for instructions from their supervisor rather than consciously commit to thesis writing on their own. As one participant mentioned, “When I have time, I don’t do it and when I know I don’t have any requirements from my professors or anything, I don’t” (P3).

Another participant commented on her feeling of exhaustion and her reliance on her supervisor:

I asked her, “What should I do?” She said, “You need to figure it out by yourself about what you want.” And I don’t know what I want. I just want her to tell me something that I should do. And I will just follow it because I’m really getting exhausted of thinking. (P4)

This finding indicated that there is an expectation difference between supervisors and students. This participant expected more support from her supervisors and tended to rely on supervisors, while her supervisor expected the student’s dedication and independent work.

Social challenges

The last type of challenge that emerged from data analysis was students’ challenges in addressing interpersonal relationships within the research community. In particular, the relationship between supervisors and supervisees plays a major role in thesis writing. Based on participants’ responses, these challenges encompass students’ communicative difficulties with supervisors (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5), dissatisfaction with supervisors’ dedication (P3, P9) or feedback (P2, P6, P9), or expectation differences between supervisors and supervisees (P4, P5).

One of the common difficulties that students face relates to language barriers when they communicate with supervisors. One participant expressed her concern about her inability to articulate her thoughts fully and clearly to the supervisor: “Maybe because my English is

not so good. I'm not so proficient ... Sometimes I cannot convince [my supervisor]. I cannot properly explain my opinions and my thoughts, that's why there might be misunderstandings" (P5). Another participant (P1) recalled that she had to remind her supervisor who was speaking too fast to lower the speed while she was talking and not to include too much information during one consultation hour because of her limited language proficiency.

Some students expressed dissatisfaction with the supervisor who lacked enthusiasm for their thesis project. They consider the supervisors as the most reliable person who should be responsible for helping students when it is needed. Confronting the challenges posed by unreachable supervisors, one participant stated:

The most irritating part for me is that my advisors are not always approachable. Like, I tried at first to write them emails and they were sort of ignoring me, but then I went to their offices, and sometimes they [were] available, sometimes they [were] not. (P3)

Moreover, a few of them were dissatisfied with supervisors' unclear, general, or sceptical feedback, and thus less helpful (P6, P9) while others were demotivated because of supervisors' late feedback (P2). As one of the participants noted, "My advisor just says, 'Oh, we have to polish it better', but never specify where exactly" (P6). Therefore, she had to seek assistance at the writing centre of the university. Another participant described her feelings of being intimidated: "The second advisor talks not that much, and our office hours are short and sometimes she's a bit sceptical, so I think that she kind of intimidates me" (P9).

Some shared their concerns that their limited research capacity made them fail to meet supervisors' high expectations. As one participant expressed her apprehension:

My second-line advisor wants to see the real results. They want to see results like in front of them, with lots of descriptions, with lots of details, with everything which I don't know obviously because I'm not coming from the background. (P6)

Moreover, some participants' replies suggested they expect a stronger bond with their community. For example, one participant shared their feeling of isolation from the community and her expectation of being cared for. She pointed out her wish to build a good connection with her community and her psychological needs:

I would be glad if there were more psychological help and support ...from the department, like from professors...because I feel isolated from them. And I don't feel like anyone cares... it would be really nice if they [asked] from time to time, "Hey, how are you doing? Is it okay? Are you dealing with everything and all that?" I mean it's not much to ask for but it's a very soul-warming thing. (P 3)

The findings above show that participants experienced various challenges while writing thesis work. The perceived causes of challenges also vary from one to another, which will be discussed in the next section.

The Perceived Causes of Challenges

The data analysis findings suggest four main causes of these challenges: competing commitments and poor time management skills, lack of prior training in and experience with thesis writing, language-related causes, and cultural differences.

Competing Commitments and Poor Time Management Skills

The findings reveal that various distractions posed the challenges discussed above for all participants—competing commitments including an overwhelming academic schedule, family duties, or career planning.

Most students blamed an overwhelming academic schedule as the main cause of challenges. For example, one participant stressed that thesis writing is challenging because it demands a vast amount of time while they were also taking intensive courses:

I think [thesis writing] is challenging not because it is difficult but because it is time-consuming. It needs a lot of time and when you have other classes you have other tasks, and you can't really concentrate on reading for your thesis. (P9)

This challenge was echoed by another student who also considered thesis writing itself as not challenging but as distractions from personal life and other academic duties that made it hard. He noted "It's difficult to juggle different plates to be juggling, all these different plates like a thesis and then you have your personal life and then you have other courses, etc. Yeah, it's hard!" (P7).

Some other study participants attributed the challenge to distractions stemming from different family duties (P1, P4, P5, P9). One participant indicated her challenge "As a mother student, it is very difficult to balance time with study" (P5), which is also echoed by two others (P1, P9).

Participant 8 associated the distractions with her career goals: "I'm struggling between writing applications, searching for some positions, available positions, and my thesis writing. So, it feels like I'm out of focus because there is too much stuff. So, it is challenging to be honest."

Four participants (P3, P5, P8, P11) reported that their weakness in managing time. Participant 8 stated: "I do have some problems with organizing my time and with balancing my life and work." Participant 11 also confirmed: "I am very bad at time management."

Lack of Prior Knowledge or Experience

According to the majority of participants, the second common cause of thesis writing challenges is a lack of prior experience and training in thesis writing in English (P1, P3, P4, P5), disciplinary content knowledge (P3, P5, P6, P9, P11) and research methods (P3, P4, P7, P11).

The novelty of thesis writing in English contributes to the challenges faced by certain participants. Participants highlighted difficulties, particularly in organizing literature, mastering writing mechanics, and using academic language. They attributed these difficulties to a lack of prior experience in thesis writing in English. This is how one participant reported:

It is, honestly, my first time writing a thesis work in English because, in my bachelor's degree, we didn't write the thesis...it is difficult for me now to write the thesis because we never learned about the structure of a thesis, how to write it and all this APA style, how to write, what we should include in our thesis, then the academic language, everything was new for me. I'm still struggling with it. (P5)

Completing a demanding thesis independently without any prior experience brings frustration to this participant. This finding was echoed by another participant who noted a lack of experience and knowledge in research, which made her feel stressed, particularly when deciding her research topic: "My background is not a research program. There was nothing on research...The most challenging part for me was to figure out what I wanted to research ... I've been anxious about it" (P3).

Some stated that they faced difficulties due to a lack of knowledge of research methods. For example, despite a relatively satisfactory level of language proficiency,

insufficient “prior training in statistics” (P7) led to some challenges for this participant.

Another participant felt she “got lost”. She shared:

I do have a vague topic, but I don’t have any purpose for my research and due to personal reasons, my initial idea was not feasible enough, especially when I have only like half a year to finish it. So right now, it’s very challenging to sit and write my thesis because I don’t really know what my thesis is about. (P11)

Because of her lack of knowledge in the field and the topic, her general progress did not go as well as expected, especially with only half a year left. Furthermore, this participant seemed to have lost her motivation because the initial ideas did not work out. All of these might lead to the serious consequence of failure to complete a quality thesis.

Lack of prior knowledge or experience causes participants’ feelings of uncertainty and helplessness, which further triggers emotional issues like anxiety and behavioural issues of avoidance of writing. This exaggerates the level of anxiety, affects the progress of the paper, and even falls into a vicious cycle.

Language-Related Causes

The findings suggested that several language-related causes lead to challenges in thesis writing, including limited English language proficiency, the interference of the Russian language, or differences in the thesis writing genre in English.

More than half of the participants identified their limited English language proficiency as a major hindrance in various aspects of the thesis writing process. The limited language proficiency in English is primarily manifested in their limited vocabulary use for comprehending literature and expressing ideas. More than half of the participants pointed out that they failed to articulate their ideas precisely with appropriate academic expressions or

words (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P10). This is how they specified their issues with limited lexical range when expressing ideas, “I always use the same words” (P2) and “I tend to use one word many times...I don’t know which word would be the best to use” (P6). Consequently, their arguments lacked persuasiveness (P5), or they found it difficult to comprehend the complex literature (P9). In addition, limited linguistic proficiency is found to indirectly contribute to communicative challenges with supervisors. For instance, some participants struggled to fully comprehend rapid and excessive verbal feedback provided by the supervisor (P1) or lacked the confidence to convince their supervisor when they had a different point of view (P5). Interestingly, while most students encountered word usage challenges, only one student attributed difficulties in expression to a lack of grammatical knowledge (P6).

Another cause hindering students’ ability to express themselves is the impact of their first language (Russian/Kazakh). Half of the participants were affected by writing discourse differences between Russian and English. As one participant mentioned, “I get some English mistakes coming from the Russian language. It’s mostly in terms of the writing system, grammar mistakes, or mistakes in terms of using languages. So that’s the challenge that I’m experiencing right now” (P6). Participant 2 had the rhetorical challenge of generating over-complicated sentences. She attributed this to her “thinking mode and schooling experience” in Russian. Another participant had the challenge of translating Russian text sources into English for her thesis work: “working with first-hand texts and then translating them into English is what I’m struggling with right now” (P8).

Finally, even if they were confident in their English language proficiency, students might still face challenges of articulation because they were previously used to writing in other genres in English, specifically creative writing. For example, one participant often forgot to

include transitions to link thesis sections together because she “had gotten used to creative writing in which a logical flow is not expected” (P9).

To conclude, language-related barriers, including limited English proficiency, the impact of the first language, and differences in writing genres are the main causes of challenges for participants in thesis writing endeavours.

Cultural Differences

The findings suggest that for more than half of the participants, cultural difference is another important cause for thesis writing challenges.

The predominant impact of cultural differences is that students think of supervisors as authoritative figures (P1, P2, P9). This leads to communication apprehensions or a lack of personal voice in writing, where they hesitate to express their independent ideas and positions clearly. One participant confirmed that her original conservative culture made her prefer being less talkative when communicating with her supervisor (P1). Similarly, another participant mentioned that compared to her foreign peers, she had a piety attitude toward professors. They attributed this to differences between Western culture and their formed traditional ideology:

If I have other ideas, I tell [my advisor], but mostly I agree with him. But my foreign classmates do that less often. They don't have this piety over advisors there... because I was trained in very, you know, hierarchical Soviet style studies when you just be disciplined and do whatever you are set to do. I think that affects my attitude towards professors. I think this is a cultural difference. (P9)

To conclude, the findings from this study shed light on the various causes contributing to the challenges faced by students in their thesis writing journey. These causes are related to competing commitments, lack of prior training and experiences, language-related causes, and

cultural differences. It is worth mentioning that few participants considered that gender differences between supervisees and supervisors led to feelings of alienation (P2, P3) and a delay in starting the project which caused further anxiety (P4).

The next section will discuss the strategies that students used to overcome the challenges they faced.

Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

The findings suggested that students employed a variety of strategies to overcome challenges that they had to facilitate their writing. Drawing on Oxford's (1990) LLS categorization, I classify findings on students' strategies into four main categories: cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social.

Cognitive Strategies

The first type of strategy that students use is cognitive strategies, which include practising writing, using multiple sourcing strategies to understand literature and facilitate writing, reasoning and analyzing, and taking notes.

The findings revealed that students utilized practising strategies through regular writing habits, using templates, and proofreading their work for improvement. Over half of students keep regular writing habits weekly (P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, P8, and P9). For example, one participant reported that "I try to do something at least once a day" (P2), while another student noted that "I'm doing my thesis for two or maybe three days per week, spending up to four or five hours on readings and then transforming it into some writing-based material" (P8). Most of these participants write their thesis at least weekly.

Several of them use templates to acquire some academic vocabulary and expressions, develop new ideas, and imitate the structure to sound more academic. This is how one participant recalled strategies for dealing with difficulties in using academic language:

I sometimes ask my group mates who do better to send their templates, so I can read them and try to use the construction or linking words that they used in my paper. I usually read the examples that our professor sent to us and try to take some interesting ideas and some interesting sentences and use them on my own. (P4)

The participant not only imitated the words and construction of sentences but was also enlightened by interesting ideas from these templates. Imitating strategy is not limited to language or structure level but was also used to enhance the persuasiveness of arguments, as one participant reported:

When I try to make a persuasive and clear paragraph, maybe sentences, I will try to read other papers that are very well written. Especially those professors who are very famous among our faculty and I'll look through their students' previous written articles and then I will have some ideas on how to express my idea according to theirs and compare. (P1)

Moreover, some participants imitate the structure and research method from well-written articles (P7).

Most participants stressed the importance of reading for thesis writing and reported reading extensively to accumulate knowledge and ideas for writing. One participant described the way she accumulated literature and arranged them into different sections:

I found all the articles and books that I am going to read, and I looked through them. I usually divide them into a Word document...I divide them by [themes]...I will divide them like this one I will write in this part and this one I will write in the last part. (P4)

Additionally, over half the number of participants gathered information through various sources to prepare for or assist their thesis writing. One participant reported that she used YouTube to improve her writing skills:

In the process of writing, I always first try to search for some research from YouTube channels because we have various kinds of resources available on YouTube. I check YouTube channels and take notes when I'm watching these channels, especially about writing skills. (P1)

Other participants utilized YouTube to learn ways to manage their academic life, organize their ideas (P9), or use other online tools to search vocabulary for paraphrasing (P4).

Moreover, several participants used the notetaking, summarizing, or highlighting strategy to assist their writing (P1, P2, P5, P6, P8, and P9). For instance, participant 8 pointed out that "taking notes while reading, then structuring and turning them into text." These strategies enhanced participants' comprehension of thesis writing tangibly and helped them accumulate language and knowledge related to thesis writing.

Metacognitive Strategies

The findings suggested that some students utilize metacognitive strategies that include planning for the learning process and monitoring their written work for further amendment.

Writing a thesis requires effective time management, particularly when confronting various distractions that can complicate the process. Apart from participants 6 and 10, the rest

expressed that they set goals and made plans to achieve their goals. For example, they shared “I’m writing my thesis on a plan. I keep writing to-do lists every day” (P1) or “usually I establish some sort of deadlines, e.g., today I have to write at least 300 words” (P2). One of them described her tactic to meet deadlines in detail:

To meet my deadlines, I usually make a special plan in my head. Let’s say, I have deadlines for a month, and I just write them in my copybooks. This week I need to read approximately 10-20 articles and find some notes. I have then like one or two weeks to write such a work. Usually, in my mind, I write 1000 or 800 words [in one day]. (P4)

To produce a specific word count, the participant scaffolded the tasks into steps, which helped her to accomplish her thesis writing goal.

Apart from time management, students used metacognitive strategies like selecting physical learning conditions. To be exact, three participants organized their learning environment to be more productive. They recalled “I like to go to the library. Staying at the library is a very precious and valuable time for me. I read some papers...very interesting written books related to my topic” (P1) or “I usually go to the library because everyone is studying there, and I feel this urge [me] to study as well” (P6). Another participant (P9) highlighted that a non-academic environment is beneficial for her to “brainstorm new ideas” for thesis writing.

Participants acknowledged that constant proofreading and revision are necessary for better writing. To achieve this purpose, most participants asserted that they had certain habits related to revision. A participant shared his proofreading strategies in detail: “You need to forget your thesis for a while...because when you come back to it later, you will see it in a

different light. You will get a new feeling, a new idea, a new thought.” (P7) This strategy was echoed by another participant:

Even if it’s completed, I do not upload it into Turnitin. I just had a really good sleep and then in the morning I just proofread it. Do not proofread when you just have done it because your mind is still blurred. I do or I refocus on another assignment or something and then go back with a fresh mind, proofread, and then upload. (P9)

These two participants avoided immediate proofreading to have a rejuvenated mind to identify weaknesses in their writing. Additionally, the latter participant diverted her attention to other assignments temporarily to offer her a new perspective when proofreading.

Focusing on a more specific aspect or working with weaknesses is another strategy that students employ. Three participants paid attention to a specific aspect while writing (P7, P9, and P10). As one participant stressed: “Right now we’re focusing more on the content but not on language. I think I will deal with the language maybe by the end of my thesis journey, but not right now” (P10). Prioritizing content over language allowed her to be focused on her current stage. However, one participant noted: “What I’m concerned with is the actual content, the research quality, and the results of my thesis. For my [thesis], it needs to be improved in terms of methodology” (P7). This participant identified his weaknesses for improvement.

Social Strategies

Almost all these participants employed social strategies during the process, especially asking for clarifications and corrections mostly from supervisors and writing centres, or cooperating with peers to improve writing skills or written work (P8, P9, P10). To understand supervisors, they attempted to build a closer relationship with them (P4, P9).

The findings suggested that some participants actively negotiated with their supervisors. One participant recalled that they built a mutual fixed weekly schedule with the supervisors: "...we still have this shared Google Doc. I write on a weekly basis, and he just checks everything. [My supervisor] leaves some comments, like 'expand this or add this' or refer to another author or [commented] 'you can add this source'" (P9). Moreover, another participant recalled his experience of seeking help when it was needed: "[My supervisor] doesn't have much time to work with me, but sometimes I [discuss] some challenges or maybe some questions with him" (P7). This resonated with another participant:

After receiving [supervisor's] feedback and reading it, when I realize that there are some points that I do not understand or do not agree with, then I easily arrange a meeting with my supervisor, and we can discuss those points and she can give me [her] feedback then. (P10)

To advance their thesis writing pursuits, these participants leveraged their relationships with supervisors. Participant 10 specifically demonstrated an active attitude when interacting with her supervisor. To address her doubts, she used the tactics of establishing fixed communication modes and seeking timely assistance in communication with her supervisor.

Moreover, some participants sought assistance from writing centres or peers when supervisors were not approachable or when they were unsatisfied with supervisees' feedback. As one participant noted, "Another way I'm dealing with my difficulties is asking for help from the writing centre at our university." (P1) In a similar vein, participant 6 shared her experience of visiting the writing centre to receive more detailed feedback when she did not get enough support from her supervisor: "...I went to the writing centre with the same

professor because [they] started looking at my paper from the beginning and I wanted to work with [them] because [they] were already familiar with my topic.” The participants’ comments suggested that they sought feedback from not only supervisors but also other professionals constantly. Three participants reported that they built a learning community for mutual assistance by seeking peer feedback (P8, P9, and P10).

Affective Strategies

To cope with their emotional challenges, all participants expressed that they employed a broad repertoire of affective strategies encompassing sharing feelings and difficulties with others, having a good rest, or rewarding themselves.

All participants stated that they shared negative emotions with family members, friends, or peers. Venting about frustration helped students alleviate stress. For example, when commenting on the way of releasing stress, most of them tend to “complain”, which is well expressed in the following quote:

I like complaining a lot... And I [usually] go to my husband and say, oh, I don't want to write it...or I can complain in our program chat saying: “Who finished the chapter?” And everyone will say, “No, no, no.” And I'll be like, “Oh, it's okay. We are on the same page”. So, that makes me feel better. [the participant felt relaxed and was laughing while sharing] (P6)

Another participant shared a similar strategy:

Sometimes I discuss the thesis subject with my fiancé. He helps me a lot with my thesis writing. I talk with him about my struggles and challenges at the university and sometimes maybe cry. Yeah, I think my family and my fiancé help me a lot. (P8)

Both participants preferred to share their challenges with trusted ones. Sharing their feelings or discussing faced problems, even crying, allows them to release their stress. Additionally, acknowledging their peers' progress, allows them to make sure that they are not falling behind. This seemed helpful in not panicking.

Having a good rest and balancing thesis writing with relaxation is another technique that was found in the collected data. For example, this is how one participant talked about her way of recharging herself “closing my laptop and doing nothing” (P8) or “I close my laptop and then come back after several hours. I give myself one day to relax, rethink about my ideas, and then look and read my paper again” (P5).

To lower their anxiety, participants also employed other relaxing strategies including listening to their favourite music (P2, P9), watching TV or series (P1, P3, P4, P11), having junk food or drinks with friends (P2, P3, P4), going shopping (P5), spending time for hobbies (P4, P9), receiving counselling (P9). Interestingly, one of them even arranged a special “ritual” to release stress:

Sometimes I burn incense in this room. I do this kind of small “*alastau* ritual”. Yeah.

When I just say, “May this help with my decision”, it helps me! Yeah. Because it’s not an academic ritual, it’s more emotional ritual, and they are connected to my topic. So, I think it’s kind of academically driven. (P9)

Utilization of this ritual lets the participant find a connection between themselves and their culture. The *alastau* ritual has its cultural meaning in Kazakh, symbolizing driving away unclean things like stress, which made the participant feel relaxed.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter provided a comprehensive presentation of participants' rhetorical, emotional, behavioural, and social challenges in the thesis writing process.

Participants ascribed these challenges to various causes like competing commitments and poor time management skills, lack of prior knowledge and experience in thesis writing, linguistic factors, and cultural differences. To mitigate these challenges, they employed a variety of strategies which were categorized according to Oxford's (1990) strategy taxonomy: cognitive, metacognitive, social, and affective strategies.

The following chapter will delve into an interpretation of these findings in light of the theoretical framework and previous studies.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of the study was to investigate these participants' thesis writing challenges, the perceived causes for these challenges, and their coping strategies. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks developed from Paltridge and Starfield's (2020) and Oxford's (1990) theories, this chapter interprets findings about three main research questions:

1. What are the challenges that master's students identified in thesis writing at an EMI university in Kazakhstan?
2. What are the essential causes of these challenges as they perceived them?
3. What strategies do master's students use to overcome these challenges?

Based on the data analysis presented in the preceding chapter, six major findings will be discussed in this chapter: four major challenges (Findings 1-4) and causes (Finding 5), and coping strategies (Finding 6) in the students' thesis writing process.

RQ1: What are the Challenges That Master's Students Identified in Thesis Writing at an EMI University in Kazakhstan?

Finding 1: Participants reported their rhetorical difficulties in several areas, including sourcing, analyzing, and structuring extensive texts; articulating ideas with clarity and precision; and developing academic voices and proper tones.

Rhetorical issues refer to issues in terms of writers' capability to convince readers by using language and norms of thesis writing (Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). The rhetorical challenges aligned with the theoretical frame of the present study in terms of the issues of logical structuring texts and developing proper voices and tones, while it enriched the

theoretical frame by revealing rhetorical issues in terms of students' weaknesses in sourcing and expressing capabilities.

The findings revealed that all participants reported their challenges in creating logically structured texts. The present study introduced participants' structuring difficulties in a more detailed manner: synthesizing vast amounts of information into coherent sections; balancing the broader structure with a detailed focus on a specific idea; or creating a logical flow between different sections in their writing. The findings suggested that all students endured structuring issues in thesis writing, which are consistent with previous literature in terms of difficulties in logically organizing different ideas (Aldabbus & Almansouri, 2022; Junianti et al, 2020) and difficulties in creating coherent paragraphs or sections (Aldabbus & Almansouri, 2022; Bulqiyah et al., 2021; Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). For example, Paltridge and Starfield (2020) stressed that presenting organized information requires the writer's awareness of having readers in mind and using signposting tactics. However, only a few participants in the current study mentioned using signposting to guide readers. Moreover, the data analysis revealed that students faced the challenges of overarching the whole structure while focusing on specific sections, which has not been discussed in previous studies.

Difficulties in articulating ideas clearly and precisely are found as another rhetorical issue for all students. This finding is consistent with previous research (Bulqiyah et al., 2021; Gürel, 2011; Hyland, 2016; Junianti & Wulandari, 2020; Paltridge & Starfield, 2020; Singh, 2019; Sukandi & Rianita, 2020). This study fully supports previous research in terms of students' difficulty in conveying ideas clearly due to their limited English level in terms of vocabulary use (Bulqiyah et al., 2021; Gürel, 2011; Junianti & Wulandari, 2020; Singh, 2019)

and the negative influence of their L1 on their writing in English (Gürel, 2011). Some participants in the present study also mentioned they tended to use the same expressions, which aligns with Gürel's (2011) findings. Moreover, unlike Bulqiyah et al.'s (2021) study, grammar was not a common issue for all participants in the present study.

Finding proper tones is challenging in academic writing, particularly for non-native English writers (Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). Hedging, a common feature in English academic discourse, is used to take a stance on the claims being made by using cautious language (Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). On the one hand, the present study approved the theoretical frame of Paltridge and Starfield by uncovering students' rhetorical difficulties in developing appropriate academic tones, particularly in terms of hedging. This finding, on the other hand, extends beyond previous empirical research in Kazakhstan (Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021; Tajik et al., 2022). In this study, these two participants commented on their struggles of either being too assertive or consciously avoiding boldness in their arguments, which has not been found in Hajar and Ait Si Mhamed's (2021) and Tajik et al.'s (2022) study.

Hyland (1996) stated that students often struggle with hedging techniques due to the complex linguistic resources required, particularly for second language (L2) writers (as cited in Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). However, the present study differed from Hyland's (1996) statement in that participants attributed this issue to their L1, which will be discussed under the causes in detail. The explanation for the discrepancy between the present study and Hyland's (1996) interpretation could be the present study participants have a relatively high English proficiency. Therefore, they tended to attribute this to their L1, rather than their limited English proficiency.

Moreover, the findings show that over half of students experienced difficulties in finding authorial voices. In humanities and social sciences domains, students' voices play an important role in their argumentation because their stance can enhance the authority and certainty in their work (Hyland, 2002). Study participants claimed to lack an academic voice, considering it was the impact of prior authoritarian Soviet-style education, which hindered the development of students' agency and independent thinking. This finding highly supports Cadman's (1997) study findings of ascribing a lack of voice to a different trained epistemology. Since epistemology operates in the scope of culture, I categorized it as a cultural difference in general in the present study.

Finding 2: The majority of master's students were found facing various emotional challenges including feelings of boredom, exhaustion, fear and shame, envious of peers, frustration and anxiety, and even burnout.

Positive emotions enhance learning, while negative emotions demotivate learners and make the learning process less productive (Amin et al., 2023). The findings suggested that a vast majority of students face various emotional challenges, which might endanger students' mental condition and hinder the writing process.

Participants indicated that the length of the thesis, the extensive reading materials, and the continuous writing and proofreading process made them feel bored and tired sometimes. Thesis writing is a non-linear process in which multiple iterations are involved (Atkinson & Curtis, 1998, as cited in Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). Hence, the complex and demanding nature of the thesis determines its arduousness. This further led to a lack of motivation and dedication to write.

Moreover, students experienced feelings of fear and shyness to meet their supervisors, fear of receiving negative feedback, or fear of disappointing the supervisors. Even worse, some students experienced severe psychological issues like a high level of anxiety and a very low level of self-esteem (self-denial). These findings of emotional challenges are consistent with previous research that deals with EFL undergraduate students' affective difficulties such as lack of confidence and motivation in their writing (Bulqiyah et al., 2021), anxiety (Bulqiyah et al., 2021; Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021; Nur, 2022) and tiredness (Nur, 2022). More specifically, the current study's findings of students' emotional issues such as lacking confidence and having feelings of doubt and anxiety are consistent with the research findings by Hajar and Ait Si Mhamed (2021) who reported that students face emotional challenges like feelings of inadequacy, uncertainty, and anxiety.

However, the present research enriches prior research findings by revealing students' feelings of envy towards their peers' supervisory relationships. Due to the lack of communication between supervisors and students regarding their roles and responsibilities, some students' enviousness of their peers suggests that they feel they receive insufficient support or guidance from their supervisors, in comparison to their peers, leading to feelings of neglect or abandonment. Hence, further communication and negotiation in the supervisory relationship is needed.

Moreover, the *vicious circle* mentioned by Participant 11 revealed the complexity of the thesis writing process. Students' challenges in thesis writing are interrelated. This enriched the theoretical frame of Paltridge and Starfield's (2020) four thesis writing challenge categories by revealing the reciprocal relationships among them. On the other hand, although

some participants in the present study consider writing a thesis as the process of developing their research skills, and growing from student to novice researcher, they did not explicitly express the emotional challenges that are associated with this identity transition. This is different from what Hajar and Ait Si Mhamed (2021) and Paltridge and Starfield (2020) stated in their research.

Given the broad range of students' emotional struggles, in addition to the care and support from supervisors and administrators, the university can provide more systematic psychological counselling. For example, students' mental health should be included in the mandatory annual medical check-up, and corresponding psychological counselling and treatment should be provided when necessary. Although the university provides some psychological support and arranges events, more systematic and scientific psychological support is needed.

Finding 3: Students experience behavioural challenges such as reluctance, procrastination, and overreliance on supervisors in their writing process.

Beers (1996) defines writers' reluctance as the unwillingness of writers who can write to an extent but refuse to do so. Some study participants clearly stated their reluctance as "no will to write" or "don't want to do it," which resulted in a vicious circle in their writing process. Procrastination is another serious issue that students face. These findings fully affirmed Hajar and Ait Si Mhamed's (2021) findings of some students' late submission of their thesis. Additionally, the data analysis from this research suggested that some students leave the task to the last moment and wait for the supervisors' instructions, which supports the findings of Gürel's (2011) and Khozaei et al.'s (2022) studies that students have behavioural

challenges like a lack of academic writing practice. Moreover, Singh's (2019) study reported severe behavioural issues of academic dishonesty among students, a finding not suggested in the current study. This discrepancy may be because Singh's study collected data from advisors, whereas the present study's participants are students, who are less likely to report academic dishonesty.

The present study's findings are consistent with previous studies by revealing students' fear of receiving negative feedback from their supervisors (Afzal & Jami, 2018; Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021) and poor time management (Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021) as major causes for their reluctance or procrastination. In the present study, participants who showed high sensitivity to receiving negative feedback may be interpreted as having a fear of being judged as inadequate (Kamler, 2008), a sentiment prevalent in the research community.

Another explanation of avoidance or procrastination might be students seeking a temporary break (Sirois & Pychyl, 2013). However, it is noteworthy that this short-term emotional regulation can lead to worse results of task delay and higher anxiety. Therefore, the awareness of self-discipline, self-control, and dutifulness should be cultivated amongst students. Moreover, interventions like positive mood induction and self-affirmation are suggested (Sirois & Pychyl, 2013).

Moreover, participant 11's description of the vicious circle of procrastination and anxiety demonstrates a close interrelationship between emotional and behavioural issues. This finding fully affirmed findings in previous research (Ho, 2016; Pravita & Kuswandono, 2022) that students' anxiety and procrastination in academic writing are interrelated. Thus, this finding enriched the theoretical frame by revealing the interrelationship of emotional and behavioural challenges.

Given the fact that students' behavioural issues are closely related to their negative emotions, supervisors need to be aware of students' well-being alongside providing academic support. Moreover, school programs can decrease students' anxiety by balancing time for courses and theses and arranging workshops to enhance students' self-regulation and time management skills. Students themselves should also realize that a temporary enjoyment of avoidance can lead to serious consequences. Therefore, intentionally improving their self-control and self-awareness is needed.

Finding 4: Most students reported social challenges including their negative experiences related to relationships with supervisors, feeling isolated in the research community, and difficulties in reaching participants when collecting data.

Although crafting a thesis is typically an independent endeavour, students rely on the guidance of supervisors throughout this journey. To be specific, five study participants encountered communicative difficulties with supervisors (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5), two were dissatisfied with supervisors' level of commitment (P3, P9), and three received ineffective feedback (P2, P6, P9). These findings support previous literature in terms of supervisors' insufficient support (Bakhou & Bouhania, 2020), ineffective feedback from supervisors (Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021; Tuasikal & Patria, 2019), or communicative difficulties with supervisors (Huang, 2007).

Despite students' acknowledgement of their duties in the writing process, some expected more support from supervisors, especially those students who did not have any prior learning experience in EMI contexts, as they tended to rely more on supervisors' support and regular guidance. However, the findings indicate that some supervisors could not be reached,

leading to students feeling dissatisfied with their supervisors' indifferent attitudes toward their research projects and other emotional challenges.

Addressing supervisor-supervisee communicative challenges in EMI programs not only can be beneficial to the students' learning experience but also enhance mutual understanding and collaboration in the research community. Moreover, thesis writing is a milestone for graduate students, building a harmonious relationship between them and guiding them can boost students' confidence to be a member of the research community and enhance students' determination in academic pursuits.

To address the social challenges discussed, clarifying the expectations between students and supervisors is necessary as they can lead to more effective supervision (Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021). Moreover, students can enact their agency and interpersonal skills to actively seek assistance from supervisors, and professors, and make good use of other resources like writing centres at the university. Additionally, apart from academic guidance, supervisors can show their enthusiasm for students' projects and encourage their supervisees. Finally, administrators can develop a friendly culture among the community by regular dialogue between staff and students, and amongst students.

The feelings of belonging play an important role in the emotional status of students in their thesis writing process. Some blame being isolated from the community. Another possible interpretation can be graduate students' overloaded schedules and competing commitments. Moreover, students who felt isolated might passively build relationships with others.

As for the challenges related to approaching research participants in the field, none of the participants in this study provided any reasons. This can be explained by the

underdeveloped research culture in Central Asia or the researchers' neglect of proper planning (Jonbekova, 2020).

RQ2: What are the Causes of These Challenges as They Perceived Them?

Finding 5: In general, the perceived causes for challenges are competing commitments and poor time management skills; language-related causes (limited language proficiency and L1 influence); cultural, gender, and expectation differences in supervisory relationships; and lack of prior training in research. The present study participants cited various causes for these difficulties.

Competing Commitments and Poor Time Management Skills

The study findings revealed that students attributed emotional, behavioural, and rhetorical challenges to various causes including competing commitments and poor time management skills. These commitments include the demanding requirements of thesis work, an overloaded academic schedule, and family duties. This supports Bloom's (1981) discussion of the multiple rules that cause writing anxiety in graduate students, which may impact their dedication.

Some students in the current study attribute their procrastination to poor time management skills, a finding consistent with previous research conducted in Kazakhstan (Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021). However, the present study provides additional insights into the causes of challenges, such as competing commitments, which were not previously mentioned in research within the Kazakhstani context. This can be explained by the phenomenological research design employed in the current study, which enabled participants to express their genuine feelings and thoughts, allowing for a deeper exploration of their inner

world. It appears that Sirois and Pychyl's (2013) statement can provide a better explanation for the nature of the problem: when individuals face demanding tasks like thesis writing, they tend to prioritize short-term mood repair over long-term goal pursuit, leading to procrastination.

Language Related Causes

Some language-related causes, such as limited vocabulary proficiency or the influence of their L1, claimed to hinder their expression in thesis writing and communication with supervisors, i.e., these causes may lead to rhetorical and social issues in thesis writing.

Students' limited language skills hindered them from generating precise sentences and actively communicating with supervisors, which increased their anxiety levels. Some students reported that their limited language proficiency posed issues of catching up with the supervisor's speedy talk and extensive information and worried about convincing supervisors during consultations. These findings converge with previous studies in terms of linguistic reasons that cause communicative problems (Adas & Bakir, 2013; Brown, 2008, as cited in Singh, 2019; Hajar & Mhamed, 2021) and problems of conveying ideas clearly due to language constraints (Aldabbus & Almansouri, 2022; Bulqiyah et al., 2021; Gürel, 2011; Junianti & Wulandari, 2020; Singh, 2019) or the effect of L1 (Aldabbus & Almansouri, 2022).

Interestingly, the current study's findings indicated that although some others could comprehend English and are quite confident, it is still difficult for them to generate ideas clearly and not sound as academic as they expected. This finding supports Tajik et al.'s (2022) research that for some students who are relatively confident with their level of English, academic writing is still challenging. They assumed students estimated their English

proficiency based on their IELTS results. Moreover, given the fact that English language learning in mainstream schools in Kazakhstan is still mainly teacher-centred and examination-oriented (Hajar et al., 2024), students were not trained enough to express themselves during their English language learning. This may cause articulation difficulties, lack of own voice, and proper tones.

The study participants attributed challenges of proper tone to features in their L1 (Russian or Kazakh). The study findings suggested that L1 impacts various aspects of writing, including assertiveness in arguments, structure, and articulation. Only two study participants stated that they outlined the structure or created a mind map before writing, while others reported starting to write without outlining. One possible interpretation of students' "disorganization" is their lack of awareness in planning the structure before writing and insufficient training and practice in English during their previous learning experiences. This lack of awareness in planning before writing may stem from their familiarity with writing practices in Kazakh or Russian. The less structured and more indirect nature of the Kazakh language may also impact students' writing in English (Amirova, 2020, p. 61). Moreover, Amirova's study suggested that the limited use of connecting words in Kazakh could lead to a loss of logical order in academic writing. Hence, these language differences might contribute to the structural issues experienced by Kazakh students. Furthermore, this can be explained by the concept of genre knowledge (Tardy, 2009, as cited in Goodman et al., 2023). Goodman et al.'s (2023) research revealed that the most significant transfer of formal structure knowledge occurs from students' first language (Kazakh or Russian) to English, mainly in a negative way. Similarly, these rhetorical difficulties faced by the participants in the present study can be attributed to the negative influence of their L1. Moreover, one possible interpretation of

students' challenges of generating over-complicated sentences can be explained by transfer and can happen in multiple directions within various aspects of languages (Goodman et al, 2023).

Cultural, Gender, and Expectation Differences in Supervisory Relationships

The findings of the study suggested that cultural differences caused rhetorical and behavioral challenges for students' thesis writing. Some study participants attributed the lack of voice in their argument to their piety towards supervisors. They consider supervisors as the authority and mostly tend to agree with supervisors' feedback and consultations with supervisors. These findings affirmed previous research findings regarding rhetorical issues of lack of writers' voice in the writing (Bian & Wang, 2016; Huang, 2007; Khozaei et al., 2022; Ma, 2021; Singh, 2019).

However, the findings here revealed students' behavioural issues of over-reliance on supervisors. This might be explained by students' weak awareness of autonomy and responsibility due to teacher-centred pedagogy in most Kazakhstani classrooms (Burkhalter & Shegebayev, 2012; Tajik et al., 2022).

Then, the findings of data analysis indicated that gender differences may cause alienation in supervisory relationships, which was not suggested in the previous study. Although these are assumptions of participants, they mirror students' concerns and expectations of a closer supervisory relationship.

Moreover, the analysed data suggested that there is a disparity in expectations between supervisors and supervisees in terms of their roles and responsibilities in the supervisory relationships. This finding fully supports Hajar and Ait Si Mhamed's (2021) research findings that students have different expectations towards their supervisor, causing social and

emotional challenges. Therefore, setting expectations and responsibilities for both parties from the beginning and acknowledging differences can be helpful (Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021).

Moreover, a few study participants think that supervisors lack acknowledgement of students' specific difficulties and competencies. Although these students recognized their thesis writing as independent work, they still expected more than what supervisors could provide. It is noteworthy that "interdependence begins with dependence" (Kittay, 2019). Hence, supervisors can provide support and guidance according to the uniqueness of their supervisees, they can provide more guidance to less independent students, especially for students who lack prior academic training and experience.

Lack of Prior Experience and Knowledge

The lack of prior experience and knowledge in writing research projects caused various rhetorical challenges in students' thesis writing. The research findings align with previous studies, which indicate that inadequate academic preparation leads to writing difficulties (Bakhou & Bouhania, 2020; Ma, 2021). Specifically, students' insufficient research knowledge and underdeveloped academic skills result in weak critical thinking abilities (Peng, 2018). Additionally, insufficient academic training leads to rhetorical difficulties, such as inarticulate expression and poor organization (Singh, 2019). Most of these studies stressed the impact of prior training on students' rhetorical issues in their thesis/academic writing.

The study participants expressed that it is their first time to write a thesis independently, therefore they "do not know what to do" and feel anxious, especially when supervisors are unapproachable. This can further cause behavioural issues like writing delay and procrastination.

RQ3: What Strategies do Master's Students use to Overcome These Challenges?

Finding 6: Students mainly used cognitive strategies to overcome rhetorical challenges, affective strategies to cope with negative emotions, metacognitive strategies to anchor their learning process, and social strategies to overcome social challenges. Besides, students used multiple strategies collectively according to their preferences and the range of challenges that they faced. One interpretation for this finding can be the complex nature of the thesis, and its dynamic process and various factors.

The collected data on strategies are classified according to categories developed by Oxford (1990): cognitive, affective, metacognitive, and social. Oxford stated that these four language learning strategies (LLSs) are used for writing, overcoming emotional issues, navigating learning processes, and enacting interpersonal relationships respectively. Although previous research also revealed that students use various strategies, they lack detailed explanations for each category. What present research can contribute to the research discourse is the participants responded in a more detailed manner.

First, the study participants reported they used cognitive strategies encompassing practising any writing associated with their thesis, multiple sourcing strategies to understand literature and facilitate their writing, and outlining and note taking. The use of cognitive strategies can also be found in other research, Huang's (2007) research exploring ESL doctoral students in Hong Kong found that students used cognitive strategies like using samples for mimicking. Second, the study participants used affective strategies including sharing feelings and difficulties with others, taking a good rest, or catering to their personal preferences. Although prior research mentioned that students used affective strategies like empathizing

with their peers (Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021), this study provided more rich data. Third, to overcome behavioural issues, the study participants utilized metacognitive strategies including scheduling learning and prioritizing a specific task, and self-evaluating and proofreading for improvements. The use of metacognitive strategies can also be found in other studies. For example, students seeking feedback for evaluation (Huang, 2007) and more critical and reflective (Xu & Zhang, 2019). However, the description of these studies was general and lacked specification. Lastly, the study participants used social strategies like asking for clarifications and corrections, collaborating with peers, immersing themselves in academic environments, and endeavouring to build positive relationships with supervisors. Prior studies reported similar social strategies that were used by participants of the present study (Hajar & Ait Si Mhamed, 2021; Huang, 2007; Tardy, 2005, 2012).

The data analysis above identified the convergence of two different theories, i.e., Paltridge and Starfield's (2020) four thesis writing challenge categories and Oxford's LLSs taxonomy, which was not expected before conducting the research.

Besides, the effectiveness of students' coping strategies varies. Some students shared a broad repertoire of strategies that they felt were useful. For instance, one participant found the use of the *alastau* ritual helpful. This participant used cultural elements that connected with their culture, which helped them gain inner peace, boost confidence, decrease anxiety, and thus improve performance during the writing process. This explanation does not intend to promote any religious belief; rather, it highlights the complexity of the thesis writing process with culture.

There are also instances where some strategies did not work as students expected. Given that strategies can be taught and subsequently adopted by learners to enhance their learning (Grenfell & Macaro, 2007, as cited in Grainger, 2012), students can be encouraged to learn from each other's effective strategies for improving their thesis writing. Accordingly, workshops or informal discussions about effective strategies can be organized for students to learn from one another.

Conclusion

This chapter presented an interpretation of the present study's findings in light of previous research. Overall, most of the experiences of these EMI university students align with those commonly faced by other EMI or international students, with this study offering detailed insights into their specific challenges, perceived causes, and coping tactics. These findings were presented as six findings: four types of challenges (Findings 1-4), causes (Finding 5), and strategies (Finding 6).

This research contributes to existing literature by highlighting several findings. First, the findings revealed that students encountered multiple types of rhetorical challenges, for instance, they struggled with articulating their ideas despite their confidence in English language proficiency. Moreover, the findings of students' rhetorical challenges of lack of own voices and proper tones are essentially the issues of students' lack of independent thinking skills. Second, it presents findings related to emotional challenges including feelings of envy, which show different degrees of closeness in supervisory relationships and possible differences in supervisors' levels of dedication to students' research projects. Third, this study identified gender differences in the supervisory relationship as a cause for social challenges.

Fourth, it stresses the varying levels of anxiety confronted by EMI students, underscoring greater attention from supervisors and administrators in coping with students' mental health.

The following conclusion chapter presents the summary of the key findings along with the research implications, its contributions and limitations, and recommendations for further studies.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The previous chapter outlined significant findings directly pertinent to the aim of this phenomenological study of master's students' thesis writing challenges, the perceived causes, and strategies in an EMI university in Kazakhstan. In this chapter, conclusions drawn from the research findings, study limitations, and suggestions for further research and practice will be discussed. It will end with the researcher's personal throughout the thesis writing process.

This research was guided by three following questions:

1. What are the challenges that master's students identified in thesis writing at an EMI university in Kazakhstan?
2. What are the essential causes of these challenges as they perceived them?
3. What strategies do master's students use to overcome these challenges?

Based on the frameworks developed from Paltridge and Starfield's (2020) four clusters of issues associated with writing a thesis in English and Oxford's (1990) LLSs for non-native students, the major findings are summarized and presented in the following section.

Main Conclusions of the Study

The first conclusion of the study revealed that students experienced rhetorical, emotional, behavioral, and social challenges during the thesis writing process. Rhetorical challenges could be seen in sourcing, structuring, articulating, and developing proper academic voices and tones. Students with a satisfactory English level found it difficult to convey ideas precisely and clearly. Emotional challenges were feelings of boredom, shame, fatigue, fear, envy towards peers, frustration, anxiety, and even burnout. Behavioural challenges were reluctance to write, delay in writing, and lack of independence. Social challenges mainly happen in the supervisory relationship as some students expressed

dissatisfaction with their supervisor. These challenges are interrelated and can happen simultaneously.

The second conclusion of the study suggested that students perceived these challenges as stemming from competing commitments, insufficient prior knowledge and academic training, limited English proficiency, the impact of L1 or another writing genre, and cultural differences between students and English. Students' claim of competing commitments mirrored some students' weak time management skills and their adjustment difficulties to an intensive academic schedule. Students lack prior knowledge of disciplinary and academic writing, and cultural differences reflect issues in mainstream schools and ordinary university education.

The third conclusion of the study is that participants used cognitive, affective, metacognitive, and social strategies for overcoming challenges. Cognitive strategies include regular writing, sourcing multiple sources to comprehend literature, and facilitating writing, reasoning, analyzing, and taking notes. Interestingly, these strategies are mainly used for overcoming rhetorical challenges as they are directly related to the writing process. Students utilize a broad affective strategy repertoire to confront negative emotions. These strategies encompass sharing difficulties and negative feelings with others and rewarding themselves in multiple ways. Metacognitive strategies include monitoring their writing process and proofreading their work for improvement. Students used social strategies like asking for clarifications and solving doubts by visiting supervisors and writing centres and cooperating with peers with feedback.

Limitations and Further Implications

Although the present study successfully answered research questions, it is appropriate to recognize three potential limitations.

One of the main limitations of the current research is its constrained research sample. Due to the limited time for the research and feasibility of the research, a small number of 11 master's students from social science programs in an EMI university in Kazakhstan were recruited for the present study. Based on the uniqueness of the chosen university as a research-based EMI University, thus the participants from this university cannot represent the whole population of master's students in Kazakhstan. In other words, their challenges and coping strategies in the thesis writing process may also not align with what students experience in other EMI institutions in the country. Therefore, the findings of this qualitative phenomenological research cannot be generalized. This indicates that large-scale quantitative research involving a larger sample and site is needed.

Another limitation of the current research is that it did not fully capture the difficulties students had in the whole thesis writing process. Originally, the participants of this study were set to be graduates who had recently completed the thesis writing process. However, considering the potential dilemma of not being able to contact enough participants who have already left the university and the possible spatial limitations in conducting interviews, this study selected the participants from the second-year students who are writing their thesis. This choice was also because they were going through the writing process, so their responses could reflect their truest feelings in real time. During the data collection, students were halfway through the completion of the thesis. This means the study was not able to capture the full picture of the challenges of the entire writing process. To capture the whole picture,

chronological or autoethnographic research that investigates the whole thesis writing process is suggested.

Third, the participants revealed different levels of emotions toward their thesis writing. Due to the nature of the research method that current research uses, their emotional challenges and resources were identified through interviews. To acknowledge the issue in depth, large-scale research can be conducted to examine writing anxiety levels and their sources with quantitative or mixed methods. Although the findings of this study cannot be generalized, they reveal the complex emotional challenges through the lens of students' thesis writing process and call for more attention from supervisors and administrators.

Recommendations

Based on the current research findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed for various educational stakeholders.

First, based on the rhetorical challenges that students had and given the fact that English language learning in mainstream schools in Kazakhstan is still mainly teacher-centred and examination-oriented (Hajar et al, 2024), students were not trained enough to express themselves freely during their English language learning. Thus, schools and productive skills such as speaking and writing, building learner-centred classrooms, encouraging students to express themselves, and providing adequate writing training. Meanwhile, this requires supervisors' guidance and encouragement for students' thesis projects. It is noteworthy that very few who graduated from NIS schools and had EMI university learning experiences feel more confident in their capability to articulate their thoughts in writing. This result also strongly implies that extensive education training and experience in English can assist their

academic writing. Therefore, to bridge the gap between school education and higher education, students should be trained in academic writing starting from school.

The findings related to students' difficulties in developing their voices and over-reliance on supervisors might be because they have gotten used to the ready-made solutions in prior learning experiences and lack independent learning awareness, suggesting that some students lack independent thinking capability and critical thinking skills. Based on the influence of the mentality of obeying authority under Soviet education and the concept of respecting elders in Kazakh culture, students are rarely encouraged to express different opinions, which to a certain extent affects students' critical thinking. Therefore, educators in schools and universities are suggested to create student-centred classrooms and cultivate students' independent thinking skills.

Second, considering the complex emotional and social challenges students face during thesis writing, it is recommended that the university consider a variety of suggestions. These include implementing systematic mental health care, which involves assessing anxiety levels and providing counselling services. Moreover, school administrators can build an inclusive community that makes students feel at home and not marginalized. As for students, they should be prepared for graduate study not only academically, but also mentally and physically. Meanwhile, they can take care of their mental health by making good use of psychological sources provided by the university. Supervisors and other teaching staff can care for students' mental health conditions alongside providing academic support.

Last, to lower the negative impact of competing commitments, school and university education should pay attention to raising students' time management awareness and cultivating their time management skills. Meanwhile, a mutual schedule that is convenient for

both supervisors and students can be taken into consideration. Besides, a culture of cooperation and assistance should be cultivated within the research community.

Personal Reflection

Thesis writing is an experience that helped me grow as a writer and researcher, with its share of challenges and lessons.

One of the biggest challenges is the ethics application. I felt stressed during that process because the application process had been described as very difficult by everyone, so I took it so seriously and I tried to avoid reapplying. Another reason that made me feel stressed is that the preparation lasted around one month and went through numerous reproofs of specific sections. This process was intimidating. The result, however, was pretty good and I got ethical approval very soon, which made me feel relieved in an instant.

Data collection was certainly another challenging stage for me. The difficult part was approaching my gatekeeper and finding enough participants was more difficult than I had expected. I have discussed this in detail in the Methodology Chapter. Although the university research focused with a productive research environment, finding potential participants was not smooth. Predictably, it would have been more challenging to collect data at other non-research universities or institutions, which tests the researcher's abilities to confront stress and solve problems and other soft skills.

Writing the discussion chapter was the last challenge that I saw. I did not know how to compare and contrast my findings with previous findings despite having lessons and reading books. I tried to learn from previous cohorts' written work. I found my weaknesses in critical thinking skills and organizing ability. I prefer to attribute this to the teacher-centred and examination-oriented education in my educational experience and advocating the value of

humility and humbleness in China. This is how my identity as a writer negatively affected my writing.

Although I encountered these difficulties, I gradually made progress with the encouragement and patient guidance of my supervisor and EAP instructors. Compared with the initial confusion and doubts, I have grown a lot. I learned about and experienced the whole research process. I also understand that the path of academic research is not easy. It requires researchers' rigorous scientific research attitude and enthusiasm. All of these understandings and experiences boost my confidence because I am on the right path to becoming a future researcher.

References

- Abdulkareem, M. N. (2013). An investigation study of academic writing problems faced by Arab postgraduate students at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 3(9), 1552.
<http://www.academypublication.com/issues/past/tpls/vol03/09/tpls0309.pdf#page=58>
- Ablazimova, A. (2022). *Exploring Kazakhstani undergraduate students' academic writing challenges at an EMI university: a qualitative inquiry* [Master's thesis, Nazarbayev University]. Nazarbayev University Repository.
<http://nur.nu.edu.kz/handle/123456789/6562>
- Adas, D., & Bakir, A. (2013). Writing difficulties and new solutions: Blended learning as an approach to improve writing abilities. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(9), 254-266.
<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=946f90183397a02797983b2e357801677cc3e428>
- Adrian-Taylor, S. R., Noels, K. A., & Tischler, K. (2007). Conflict between international graduate students and faculty supervisors: Toward effective conflict prevention and management strategies. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(1), 90–117.
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1028315306286313?casa_token=FNdQlRHXEnkAAAAA:JEFuHfwL-kUehQtJvE3UVsOBZAKytPSPv44bc7r4Td4U4xaK10-HhzdhWnBC3KsYb352dXg

- Afzal, S., & Jami, H. (2018). Prevalence of academic procrastination and reasons for academic procrastination in university students. *Journal of Behavioural Sciences*, 28(1), 51-69.
- Aldabbus, S. (2017). Challenges faced by some Foundation students at Bahrain Teachers College in acquiring reading and writing skills. *International Journal of Pedagogical Innovations*, 5(02), 123-131. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12785/IJPI/050204>
- Aldabbus, S., & Almansouri, E. (2022). Academic writing difficulties encountered by university EFL learners. *British Journal of English Language Linguistics*, 10(3), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjel.2013/vol10n3111>
- Amin, M., Thohir, L., & Soepriyanti, H. (2023). Emotional dynamics of postgraduate students in completing their thesis: A narrative inquiry. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, 10(5), 11-23. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v10i5.4574>
- Amirova, A. (2020). *Students' perceptions and experiences of academic Kazakh in one Kazakhstani EMI university* [Doctoral dissertation, Nazarbayev University]. [Nazarbayev University Repository](https://nur.nu.edu.kz/bitstream/handle/123456789/4864/Amirova_Aida_MAtHesis_2020.pdf?sequence=1)
https://nur.nu.edu.kz/bitstream/handle/123456789/4864/Amirova_Aida_MAtHesis_2020.pdf?sequence=1
- Ankawi, A. (2015). *The academic writing challenges faced by Saudi students studying in New Zealand* [Master Thesis, Auckland University of Technology]. Tuwhera Open Access. <https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/server/api/core/bitstreams/0e051a98-47d9-447a-ba11-5da97fd169ab/content>

- Aubakirova, B., Mandel, K. M., & Benkei-Kovács, B. (2019). Multilingual education in Kazakhstan and model of multilingual education in the European context. *PedActa Journal*, 9(2), 25-36. [10.24193/PedActa.9.2.3](https://doi.org/10.24193/PedActa.9.2.3)
- Bakhou, B., & Bouhania, B. (2020). A qualitative inquiry into the difficulties experienced by Algerian EFL master students in thesis writing: 'Language is not the only problem'. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume, 11*.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no2.17>
- Beers, G. K. (1996). No Time, No Interest, No Way! The Three Voices of Aliteracy: Part 2. *School Library Journal*, 42(3), 110-13.
- Bian, X., & Wang, X. (2016). Chinese EFL undergraduates' academic writing: Rhetorical difficulties and suggestions. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 6(1), 20-29.
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/439d/5b8de9c446950f4973660b2619ba56c82dca.pdf>
- Bloom, L. Z. (1981). Why graduate students can't write: Implications of research on writing anxiety for graduate education. *Journal of Advanced Composition*, 103-117.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20865491>
- Brooks, A. W., Schroeder, J., Risen, J. L., Gino, F., Galinsky, A. D., Norton, M. I., & Schweitzer, M. E. (2016). Don't stop believing: Rituals improve performance by decreasing anxiety. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 137, 71-85. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2016.07.004>
- Bui, Y. N. (2013). *How to write a master's thesis*. Sage Publications.
<https://books.google.kz/books?hl=en&lr=&id=bQgAQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Bui,+2013,+thesis+writing&ots=Oj04Nh2DbV&sig=2IpReAneqTK6bQjYvv2uuu>

[Kmfko&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Bui%2C%202013%2C%20thesis%20writing&f=false](#)

- Bulqiyah, S., Mahbub, M., & Nugraheni, D. A. (2021). Investigating writing difficulties in essay writing: Tertiary students' perspectives. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal*, 4(1), 61-73. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1296404>
- Burke, S. B. (2010). *The construction of writer identity in the academic writing of Korean ESL students: A qualitative study of six Korean students in the US*. Indiana University of Pennsylvania. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/839877923?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true>
- Burkhalter, N., & Shegebayev, M. R. (2012). Critical thinking as culture: Teaching post-Soviet teachers in Kazakhstan. *International Review of Education*, 58, 55-72. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11159-012-9285-5>
- Cadman, K. (1997). Thesis writing for international students: A question of identity? *English for Specific Purposes*, 16(1), 3-14. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(96\)00029-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(96)00029-4)
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). Pearson.
- Dearden, J. (2014). *English as a medium of instruction-a growing global phenomenon*. British Council. https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:4f72cdf8-b2eb-4d41-a785-4a283bf6caaa/download_file?file_format=pdf&hyrax_fileset_id=m76ff3ec69df0d4e19

[4de40880f32f2f2&safe_filename=EMI-%2Ba%2BGrowing%2BGlobal%2BPhenomenon.pdf&type_of_work=Report](#)

- Demb, A., & Funk, K. (1999). What do they master? Perceived benefits of the master's thesis experience. *NACADA Journal*, 19(2), 18-27.
- Divsar, H. (2018). Exploring the challenges faced by Iranian TEFL students in their doctoral dissertation writing. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*, 6(3), 195-203. <http://www.eltsjournal.org/>
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics*. Oxford University Press. <https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl>
- Dukes, S. (1984). Phenomenological methodology in the human sciences. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 23, 197-203. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/27505782>
- Durdella, N. (2019). *Qualitative dissertation methodology: A guide for research design and methods*. Sage Publications.
- Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 20(9), 1408.
- Gerfanova, E. (2018). Foreign language education of Kazakhstan: current trends and future perspectives. *People: International Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(3), 735–745. <https://doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2018.43.735745>
- Goodman, B., Kambatyrova, A., & Kerimkulova, S. (2023). Transfer of genre knowledge among three languages: Insights from English-medium postgraduate programs in Kazakhstan. *System*, 117, 103114. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103114>

- Grant, C., & Osanloo, A. (2014). Understanding, selecting, and integrating a theoretical framework in dissertation research: Creating the blueprint for your “house”. *Administrative Issues Journal*, 4(2), 4. <https://dc.swosu.edu/aij/vol4/iss2/4>
- Griffiths, C. (2013). *The strategy factor in successful language learning* (Vol. 67). Multilingual Matters.
https://books.google.kz/books?hl=en&lr=&id=QNDirHDoBl0C&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&dq=Griffiths,+2013&ots=4E86oc5hxn&sig=prNnA-S0G-sHMRqEhBFiuxYXPis&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Griffiths%2C%202013&f=false
- Griffiths, C. (2015). What have we learned from ‘good language learners’? *Elt Journal*, 69(4), 425-433. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccv040>
- Gürel, N. (2011). Challenges of dissertation writing in the foreign language and strategies used: The perceptions of dissertation supervisors. *Ekev Akademisi Dergisi*, 49, 217-234. <https://www.acarindex.com/dosyalar/makale/acarindex-1423877954.pdf>
- Hajar, A., & Mhamed, A. A. S. (2021). Exploring Postgraduate students’ challenges and strategy use while writing a master’s thesis in an English-medium University in Kazakhstan. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 27(3), 187-207.
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11233-021-09072-6>
- Hajar, A., Batyrkhanova, G., & Manan, S. A. (2024). Understanding challenges, investment, and strategic language use of postgraduate students in an English-medium university in Kazakhstan. *Asian Englishes*, 26(1), 216-232.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2023.2216868>
- Hammersley, M. (2013). *What is qualitative research?* Bloomsbury Academic.
<https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/58723/1/9781849666077.pdf>

- Ho, M. C. (2016). Exploring writing anxiety and self-efficacy among EFL graduate students in Taiwan. *Higher Education Studies*, 6(1), 24-39. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1087317>
- Hsiao, T. Y., & Oxford, R. L. (2002). Comparing theories of language learning strategies: A confirmatory factor analysis. *The Modern Language Journal*, 86(3), 368-383. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-4781.00155>
- Huang, R. (2007). "A challenging but worthwhile learning experience!" Asian international student perspectives of undertaking a dissertation in the UK. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 6(1), 29-38. <https://www.cabdirect.org/cabdirect/abstract/20073158478>
- Hyland, F. (2016). Challenges faced by second language doctoral student writers in Hong Kong and their writing strategies. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, 39(2), 158-180. <https://doi.org/10.1075/aryl.39.2.04hyl>
- Hyland, K. (2002). Options of identity in academic writing. *ELT Journal*, 56(4), 351-358. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/56.4.351>
- Irvin, L. L. (2010). What is academic writing? In C. Lowe & P. Zemliansky (Eds.), *Writing spaces: Readings on writing* (pp. 3-17). Parlor Press. <https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/books/writingspaces1/irvin--what-is-academic-writing.pdf>
- Johnson, R. B., & Christensen, L. (2019). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches* (7th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Jonbekova, D. (2020). Educational research in Central Asia: Methodological and ethical dilemmas in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. *Compare: A Journal of*

Comparative and International Education, 50(3), 352-370.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2018.1511371>

- Jumakulov, Z., Ashirbekov, A., Sparks, J., & Sagintayeva, A. (2019). Internationalizing research in Kazakhstan higher education: A case study of Kazakhstan's state program of industrial innovative development 2015 to 2019. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 23(2), 234-247. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315318786445>
- Junianti, R., Pratolo, B. W., & Wulandari, A. T. (2020). The strategies of learning writing used by EFL learners at a higher education institution. *Ethical Lingua: Journal of Language Teaching and Literature*, 7(1), 64-73. <https://doi.org/10.30605/25409190.131>
- Kamler, B. (2008). Rethinking doctoral publication practices: Writing from and beyond the thesis. *Studies in Higher Education*, 33(3), 283-294. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070802049236>
- Kerimkulova, S., Goodman, B., & Aitzhanova, K. (2023). EMI in higher education in Kazakhstan: Policy supports and challenges. In *Policies, politics, and ideologies of English-medium instruction in Asian universities* (pp. 15-32). Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003173120-3/emi-higher-education-kazakhstan-sulushash-kerimkulova-bridget-goodman-kamila-aitzhanova>
- Khozaei Ravari, Z., Ul Islam, Q., Khozaei, F., & Choupan Zarvijani, S. B. (2022). Factors that hinder the thesis writing process of non-native MA students in ELT: supervisors' perspectives. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JARHE-06-2022-0184/full/html>
- Kittay, E. F. (2019). *Love's labor: Essays on women, equality and dependency*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315108926>

- Kwan, B. S. (2009). Reading in preparation for writing a PhD thesis: Case studies of experiences. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 8(3), 180-191.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2009.02.001>
- Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (1997). Retrieved from
<https://adilet.zan.kz/eng/docs/Z970000151>
- Ma, L. P. F. (2021). Writing in English as an additional language: Challenges encountered by doctoral students. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 40(6), 1176-1190.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1809354>
- Macaro, E., Curle, S., Pun, J., An, J., & Dearden, J. (2018). A systematic review of English medium instruction in higher education. *Language Teaching*, 51(1), 36–76.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444817000350>[\[Opens in a new window\]](#)
- Marhaban, S., Mukminatien, N., Widiati, U., Sulisty, T., Suhastyanang, W. D., Puspitasari, Y., & Muslem, A. (2021). Strategies employed by EFL doctoral candidates in dissertation writing completion. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 8(2), 546-560. <https://jurnal.usk.ac.id/SiELE/article/view/17694/14279>
- Mason, J. (2006). Mixing methods in a qualitatively driven way. *Qualitative Research*, 6(1), 9-25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794106058866>
- Merriam, S. & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th Edition). John Wiley & Sons.
- Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan [MoES] (2020). *Strategic plan of the Ministry of Education and Science of RK for 2020-2024*.
<https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/edu/documents/details/32853?lang=ru>.

Montgomery, D. P., Sparks, J., & Goodman, B. (2019). ‘What kind of paper do you want from us?’: developing genre knowledge in one Kazakhstani university postgraduate school.

Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education, 15(2019), 1-27.

<https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/67919617/pdf-libre.pdf?1625751400=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DWhat+kind+of+paper+do+you+want+from+us.pdf&Expires=1693417259&Signature=VcD54m4ITL8Zg6WQx6Y6N4g42s1PR0pPKIZTTBQHcIb7p5TRL5f3hNUFK-BXhL36FkUpHidLNIcfpZ6V5WI-PnXgr3ah1TXiUSrtkK5MNINX1dwFioiLTA4B7FYyLxR9wAIHm4G6ufV-zzKWZUaYAtdG-8sCRQ1IUGCJdeepIHdBYwWf618MBg7gdX-rZ5bkl~Clkj17eF8D1c9YT7Y4AiJOCVz6pKsBE5SjZQlsuoG6QXNUAwsuxkKZCjg~wDvFze5P4qlPEPdgvOok6kt2QrFgmGuyIOEfkYPi4luQd-lcDH1OstunO~LFMjUuClBtfnT9BWmDyym96ZADIAAWw &Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA>

Nazarbayev University Institutional Effectiveness Office of the Provost. (2023). *NU graduate exit survey: 2023 survey results*. Retrieved

from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hgvBZJ54SoS5QkFFR6brprJ-7gdYQJwU/view>

Niroo, W. T., & Williams, M. (2022). “Native speakers do not understand me”: A phenomenological study of student experiences from developing Asian countries at an American university. *Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education*, 14(2). <https://doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v14i2.3215>

North, S. (2005). Disciplinary variation in the use of theme in undergraduate essays. *Applied linguistics*, 26(3), 431-452. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/ami023>

Nur, C. K. (2022). *EFL Students' Emotions During Thesis Writing* [Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Negeri]. Walisongo Institutional Repository.

Office of the Provost. (2023). Graduate Exit Survey Reports - Nazarbayev University.

<https://ie.nu.edu.kz/ira/surveys/exit-surveys/graduate-exit-survey-results/>

Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Oxford, R. L. (2003). Language learning styles and strategies: An overview. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 41(2003), 271–278

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254446824_Language_learning_styles_and_strategies_An_overview#fullTextFileContent

Paltridge, B., & Starfield, S. (2020). Thesis writing in English as a second language. In

Paltridge, B., & Starfield, S. (Eds.), *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language: A Handbook for Students and their Supervisors* (pp. 43-54). Routledge.

https://ds.amu.edu.et/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/13041/%5BPaltridge_Starf%5D_Thesis_and_Dissertation_Writing_%28BookZZ.org%29.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*. Sage Publications.

[https://books.google.kz/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ovAkBQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Patton,+M.+Q.+\(2014\).+Qualitative+research+%26+evaluation+methods:+Integrating+theory+and+practice.+Sage+publications.&ots=ZR312ovHE_&sig=okFxbBhfRWP92PufgRhbx89GWQ&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Patton%2C%20M.%20Q.%20\(](https://books.google.kz/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ovAkBQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Patton,+M.+Q.+(2014).+Qualitative+research+%26+evaluation+methods:+Integrating+theory+and+practice.+Sage+publications.&ots=ZR312ovHE_&sig=okFxbBhfRWP92PufgRhbx89GWQ&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Patton%2C%20M.%20Q.%20()

[2014\).%20Qualitative%20research%20%26%20evaluation%20methods%3A%20Integrating%20theory%20and%20practice.%20Sage%20publications.&f=false](#)

Peng, H. (2018). Supervisors' views of the generic difficulties in thesis writing of Chinese EFL research students. *The Asian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 5(1), 93-103.

<https://caes.hku.hk/ajal/index.php/ajal/article/view/524/528>

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1989). Phenomenological research methods. In *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology: Exploring the breadth of human experience* (pp. 41-60). Springer US.

Pravita, A. R., & Kuswandono, P. (2022). Writing anxiety and academic procrastination on undergraduate thesis writing: The role of self-regulation. *JEELS (Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies)*, 9(1), 1-25.

<https://doi.org/10.30762/jeels.v9i1.4010>

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

<https://jurnal.unimus.ac.id/index.php/ELLIC/article/viewFile/4683/4210>

Rahimi, M., Riazi, A., & Saif, S. (2008). An investigation into the factors affecting the use of language learning strategies by Persian EFL learners. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 11(2), 31-60.

<https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/CJAL/article/view/19915/21770>

Ren, B., & Zhu, W. (2023). A Chinese EFL student's strategies in graduation thesis writing: An Activity Theory perspective. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 61,

101202. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2022.101202>

- Rubin, J. (1975). What the “good language learner” can teach us. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41-51.
[3586011](#)
- Sandelowski, M., & Barroso, J. (2007). *Handbook for synthesizing qualitative research*.
Springer.
- Scarcella, R. C., & Oxford, R. L. (1992). *The tapestry of language learning: The individual in the communicative classroom*. Heinle & Heinle.
- Seitzhanova, A., Plokhikh, R., Baiburiev, R., & Tsaregorodtseva, A. (2015). English as the medium of instruction: Modern tendency of education in Kazakhstan. *Perspectives of Innovations, Economics and Business*, 15(3), 113-117.
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Roman-Plokhikh/publication/307819672_New_trend_of_education_in_Kazakhstan_English_as_the_medium_of_instruction/links/582d867708ae138f1c0186dc/New-trend-of-education-in-Kazakhstan-English-as-the-medium-of-instruction.pdf
- Singh, M. K. M. (2019). Academic reading and writing challenges among international EFL Master’s students in a Malaysian university: The voice of lecturers. *Journal of International Students*, 9(4), 972-992. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v9i3.934>
- Sirois, F., & Pychyl, T. (2013). Procrastination and the priority of short-term mood regulation: Consequences for future self. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 7(2), 115-127. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12011>
- Soruc, A., Altay, M., Curle, S., & Yuksel, D. (2021). Students’ academic language-related challenges in English medium instruction: The role of English proficiency and language gain. *System*, 103. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2021.102651>

Sukandi, S. S., & Rianita, D. (2020). Problems of Indonesian EFL students in writing thesis in the field of English education. In *Proceedings of the 1st Bandung English Language Teaching International Conference* (pp. 448-459).

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Syayid-Sukandi-2/publication/341419773_Problems_of_Indonesian_EFL_Students_in_Writing_Thesis_in_the_Field_of_English_Education/links/5ed39eea299bf1c67d2ccb5b/Problems-of-Indonesian-EFL-Students-in-Writing-Thesis-in-the-Field-of-English-Education.pdf

Tajik, M. A., Abdul Manan, S., Arvatu, A. C., & Shegebayev, M. (2022). Growing pains: graduate students grappling with English medium instruction in Kazakhstan. *Asian Englishes*, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2022.2119970>

Tardy, C. M. (2005). "It's like a story": Rhetorical knowledge development in advanced academic literacy. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 4(4), 325-338. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2005.07.005>

Tardy, C. M. (2012). A rhetorical genre theory perspective on L2 writing development. *RM Manchón (Ed.) L*, 2, 165-190. [https://books.google.kz/books?hl=en&lr=&id=3kDs-rMZG1QC&oi=fnd&pg=PA165&dq=Tardy,+C.+M.+\(2012\).+A+rhetorical+genre+the+ory+perspective+on+L2+writing+development.+RM+Manch%C3%B3n+\(Ed.\)+L,+2,+165-190.&ots=5uL1OZwG7C&sig=E5EspGG4NWvIUUIUX0iam-Bq6ps&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.kz/books?hl=en&lr=&id=3kDs-rMZG1QC&oi=fnd&pg=PA165&dq=Tardy,+C.+M.+(2012).+A+rhetorical+genre+the+ory+perspective+on+L2+writing+development.+RM+Manch%C3%B3n+(Ed.)+L,+2,+165-190.&ots=5uL1OZwG7C&sig=E5EspGG4NWvIUUIUX0iam-Bq6ps&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Tardy, C. (2016). Voice and identity. In R. M. Manchon, & P. K. Matsuda (Eds.), *Handbook of second and foreign language writing* (pp. 349-363). Walter de Gruyter Inc. [https://books.google.kz/books?hl=en&lr=&id=w9YXDQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&dq=R.+M.+Manchon,+%26+P.+K.+Matsuda+\(Eds.\),+Handbook+of+second+and+fo](https://books.google.kz/books?hl=en&lr=&id=w9YXDQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&dq=R.+M.+Manchon,+%26+P.+K.+Matsuda+(Eds.),+Handbook+of+second+and+fo)

[reign+language+writing+\(pp.+349-363\)&ots=8Fd3f2lu0z&sig=RATrW0mcBMit2YQpreIL_hE9ubc&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](#)

- The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (1995, August 30). Retrieved from <https://www.akorda.kz/en/constitution-of-the-republic-of-kazakhstan-50912>
- Thompson, P. (2016). *The Routledge handbook of English for academic purposes* (pp. 379-391). Routledge.
- Trice, A. G. (2003). Faculty perceptions of graduate international students: The benefits and challenges. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 7(4), 379-403.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315303257120>
- Toba, R., & Noor, W. N. (2019). The current issues of Indonesian EFL students' writing skills: Ability, problem, and reason in writing comparison and contrast essay. *Dinamika Ilmu*, 19(1), 57-73. <https://doi.org/10.21093/di.v19i1.1506>
- Trisdayanti, I., Marlina, N., & Dewi, N. S. N. (2019). "My feelings": Undergraduate students' emotional responses towards supervisors' written corrective feedback in their thesis writing. *TLEMC (Teaching and Learning English in Multicultural Contexts)*, 3(1), 43-51. <https://jurnal.unsil.ac.id/index.php/tlemc/article/view/1125>
- Tuasikal, R. F., & Patria, B. (2019). Role of social support and self-concept clarity as predictors on thesis writing procrastination. *Journal of Psychology and Instruction*, 3(3), 76-82. <https://doi.org/10.23887/jpai.v3i3.23169>
- Wahyuni, D. W. D., Oktavia, W. O. W., & Marlina, L. M. L. (2019). Writing anxiety among Indonesian EFL college students: Levels, causes, and coping strategies. *Lingua Cultura*, 13(1), 67-74. <https://doi.org/10.21512/lc.v13i1.5239>

- Wang, H., Schultz, J. L., & Huang, Z. (2023). English language proficiency, prior knowledge, and student success in an international Chinese accounting program. *Heliyon*, 9(8).
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e18596>
- Woodrow, L. (2019). *Doing a master's dissertation in TESOL and applied linguistics*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429504068>
- Xu, L., & Zhang, L. J. (2019). L2 doctoral students' experiences in thesis writing in an English-medium university in New Zealand. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 41, 100779. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2019.100779>
- Yessenbekova, K. (2022). English as a medium of instruction in Kazakhstani higher education: a case study. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 1-19.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2022.2043064>
- Yilmaz, K. (2013). Comparison of quantitative and qualitative research traditions: Epistemological, theoretical, and methodological differences. *European journal of education*, 48(2), 311-325. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12014>
- Yu, S. (2019). Learning from giving peer feedback on postgraduate theses: Voices from master's students in the Macau EFL context. *Assessing Writing*, 40, 42-52.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2019.03.004>

Appendices

Appendix A: AI Declaration



Thesis Writing Challenges and Strategies of Master's Students in Social Sciences at an English Medium of Instruction (EMI) University in Kazakhstan

Appendix __ – Declaration of the Use of Generative AI

I hereby declare that I have read and understood NUGSE's policy concerning appropriate use of AI and composed this work independently (please check one):

- with the use of artificial intelligence tools, or
 without the use of artificial intelligence tools.
-

(If you have used AI tools as defined in the GSE policy document, please complete the rest of this form.)

During the preparation of this thesis/examination, I used grammarly, ChatGPT, google translate [NAME of TOOL] to correct grammer mistakes, structure and organize the written text, edit the text for clarity, tranlate expressions [REASON]¹.

I also declare that I

- am aware of the capabilities and limitations of AI tool(s),
 have verified that the content generated by AI systems and adopted by me is factually correct,
 am aware that as the author of this thesis I bear full responsibility for the statements and assertions made in it,
 have submitted complete and accurate information about my use of AI tools in this work, and
 acknowledge that there may be disciplinary consequences if I have not followed NUGSE's guidelines regarding AI appropriate use.

Name: Ulpan Nurlan

Signature: 

Date: 31.05.2024

¹ Examples of REASON: brainstorm ideas / find or select sources on a topic / paraphrase / structure and organize the written text / edit the text for clarity and grammar / ask for tips to improve coherence / cite and reference sources

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Thesis Writing Challenges and Strategies of Master's Students in Social Sciences at an English Medium of Instruction (EMI) University in Kazakhstan

Hello. My name is Ulpan Nurlan. I am a second-year master's degree student in the Multilingual Education program at the Graduate School of Education at Nazarbayev University. Thank you for agreeing to participate. The purpose of the present study is to explore the second-year master's students' challenges in thesis writing and their strategy use at an English Medium of Instruction (EMI) university in Kazakhstan. The present study does not aim to evaluate your language proficiency or experiences. Rather, I am trying to learn more about thesis writing challenges that graduate students of EMI University face and the strategies they use to overcome them.

To facilitate our notetaking, I would like to record our conversations today only with your permission. If you prefer not to record the interview, I would like to take notes and might request clarification when it is needed.

Before we begin the interview, I'd like to ensure that I have your consent to proceed. The consent outlines potential risks and benefits assures measures taken to protect your privacy throughout the research process and emphasizes the voluntary nature of participation. Once you're ready, we can proceed with the interview. I would like to state that (1) all information will be held confidential; (2) your participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time or not answer some questions if you feel uncomfortable or unwilling to do so.

Now, could you please take a moment to review the consent form? Do you have any questions or concerns before we proceed? If not, could you please sign the form? One for you and one for me. Thank you! I have planned this interview to last 30-40 minutes. During this time, some questions need to be covered.

A. Background information

1. Thank you again for agreeing to participate. Before we discuss your thesis writing experiences, could you please tell me a bit about your academic background?

Probe: 1) Is your current program different from your previous program/major?

2) Is this the first time you have studied all subjects in English?

B. Thesis writing challenges

2. Could you please describe your overall experiences of writing a thesis in English?
3. What do you find most challenging in thesis writing? Can you please elaborate on that a bit more?
4. Could you please share what challenges you experience when you try to make your thesis arguments convincing?

Probe: 1) How difficult do you find expressing your ideas clearly?

- 2) How difficult do you find organizing your ideas consistently?
 - 3) How difficult do you find maintaining a balance between your voice and cited material?
 - 4) How confident are you in your ability to use academic language effectively? If not, what is the specific challenge?
5. Do you have any difficulties when you discuss your thesis with your supervisor? If yes, could you please elaborate on them?
 6. Could you please tell me how you manage your time in your thesis writing?

Probe: 1) Have you encountered difficulties in balancing your personal life, your thesis writing, and your other courses? Please Explain.

 - 2) How often do you do any writing for your thesis every week?

C. The causes of thesis writing challenges as they perceived them

7. How do your prior training and skills in academic writing affect you in writing your thesis?
8. How does your dedication and knowledge of the chosen topic (prior knowledge) impact your thesis writing? Can you please elaborate on that a bit more?
9. Do you think your English proficiency level may cause some difficulties in your thesis writing? How?
10. Do you think that any cultural differences may create difficulties for you in thesis writing in English?
11. What other reasons do you think may cause challenges in your thesis writing?

D. The strategies for overcoming thesis writing challenges

12. To whom/where do you turn for support when you face the challenges that you mentioned? How?
13. What do you do to overcome difficulties in creating compelling and clear arguments in your thesis?
14. What do you do to release different types of stress during your thesis writing?
15. What do you do to meet deadlines and allocate time efficiently during the thesis writing process?
16. What else do you do to overcome the challenges you mentioned in your thesis writing?

E. Concluding remarks

17. What would you like your supervisors, administrators, or English for academic purposes (EAP) instructors to do to support you in your thesis writing?
18. What do you **expect to achieve** from your thesis?
19. Is there anything you would like to add before we finish the interview?

Thank you for participating in the interview! If you want to add something relevant to today's interview, you can either email me or send messages to me.

В Қосымшасы: Сұхбат Сұрақтары

Қазақстандағы Бір Ағылшын Тілді Университеттің Әлеуметтік Ғылым Бағдарламасы Бойынша Білім Алатын Магистранттардың Диссертация Жазудағы Қиындықтары Және Стратегиялары

Сәлеметсіз бе. Менің атым Ұлпан Нұрлан. Назарбаев Университеті Жоғары білім беру мектебінің Көптілді білім беру бағдарламасының 2-ші курс студентімін. Интервьюге қатысуға келіскеніңізге рақмет. Зерттеудің мақсаты Қазақстандағы ағылшын тілінде сабақ беретін (EMI) университеттің 2-ші курс студенттерінің диссертация жазу барысындағы қиыншылықтары мен қолданған стратегияларын анықтау. Бұл зерттеу сіздің тіл біліміңіз бен тәжірибеңізді бағалауды көздемейді, керісінше, EMI университеттің магистрант студенттерінің диссертация жазудағы өткерген қиындықтарын және сол қиындықтарды жеңу үшін қолданған стратегияларын зерттемекшімін.

Сұхбатты бастамас бұрын, мен сіздің келісіміңізге көз жеткізгім келеді. Келісім нысаны ықтимал тәуекелдер мен сұхбаттың пайдасын сипаттайды, зерттеу барысында сіздің жеке өміріңізді қорғау үшін қабылданатын шараларға кепілдік береді және қатысудың ерікті сипатын көрсетеді. Сіз дайын болсаңыз біз сұхбатты бастай аламыз. Мен сонымен қатар (1) барлық ақпарат құпия сақталатынын атап өткім келеді; (2) сіздің қатысуыңыз ерікті болып табылады және сіз кез келген уақытта сұхбатты тоқтата аласыз немесе ыңғайсыздық сезінсеңіз кейбір сұрақтарға жауап бермесеніз болады.

Қазір сіз келісім формасын аз уақыт бөліп қарап шықсаңыз болады ма? Осы келісім формасы бойынша сізде қандайда бір сұрақтар немесе алаңдататын мәселелер бар ма? Егер жоқ болса, бұл келісім формасына қол қойып кетсеңіз болады ма? Бір форма сізге, екіншісі мен үшін. Көп рақмет! Бұл сұхбат шамамен 30-40 минут уақыт алады. Осы уақыт ішінде бірнеше сұрақтарға жауап беру керек.

А. Жалпы мәліметтер

1. Қатысқаныңыз үшін тағы да алғыс білдіремін. Диссертация жазу тәжірибеңізді талқыламас бұрын, маған академиялық біліміңіз туралы аздаған ақпарат бере кетесіз бе?

Қосымша сұрақтар:

- 1) Сіздің ағымдағы бағдарламаңыз бұрынғы бағдарламаңыздан / мамандығыңыздан өзгеше ме?
- 2) Сіз барлық пәндерді ағылшын тілінде бірінші рет оқып жатырсыз ба?

В. Диссертация жазудағы қиындықтар

2. Ағылшын тілінде диссертация жазудағы жалпы тәжірибеңізбен бөлісе аласыз ба?

3. Диссертация жазудың ең қиын жері қандай деп ойлайсыз? Толығырақ айта кетесіз бе?
4. Диссертацияңыздың аргументтерін неғұрлым сенімді ету үшін қандай қиындықтарға тап болғаныңызды айта кетесіз бе?

Қосымша сұрақтар:

- 1) Өз идеяларыңызды нақты жеткізу қаншалықты қиын?
- 2) Идеяларыңызды дәйекті/жүйелі түрде жүйелеу қаншалықты қиын?
- 3) Өз ойыңыз бен келтірілген материал арасындағы тепе-теңдікті сақтау қаншалықты қиын?
- 4) Академиялық тілді тиімді пайдалану қабілетіңізге қаншалықты сенімдісіз? Егер жоқ болса, онда нақты мәселе неде?

5. Диссертацияңызды ғылыми жетекшіңізбен талқылауда қиындықтар туындай ма? Олай болса, олар туралы толығырақ айта аласыз ба?
6. Сіз диссертация жазу кезінде уақытты қалай тиімді қолданасыз және басқарасыз?

Қосымша сұрақтар:

- 1) Сіз жеке өміріңізді, диссертацияға байланысты жұмысыңызды және басқа сессияларды тепе тең ұстауда қандай қиындықтарға тап боласыз? Өтінемін, толығырақ айта аласыз ба?
- 2) Апта сайын сіз диссертацияңызға қаншалықты жиі жазу жұмысымен айналысасыз?

С. Диссертация жазудағы қиындықтардың себептерін қарастыру

7. Сіздің бұрынғы біліміңіз бен академиялық жазу дағдыларыңыз диссертация жазуға көмектеседі деп ойлайсыз ба? Олай болса, қалай? Егер жоқ болса, неге?
8. Сіз таңдаған тақырыпқа деген берілуіңіз бен біліміңіз диссертация жазылуына әсер етуі мүмкін деп ойлайсыз ба? Сіз бұл туралы толығырақ тоқтала аласыз ба?
9. Сіздің ағылшын тілін білу деңгейіңіз диссертация жазу кезінде біраз қиындықтар тудыруы мүмкін деп ойлайсыз ба?
10. Ағылшын тілінде диссертация жазудың қиындатары қандайда бір мәдени айырмашылықтардан келеді деп ойлайсыз ба?
11. Сіздің ойыңызша тағы қандай себептер диссертация жазу жұмысын қиындатуы мүмкін?

Д. Диссертация жазудағы қиындықтарды жеңу стратегиялары

12. Сіз айтқан мәселелерге тап болған кезде кімге жүгінесіз/қайдан қолдау сұрайсыз? Қалай?

13. Диссертацияңызда сенімді және анық дәлелдер жасаудағы қиындықтарды жеңу үшін не істейсіз?
14. Диссертация жазу кезінде әртүрлі стрессті жеңілдету үшін не істейсіз?
15. Диссертацияны жазу процесінде жұмысыңызды белгіленген мерзімде аяқтау үшін және уақытты тиімді бөлу үшін не істейсіз?
16. Бұрын айтылған қиындықтарды жеңу үшін тағы не істеп жатырсыз?

Е. қорытынды сұрақтар

17. Диссертация жазудағы ғылыми жетекшілер, университет әкімшілігі, немесе академиялық мақсаттар үшін (ЕАР) ағылшын тілінің жетекшілеріне, сіздің диссертацияңызды жазуда қалай көмектескенін қалайсыз?
18. Диссертацияңыздан не күтесіз?
19. Соңғы сұрақ, сұхбатты аяқтамас бұрын қосқыңыз келетін нәрселер бар ма?

Сұхбатқа қатысқаныңызға рақмет! Егер бүгінгі сұхбатқа қатысты қосар ойларыңыз болса, маған электрондық поштадан немесе тікелей өзіме хат жібере аласыз. Сізге сұхбаттың транскрипциясын 2-3 күн ішінде жіберемін. Жазылғандардың дұрыс екендігін тексеріп, көз жүгіртіп шыға аласыз. Уақыт бөлгеніңіз үшін тағы да рақмет айтамын!

Приложение В: Протокол Интервью

Трудности и Используемые Стратегии Магистрантов Социальных Наук Одного из Университетов Казахстана с Английским Языком Обучения при Написании Диссертации

Здравствуйте. Меня зовут Ұлпан Нұрлан. Я учусь на втором курсе программы «Полиязычное образование» Высшей школы образования Назарбаев Университета. Спасибо, что согласились принять участие. Целью моего исследования является изучение трудностей, с которыми сталкиваются магистранты второго курса в казахстанском университете с английским языком обучения при написании диссертаций и стратегий, которые они используют. Настоящее исследование не преследует цели оценить ваше знание языка или опыт. Вместо этого, я пытаюсь узнать больше о трудностях, с которыми сталкиваются магистранты университетов с английским языком обучения во время написания диссертаций, и о стратегиях, которые они используют для их преодоления.

С вашего разрешения, я хотела бы записать наш разговор, чтобы облегчить процесс ведения записей. Вы также можете отказаться от записи интервью. В таком случае, я буду делать заметки и, возможно, попрошу больше пояснений и уточнений, когда это будет необходимо.

Прежде чем мы начнем собеседование, я хотела бы убедиться, что у меня есть ваше согласие. Форма согласия описывает потенциальные риски и выгоды, гарантирует меры, принимаемые для защиты вашей конфиденциальности на протяжении всего процесса исследования, и подчеркивает добровольный характер участия. Как только вы будете готовы, мы сможем приступить к собеседованию. Я хотела бы подчеркнуть, что (1) вся информация будет храниться в тайне; (2) ваше участие является добровольным, и вы можете прекратить в любое время или не отвечать на некоторые вопросы, если чувствуете дискомфорт или не желаете этого делать.

А теперь, не могли бы вы уделить минутку, чтобы просмотреть форму согласия? Есть ли у вас какие-либо вопросы или опасения? Если нет, не могли бы вы, пожалуйста, подписать форму? Одна форма для вас, вторая для меня. Спасибо большое! Это интервью займет около 30-40 минут. За это время необходимо ответить на несколько вопросов.

А. Общие сведения

1. Еще раз благодарю вас за участие. Прежде чем мы обсудим ваш опыт написания тезиса, не могли бы вы, пожалуйста, рассказать мне немного о вашем академическом образовании?

Дополнительные вопросы:

- 1) Отличается ли ваша текущая программа от вашей предыдущей программы / специальности?

2) Вы впервые изучаете все предметы на английском языке?

В. Трудности при написании диссертации

2. Не могли бы вы, пожалуйста, описать свой общий опыт написания диссертации на английском языке?

3. Что вы считаете самым сложным в написании диссертации? Не могли бы вы, пожалуйста, подробнее остановиться на этом?

4. Не могли бы вы поделиться, с какими трудностями вы сталкиваетесь, пытаясь сделать аргументы своей диссертации более убедительными?

Дополнительные вопросы:

1) Насколько трудно вам ясно выражать свои идеи?

2) Насколько трудно вам систематизировать свои идеи последовательно?

3) Насколько трудно вам поддерживать баланс между вашим собственным мнением и цитируемым материалом?

4) Насколько вы уверены в своей способности эффективно использовать академический язык? Если нет, то в чем заключается конкретная проблема?

5. Возникают ли у вас какие-либо трудности при обсуждении вашей диссертации с научным руководителем? Если да, не могли бы вы подробнее рассказать о них?

6. А что насчет времени, как вы распоряжаетесь своим временем при написании диссертации?

Дополнительные вопросы:

1) Сталкивались ли вы когда-нибудь с трудностями в балансировании между личной жизнью, написанием диссертации и другими курсами? Пожалуйста, не могли бы вы рассказать подробнее

2) Ежедневно как часто вы пишете что-либо по своей диссертации?

С. Восприятие студентами причин трудностей с написанием диссертации

7. Считаете ли вы, что ваше предыдущее образование и навыки академического письма помогут вам в написании диссертации? Если да, то как? Если нет, то почему?

8. Считаете ли вы, что ваша преданность делу и знание выбранной темы могут повлиять на написание вашей диссертации? Не могли бы вы, пожалуйста, подробнее остановиться на этом?

9. Считаете ли вы, что ваш уровень владения английским языком может вызвать некоторые трудности при написании диссертации?

10. Как вы думаете, существуют ли какие-либо культурные различия, которые могли бы затруднить написание диссертации на английском языке?

11. Что, по вашему мнению, может вызвать проблемы при написании диссертации?

D. Стратегии преодоления трудностей при написании диссертации

12. К кому/куда вы обращаетесь за поддержкой, когда сталкиваетесь с проблемами, о которых вы упомянули? Как?

13. Что вы делаете, чтобы преодолеть трудности в создании убедительных и ясных аргументов в своей диссертации?

14. Что вы делаете, чтобы снять различные виды стресса во время написания диссертации?

15. Что вы делаете, чтобы уложиться в сроки и эффективно распределить время в процессе написания диссертации?

16. Что еще вы делаете, чтобы преодолеть проблемы, о которых упомянули ранее?

E. Заключительные вопросы

17. Как бы вы хотели, чтобы ваши руководители, администраторы или преподаватели английского языка для академических целей (EAP) помогли вам с написанием вашей диссертации?

18. Чего вы ожидаете достичь в своей диссертации?

19. И последний вопрос, есть ли что-нибудь, что вы хотели бы добавить, прежде чем закончим наш интервью?

Спасибо за участие в интервью! Если вы хотите добавить что-то, имеющее отношение к сегодняшнему интервью, вы можете написать мне по электронной почте или отправить мне сообщение. Транскрипцию нашего интервью я пришлю через два-три дня, и вы сможете ее просмотреть и убедиться, все ли правильно. Еще раз благодарю за уделенное время!

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Thesis Writing Challenges and Strategies of Master's Students in Social Sciences at an English Medium of Instruction (EMI) University in Kazakhstan

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in a research study on exploring graduate students' challenges and the strategies they use to overcome these challenges while writing a thesis at Kazakhstani EMI University. This study will investigate these thesis writing challenges, the causes of these challenges and strategies that graduate students use to overcome them. You will be requested to answer several interview questions regarding the topic. With your permission, your answers will be recorded on an audio-recorder application for further analysis. Afterwards, the recorded files will be deleted completely after they are transcribed. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, you have a full right to refuse to answer any questions that may cause discomfort, and you can withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation will take approximately 30-40 minutes.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are no more than minimal risks that might happen throughout the research: one potential risk is associated with questions related to psychological challenges experienced that you might meet during the thesis writing process. If you feel uncomfortable when being asked about these issues during the interview. You have a right not to answer the questions that cause any discomfort and they can withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. The second potential risk is related to a potential breach of your privacy. To mitigate this risk, I will only use pseudonyms instead of your real names or any other information that can cause identification of them. Besides, I will prioritize the secure storage of all collected data. This includes both physical records, such as interview transcripts and notes, and digital files. All physical documents will be kept in an access-restricted location. As for digital files, they will be password-protected. Moreover, the access to collected data will be restricted to me only.

You may not receive any direct benefits from the study, however, by participating in this study, you will have an opportunity to reflect on your thesis writing challenges, which can develop a deeper understanding of your strengths, weaknesses, and areas where they may need additional support. This self-awareness can be valuable for your academic development. Furthermore, you may feel empowered to seek out resources, assistance, or strategies to overcome obstacles in your thesis writing journey. Moreover, your strategies for overcoming challenges might benefit future cohorts as well. It is expected that your participation will expand the research literature regarding students' academic writing challenges and learning strategies of EMI University in the Kazakhstani context. Moreover, your contribution might benefit future cohorts because university faculty members, administrators, and EAP instructors will recognize the existing issues and provide better thesis writing support accordingly.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation in this study is completely voluntary, you have a full right to refuse to answer any questions that may cause discomfort, and you can

withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. You have the right not to participate, you can refuse to answer particular questions or withdraw from study at any point. The results of the current study may be presented at scientific meetings or published in scientific journals which will not include your name or other information.

If you want a copy or summary of this study's results or have any questions or concerns, you can contact either the researcher or the supervisor of the researcher at the email address provided below.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

The Master's Thesis Supervisor for this graduate student's work, Associate Professor Sulushash Kerimkulova, skerimkulova@nu.edu.kz

Independent Contact: If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the NUGSE Research Committee at ([email address: gse.research.committee@nu.edu.kz](mailto:gse.research.committee@nu.edu.kz))

Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided;
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- With full knowledge of all the foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Participant

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher

Signature: _____

Date: _____

С Қосымшасы: Зерттеу Жұмысының Ақпараттық Келісім Формасы

Қазақстандағы Бір Ағылшын Тілді Университеттің Әлеуметтік Ғылым Бағдарламасы Бойынша Білім Алатын Магистранттардың Диссертация Жазудағы Қиындықтары Және Стратегиялары

СИПАТТАМАСЫ: Сіз Қазақстандағы ағылшын тілінде сабақ беретін (ЕМІ) университеттің диссертация жазу кезінде магистранттардың қиындықтары мен осы қиындықтарды жеңу үшін қолданатын стратегияларын талдауға арналған зерттеуге шақырылып отырсыз. Бұл зерттеу диссертация жұмысты жазудағы қиындықтарды, қиындықтардың себептерін және магистранттар оларды жеңу үшін қолданатын стратегияларды зерттейді. Сізден тақырыпқа қатысты бірнеше сұрақтарға жауап беру сұралады. Рұқсатыңыз бойынша жауаптарыңыз одан әрі талдау үшін аудиоманитофонға жазылады. Жазылған файлдар транскрипциядан кейін толығымен жойылады. Осы зерттеуге қатысуыңыз толығымен ерікті түрде болады, ыңғайсыздық тудыруы мүмкін кез келген сұраққа жауап беруден бас тартуға толық құқығыңыз бар және сіз кез келген уақытта зерттеуден бас тарта аласыз.

ӨТКІЗІЛЕТІН УАҚЫТЫ: Сіздің қатысуыңыз шамамен 30-40 минут құрайды.

ЗЕРТТЕУГЕ ҚАТЫСУДЫҢ ҚАУІПТЕРІ МЕН АРТЫҚШЫЛЫҚТАРЫ: Зерттеу барысында болуы мүмкін бір ықтимал қауіп диссертация жазу барысындағы психологиялық қиындықтарға қатысты сұрақтармен тығыз байланысты. Әңгімелесу кезінде осы мәселелер туралы сұрағанда өзіңізді жайсыз сезінсеңіз, басқа да ыңғайсыздық туындататын сұрақтарға жауап бермеуге құқығыңыз бар және кез келген уақытта қатысудан бас тарта аласыз. Екінші ықтимал ақпарат қауіпсіздігіне байланысты. Бұл қауіптің алдын алу үшін атыңыздың орнына лақап ат пайдаланылады, атыңызды айқындауы мүмкін болған басқа да ақпараттар шифрланады. Сонымен қатар, мен барлық жиналған деректердің қауіпсіз сақталатынына кепіл беремін. Бұған сұхбат транскриптітері мен ескертпелер сияқты физикалық жазбалар және сандық файлдар кіреді. Барлық физикалық құжаттар қолжетімділік шектелген жерде сақталады. Сандық файлдарға келетін болсақ, олар құпия сөзбен қорғалады. Сонымен қатар, жиналған деректерге тек маған ғана қолжетімді болады.

Сіз зерттеуден ешқандай тікелей пайда ала алмауыңыз мүмкін, дегенмен, зерттеуге қатысу арқылы сіз өзіңіздің күшті және әлсіз тұстарыңызды анықтауға, қандай көмек қажет ететін анықтауға көмектесері анық. Бұл академиялық салада дамуыңыз үшін пайдалы болуы мүмкін. Сонымен қатар, бұл сізді диссертация жазу жолында қосымша ресурс, ақпарат пен көмек іздеуге қанаттардыруы мүмкін. Сонымен қатар, қиындықтарды жеңу үшін қолданатын стратегияларыңыз болашақ магистранттар үшін де пайдалы болуы мүмкін. Сіздің ат салысуыңыз қазақстандағы ЕМІ университетінің студенттердің академиялық жазу қиындықтары мен оқу стратегияларына қатысты зерттеу әдебиетінің аясын кеңейтуге үлес қосады. Сонымен қатар, сіздің үлесіңіз болашақ магистранттарға пайдасын тигізуі мүмкін, өйткені университеттің оқытушылары, әкімшілері және академиялық мақсаттарға арналған ағылшын тілі

оқытушылар бар мәселелерді анықтап, сәйкесінше диссертацияларды жазуға жақсы қолдау көрсетуі ықтимал.

ҚАТЫСУШЫ ҚҰҚЫҚТАРЫ: Егер сіз жоғарыдағы ақпаратпен танысып шыққан болсаңыз және осы зерттеуге қатысуға шешім қабылдасаңыз, бұл зерттеуге қатысуыңыз толығымен ерікті екенін түсініңіз. Ыңғайсыздық тудыруы мүмкін кез келген сұраққа жауап беруден бас тартуға толық құқығыңыз бар. Қандай да бір сұраққа мүлдем жауап бермеуге де құқығыңыз бар. Кез келген уақытта зерттеуге берген келісіміңізді қайта алуға да құқығыңыз бар, ол жағдайда ешқандай санкция қарастырылмайды, беделіңізге зияны тимейді. Ағымдағы зерттеудің нәтижелері ғылыми жиналыстарда ұсынылуы мүмкін, сіздің атыңызды немесе басқа ақпаратты көрсетпейтін ғылыми журналдарда жариялануы мүмкін.

Егер сіз осы зерттеу нәтижелерінің көшірмесін немесе қысқаша мазмұнын алғыңыз келсе немесе қандай да бір сұрақтарыңыз болса, сіз зерттеушінің өзіне немесе зерттеушінің жетекшісіне төменде көрсетілген электрондық пошта мекенжайы арқылы хабарласа аласыз.

БАЙЛАНЫС АҚПАРАТЫ:

Осы студенттің жұмысының магистрлік тезис жетекшісі, профессор Сұлушаш Керімқұлова, skerimkulova@nu.edu.kz

ДЕРБЕС БАЙЛАНЫС АҚПАРАТЫ: Егер берілген зерттеу жұмысының жүргізілуімен қанағаттанбасаңыз немесе сұрақтарыңыз бен шағымдарыңыз болса, Назарбаев Университеті Жоғарғы білім беру мектебінің Зерттеу Комитетімен көрсетілген (электрондық пошта: gse.research.committee@nu.edu.kz) арқылы хабарласуыңызға болады.

Осы зерттеуге қатысуға келіссеңіз, осы келісім формасына қол қойыңыз.

Мен берілген ақпаратты мұқият оқып шықтым;
Маған зерттеудің мақсаты мен тәртібі туралы толық ақпарат берілді;
Жиналған деректер қалай пайдаланылатынын және кез келген құпия ақпарат тек зерттеушілерге көрінетінін және басқа ешкімге айтылмайтынын түсінемін;
Мен кез келген уақытта зерттеуден себепсіз бас тарта алатынымды түсінемін;
Жоғарыда айтылғандардың барлығын толық біле отырып, мен өз еркіммен осы зерттеуге қатысуға келісемін.

Қатысушы

Қолы: _____

Күн: _____

Зерттеуші

Қолы: _____

Күн: _____

Приложение С: Форма Информационного Согласия

Трудности и Используемые Стратегии Магистрантов Социальных Наук Одного из Университетов Казахстана с Английским Языком Обучения при Написании Диссертации

ОПИСАНИЕ: Вам предлагается принять участие в исследовании по изучению трудностей магистрантов и стратегий, которые они используют для преодоления этих трудностей при написании диссертации в казахстанском университете с английским языком обучения. В данном исследовании будут изучены трудности с написанием диссертации, причины этих трудностей и стратегии, которые магистранты используют для их преодоления. Вам будет предложено ответить на несколько вопросов на интервью на данную тему. С вашего разрешения, ваши ответы будут записаны на диктофон для дальнейшего анализа. Впоследствии, после их расшифровки, записанные файлы будут полностью удалены. Ваше участие в данном исследовании является полностью добровольным, вы имеете полное право отказаться отвечать на любые вопросы, которые могут вызвать дискомфорт, и можете прекратить свое участие в исследовании в любой момент.

ВРЕМЯ: Ваше участие займет примерно 30-40 минут.

РИСКИ И ПРЕИМУЩЕСТВА: Риски, которые могут возникнуть на протяжении всего исследования минимальны: один потенциальный риск связан с вопросами, связанными с психологическими трудностями, с которыми вы могли столкнуться в процессе написания диссертации. Если вы чувствуете себя некомфортно, вы имеете право не отвечать на вопросы, вызывающие дискомфорт, и можете отказаться от участия в исследовании в любой момент без каких-либо последствий. Вторым потенциальным риском является возможное нарушение вашей конфиденциальности. Чтобы снизить этот риск, я буду использовать только псевдонимы вместо ваших настоящих имен или любой другой информации, которая может привести к их идентификации. Кроме того, я уделю особое внимание безопасному хранению всех собранных данных. Это относится как к физическим записям (транскрипт интервью и заметки), так и к цифровым файлам. Все физические документы будут храниться в месте с ограниченным доступом. Что касается цифровых файлов, они будут защищены паролем. Более того, только я буду иметь доступ к собранным данным.

Возможно, вы не получите какой-либо прямой выгоды от исследования, однако, участвуя в данном исследовании, у вас будет возможность поразмышлять над трудностями в написании диссертации, что может способствовать более глубокому пониманию ваших собственных сильных и слабых сторон, а также областей, в которых вам нужна поддержка. Этот самоанализ может быть ценным для вашего академического развития. Кроме того, вы можете почувствовать себя уполномоченным искать ресурсы, поддержку или стратегии для преодоления препятствий на пути написания диссертации. Более того, ваши стратегии преодоления трудностей могут принести пользу и будущим магистрантам. Ожидается, что ваше участие расширит исследовательскую литературу, посвященную трудностям студентов в академическом

письме и стратегиям обучения в университетах с английским языком обучения в Казахстане. Также ваш вклад может принести пользу будущим магистрантам, поскольку члены преподавательского состава, администраторы и преподаватели английского для профессиональных целей смогут осознать существующие проблемы и, соответственно, обеспечить лучшую поддержку при написании диссертаций.

ПРАВА УЧАСТНИКА: Если вы прочитали эту форму и решили принять участие в данном проекте, пожалуйста, учтите, что ваше участие в этом исследовании является полностью добровольным, вы имеете полное право отказаться отвечать на любые вопросы, которые могут вызвать дискомфорт, и можете отказаться от участия в любое время. Вы имеете право не отвечать на отдельные вопросы или отказаться от интервью в любой момент. Результаты текущего исследования могут быть представлены на научных конференциях или опубликованы в научных журналах, в которых не будут содержаться ваше имя или другая информация.

Если вам нужна копия или краткое изложение результатов данного исследования или у вас есть какие-либо вопросы, вы можете связаться с руководителем исследователя или с самим исследователем по адресу электронной почты, указанным ниже.

КОНТАКТНАЯ ИНФОРМАЦИЯ:

Руководитель магистерской работы, профессор Сулушаш Керимкулова,
skerimkulova@nu.edu.kz

Независимый контакт: Если вы не удовлетворены тем, как проводится данное исследование, или если у вас есть какие-либо жалобы или общие вопросы об исследовании или ваших правах как участника, пожалуйста, свяжитесь с Исследовательским комитетом Высшей школы образования Назарбаев Университета по адресу электронной почты research.committee@nu.edu.kz

Пожалуйста, подпишите эту форму согласия, если вы согласны участвовать в данном исследовании.

Я внимательно прочитал предоставленную информацию;
 Мне предоставлена полная информация о цели и процедурах исследования;
 Я понимаю, как будут использоваться собранные данные, и что любая конфиденциальная информация будет видна только исследователям и не будет раскрыта другим лицам.

Участник

Подпись: _____

Дата: _____

Исследователь

Подпись: _____

Дата: _____

Appendix D: Invitation to a research study

Thesis Writing Challenges and Strategies of Master's Students in Social Sciences at an English Medium of Instruction (EMI) University in Kazakhstan

Dear second-year master's students! Do you have the feeling of staring at a blank screen and blinking cursor, as you embark on the journey of writing your thesis? The journey is both exhilarating and daunting. Would you like to share your experience of thesis writing in English? Then you are the person that I am looking for. I would like to hear your story, the challenges you faced, and the triumphs you achieved. Your voice will be very valuable.

I am Ulpan, a second-year master's student in the "Multilingual Education" program at the Graduate School of Education at Nazarbayev University.

I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a research study aimed to explore graduate students' challenges and strategies for overcoming them while writing a thesis at an English Medium of Instruction (EMI) university in Kazakhstan. Your participation will be in the form of an individual interview either face-to-face or via Zoom between me and you which will last 30-40 minutes. The location and time of the interview will be arranged according to your convenience.

Your participation will be kept confidential. You will not be identified by your name or other personal information throughout the study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw your participation at any point, and you may choose not to respond to the interview questions that you do not wish to answer.

If you are interested in participating in this research or have any questions about it, please contact me directly through my contact information below. I will then send a confirmation email and provide you with further information concerning the study. The time and location of the interview will be discussed with you.

I look forward to your participation in the study and I do appreciate your time! Thank you for your consideration!

Kind regards,
Ulpan Nurlan

MA programme student
Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education

Email address: ulpan.nurlan@nu.edu.kz

Phone: +7 778 760 3746

D Косымшасы: Зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға шақыру

Қазақстандағы Бір Ағылшын Тілді Университеттің Әлеуметтік Ғылым Бағдарламасы Бойынша Білім Алатын Магистранттардың Диссертация Жазудағы Қиындықтары Және Стратегиялары

Құрметті 2-ші курстағы магистрант! Диссертация жазуды бастағанда бос экран мен жыпылықтаған курсорға қарап өткізген сезім есіңізде ме? Диссертация жазу қиын да қызықты іс. Ағылшын тілінде диссертация жазу тәжірибеңізбен бөліскіңіз келе ме? Ендеше сіз мен іздеген адамсыз. Мен оқиғаларыңызды, бастан өткізген қиыншылықтарыңыз бен қол жеткізген жеңістеріңізді тыңдағым келеді. Сіздің дауысыңыз өте маңызды.

Мен Ұлпан Нұрлан, Назарбаев Университеті, Жоғарғы білім беру мектебі, Көптілді білім беру бағдарламасының 2-ші курс магистр студентімін.

Сіздерді зерттеуге қатысуға шақырамын. Зерттеу Қазақстандағы ағылшын тілінде сабақ беретін (EMI) университетте ағылшын тілінде диссертация жазу кезінде студенттің басынан өткізетін қиындықтары мен оларды жеңу үшін қолданатын стратегиялары талдауға бағытталған. Зерттеуге қатысуыңыз жүзбе-жүз немесе Zoom арқылы орындалады. Интервью уақыты 30-40 минут. Интервью орны мен уақыты сіздің таңдауыңызға қарай белгіленеді.

Сіздің қатысуыңыз құпия сақталады. Зерттеу барысында және нәтижесінде сіздің аты-жөніңіз немесе басқа жеке ақпаратыңыз жарияланбайды. Осы зерттеуге қатысуыңыз толығымен ерікті түрде болады. Сіз кез келген уақытта қатысудан бас тарта аласыз және жауап бергіңіз келмейтін сұхбат сұрақтарына жауап бермеуге құқығыңыз бар. Егер сіз осы зерттеуге қатысуға қызығушылық танытсаңыз немесе сұрақтарыңыз болса, төменде көрсетілген байланыс ақпаратым арқылы маған тікелей хабарласыңыз. Мен сосын сізге электрондық хат жіберіп, зерттеуге қатысты қосымша ақпаратпен қамтамасыз етемін. Зерттеуге қатысуыңыз расталған жағдайда, сұхбаттың орны мен уақытын белгілейміз.

Зерттеуге қатысуыңызды асыға күтемін және сіздің уақытыңызды бағалаймын! Назар аударғаныңызға көп рахмет!

Құрметпен
Ұлпан Нұрлан

Магистратура бағдарламасының студенті
Назарбаев Университеті, Жоғарғы білім беру мектебі

Электрондық пошта: ulpan.nurlan@nu.edu.kz

Телефон нөмірі: +7 778 760 3746

Приложение D: Приглашение на добровольное участие в научном исследовании

Трудности и Используемые Стратегии Магистрантов Социальных Наук Одного из Университетов Казахстана с Английским Языком Обучения при Написании Диссертации

Уважаемые студенты второго курса магистратуры! Помните ли вы ощущение, когда вы смотрели на пустой экран с мигающим курсором мыши, когда начинали свой путь написания диссертации? Этот путь одновременно волнующий и пугающий. Не хотите ли поделиться своим опытом написания диссертации на английском языке? Тогда вы тот человек, которого я ищу. Я хотела бы услышать вашу историю о трудностях, с которыми вы столкнулись, и успехах, которых вы достигли. Ваш вклад будет очень высоко оценен.

Я Улпан, магистрантка второго курса программы «Полиязычное образование» Высшей школы образования Назарбаев Университета. Я пишу, чтобы сообщить вам о возможности принять участие в исследовании, направленном на изучение трудностей магистрантов и стратегий их преодоления при написании диссертации в университетах с английским языком обучения в Казахстане. Ваше участие будет в форме индивидуального собеседования вживую, или через платформу Zoom, и продлится 30–40 минут. Место и время собеседования будут выбраны с учетом вашего удобства.

Ваше участие будет оставаться конфиденциальным. Ваше имя или другая личная информация не будут указываться на протяжении всего исследования. Ваше участие в данном исследовании является полностью добровольным. Вы можете отказаться от своего участия в любой момент, а также можете отказаться отвечать на вопросы собеседования, на которые вы не хотите отвечать.

Если вы заинтересованы в участии в данном исследовании или у вас есть какие-либо вопросы относительно него, пожалуйста, свяжитесь напрямую со мной через мои контактные данные, указанные ниже. Я отправлю вам электронное письмо с подтверждением и предоставлю вам дополнительную информацию об исследовании, времени и месте проведения интервью.

Я с нетерпением жду вашего участия в исследовании и ценю ваше время! Спасибо за внимание!

С уважением,
Ұлпан Нұрлан
Студент программы магистратуры
Высшей школы образования Назарбаев Университета
Электронной почты: ulpan.nurlan@nu.edu.kz
Тел: +7 778 760 3746

Appendix E: Interview Transcripts Sample

...

The researcher: Could you please describe your overall experience of writing your thesis in English?

The participant: I think because of all the assignments that I had before in my first year of master's degree, I had some experience writing it. But in total, it was new for me to do some data gathering. And like even just writing academically...you need to analyze everything. It was hard for me. It's still hard for me.

The researcher: OK, thank you for sharing. What do you find most challenging in thesis writing?

The participant: For me, my thesis writing was the most challenging was to come up with an idea like what to write because I just want to say briefly, like, I, I didn't see that I will be in this university. When I first passed my document, I thought that I would fail it. And I didn't know that this is research-oriented. And for me, the most challenging was to find out what issue I wanted to focus on, and also about how to gather data. I just used to write everything I found, but here I need to find more information, more like proofs and answers to my questions. So pretty much challenging is data gathering.

...

The researcher: Okay, thank you. What challenges have you experienced when you try to make your thesis argument convincing?

The participant: Maybe it was, maybe it's just because most of the professors say that I'm not good at formulation. For me the problem of formulation is hard, I mean for me it is hard to clearly analyze everything and just formulate the sentences clearly. I think in terms of organizing, I cannot think about what I want to write. I have difficulties like I usually write on a paper in chapters about what I will do. But when it comes to expressing, I don't know how to write it, or how to show it in a good way.

...

The researcher: Thank you. And from your point, what makes your thesis writing challenging?

The participant: For me, it was because of our school. I studied at [XX] school. And like, I was comparing schools as [YY] Studies, as they start their preparation earlier than we did. And now they have made more progress than I did by myself. And they think for me it was going to be challenging because we started a little bit later. And for me, it was a little bit hard to understand when I should start and what I should start to do. And the challenge that was, for me, was also the other assignments because we had all assignments in one week. And we should do everything in a good way. Because of other assignments and we start late, and also

some mental issues like, like mental breakdowns, you need to just try your best, but you are not in the mood, or you are ill and other stuff. So, these things also cause challenges for me in my previous writing.

The researcher: Could you please share whom or where you turn for support when you face the challenges that you mentioned?

The participant: Usually, it's my supervisors and peers, but I think other professors also support like and suggested me to go to the Writing Centre, I think I will ask for their help later. I also find support from my family. For example, my dad is a very clever person I can say. When I found something or some ideas, I just came to him, and they just like to talk for 30 minutes about what I'm going to do, and he gave me some advice on what I should do. So like friends, peers, family, and professors.

The researcher: OK. Thank you. What do you do to overcome difficulties in creating compelling and clear arguments in your thesis?

The participant: I usually send it to my professors if I finish a chapter, I send it to them for feedback. And after that, I asked them: "Can we meet again to discuss my paper?" And they just tell me what kinds of things they should change or what kind of things I should add to my paper. If I understand them, I usually follow them. But sometimes when I don't understand their devices, I usually record their voices. And listen again to understand what they told me and try to find an elaborate idea that they told me.

The researcher: Thank you. So, you mentioned sometimes you have stress. What else do you do to release stress during your thesis writing?

The participant: I cry. Usually, I cry, and sometimes I can be a little bit in bad mode. I don't know what to say, but I'm a little bit psycho, my friends told me. I have these kinds of problems when I don't know what. Okay, sorry. I don't know what to do. I sometimes beat myself. (the participant cries).

The researcher: Oh. I think you did a really good job. Everything will be fine. Do you want to have a break?

The participant: I am fine. Let's continue. I'm trying to rest. Yeah. And sometimes I just collect with my friends or with my boyfriend. And usually, we have some drinks. It's also helped me to forget about thesis work and relax. And I like to do things with my hands. I usually do diamond painting. Like there is a special glue and I do a diamond painting. I can spend like two hours watching a drama. I just like to relax and do all the stuff with my friends.

The researcher: What do you do to meet deadlines and allocate your time effectively during the thesis writing process?

The participant: To meet my deadlines, I usually make a special plan in my head that I have deadlines like let's say after a week, not a week, like after a month, and I just write my

copybooks. In this one week, I need to read approximately 10-20 articles and find some notes. I have then like one or two weeks to write such a work. Usually, I divide my head like in one day I should write 1000 or 800 words. So, I have this plan of what I should do. Sometimes I have to change situations when I need to help my parents. So, I just like to spend one day on that, and I think that, okay, until three o'clock at night I have time. So, I will finish all my plans at that time.

The researcher: Wow. Your strategies sound great! Thank you. What else do you do to overcome the challenges that we mentioned here?

The participant: Usually, the challenges help me to share with my peers, who have the same experience as me. I just like to ask them about their process, and we just discuss it. And sometimes I asked for help, like, they know what they should do if they just give me their suggestion.

...