

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This dissertation begins with a comprehensive background of the research. It then presents the problem statement, which is derived from an in-depth analysis of the existing literature on the doctoral dissertations practices in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. The literature review examines how these sources specifically address the implementation of dissertation writings, highlighting the key insights, trends, and gaps in knowledge. The research questions, research objectives, and significance of the study are all presented.

1.1 Background of the Research

Doctoral dissertations written documented research results made by early stage researchers as students during their doctoral studies. Deng et al., (2021) define doctoral dissertation is as factual written document of an innovative research work done through multifaceted literature compilation and data analysis disseminated to the board team consisted of professionals who are comprehensively familiar with the form and content of the genre for assessment. Doctoral students have primary task and key prerequisite for being awarded a doctoral degree is to make research contribution to the particular discipline and documented in the dissertation. Dissertation writing skills play a crucial role in their further career development. Having a good mastery of English is necessary for the students to complete their doctoral study and improve their prospective employability (Odena & Burgess, 2017). Thus, the doctoral dissertation benefits for the discipline by preparing new members: scholars and authors proficient of keeping the community germane, dynamic, and reformist (Paré, 2017).

Whether loved or loathed, dissertation is an inevitable aspect of pursuing a doctoral degree (Bergen et al., 2020). The significance of writing dissertation in doctoral program can hardly be disputed because the students' written products are their evidences in mastering disciplinary knowledge and academic achievement. Engaging doctoral students in writing dissertation promotes their competence to reflect academic content and develop a critical stance due to arguing and defending positions in their academic field (Yuvaypan & Rathert,

2018). Mastering dissertation writing skills enables the students to participate in the conventions of communicating research and become a member of their disciplinary communities. In spite of its relevance, dissertation writing “is often an invisible dimension of the curriculum” (Coffin et al., 2005).

Additionally, the expanding process of globalization and the extensive adoption of English as a foreign language (EFL) across universities globally has resulted in a heightened need for English dissertation writing competencies among doctoral candidates (Annous & Nicolas, 2014). EFL students are demanded to master dissertation writing since it is the most fundamental means to transfer their notions, degrees, and pursue occupations (Lee & Lin, 2022). Writing skills, thus, are a crucial part of communication for the EFL doctoral students throughout their academic careers because they allow them to clearly organize their thoughts and feelings while also passing on meaning through well-developed content (Shahzad et al., 2021). Doctoral education students are often left on their own to learn the rules of dissertation writing according to the styles and nuances of their particular academic discipline, with doctoral supervisors assuming that their students are able to write their dissertation appropriately (Odena & Burgess, 2017).

Doctoral students must develop proficiency in research writing because scholarly knowledge is constructed and communicated through written discourse over time and across different contexts (Badenhorst & Guerin, 2015). The process of composing a dissertation in English when it is not one's native language is often viewed as a challenge requiring remediation, with the writer being seen as the source of this difficulty (Badenhorst & Guerin, 2015). However, an alternative perspective suggests that academic English represents a specialized register that is not naturally acquired by any speaker, regardless of their linguistic background, and consequently all scholars must develop these specialized writing competencies through structured learning experiences (Hyland, 2015; Li & Schmitt, 2009). From this standpoint, academic English functions as a specialized language variety that requires deliberate acquisition by all members of the academic community (Doyle et al., 2018).

Dissertation is an example of academic writing genre with the explicit goal of demonstrating scholarship. In writing the academic texts, doctoral students are required to use various linguistic practices grounded in discourses, identities, and values (B. Paltridge, 2017). English as a foreign language students at the postgraduate level often encounter challenges arising from low motivation and limited language proficiency when engaging with academic genres such as dissertations and research articles (Reynolds & Teng, 2021). Difficulties can be caused to some factors such as inadequate awareness and implementation of writing strategies (Ruan, 2014), limited exposure to English language input (Teng et al., 2022), and a lack of knowledge of a particular genre for successful writing (Qian et al., 2024). Being aware of the significance of dissertation writing for global academic exchange, postgraduate institutions have positioned greater emphasis on doctoral students' academic writing skills.

Dissertation writing poses distinctive challenges for EFL students because of their limited metacognitive knowledge and skills during and after dissertation writing process. The students need understand the topic, engage in critical thinking, and support their arguments (Teng et al., 2022). Writing both dissertation and research articles further demand the documentation of scientific knowledge, explanation of research methodologies, and reporting of research findings and implications (Teng & Yue, 2022). Successful academic writers must be able to control over the tone and presentation of their texts, demonstrating coherence with readers, critically evaluating their relevant references, and acknowledging alternative points of view on their academic written texts (Hyland, 2004). In specific academic writing genres like literature reviews, students had to raise awareness of genre conventions and structures, engaging in thoughtful and critical considerations tailored to their readers' needs (Cheng, 2008; Yeh, 2015).

Metacognition plays a crucial role in doctoral dissertation writing, particularly when writing in a second or foreign language, as the writing process involves encountering new challenges that require doctoral students to employ analytical thinking skills to navigate these complexities (Teng, 2019). The importance of metacognition is increasingly recognized within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. According to Hedgcock (2012), students

learning English as a second language (L2) or foreign language (FL) face distinct challenges compared to native speakers (L1 learners), primarily due to the linguistic obstacles involved in developing literacy skills while simultaneously understanding complex contextual information in an unfamiliar language. Brown et al., (1983) describe metacognition in terms of metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies, with metacognitive strategies being comparable to metacognitive skills, both representing abilities and strategies used by individuals to regulate the cognitive processes. Metacognition aspects are encompassed of controlling, monitoring, and regulating, which is made up of knowledge of cognition and regulation of cognition (Brown, 1987). According to Dunlosky & Metcalfe (2008) metacognition entails metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive monitoring, and metacognitive control. Although the various definitions are delineated above, they refer to the same domains of metacognition namely metacognitive knowledge becomes a vital element and metacognitive strategies plays a significant role metacognitive control, monitoring, and regulation. In this paper, metacognition is described as being made up of two components: metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies.

To expand on this concept, metacognitive knowledge stands as the primary element of metacognition and can be understood through three key components: person-related knowledge, task-related knowledge, and strategy-related knowledge (John H Flavell, 1977). Knowledge about the person encompasses an individual's understanding of their own mental processes and elements that might influence their learning experience, including factors like age, language ability, personal interest, drive to learn, and confidence in one's abilities (Wenden, 1998). Knowledge about tasks involves understanding the goals, characteristics, and requirements of various learning activities. Lastly, knowledge about strategies encompasses awareness of different approaches that can be employed to meet the thinking objectives of learning activities, as well as understanding how well these approaches work.

Metacognitive knowledge provides learners with essential components for employing cognitive and metacognitive strategies in the learning process (Sun et

al., 2021). Based on Flavell's et al., (1985) rationale, metacognitive knowledge consists of person knowledge, task knowledge, and strategy knowledge. Wenden (1998) further elaborated on the three types of metacognitive knowledge. Person knowledge refers to learner's self-awareness of the cognitive processes and various factors that can influence learning process, such as age, motivation, language aptitude, and self-efficacy; Task knowledge encompasses the understanding of the nature, objectives, and requirements of different learning tasks; Strategy knowledge involves the knowledge of specific strategies or skills assisting learners in achieving their learning goals and ensuring the effectiveness of learning tasks. Additionally, Paris et al., (1984) characterized metacognitive knowledge using three variables: declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge. Declarative knowledge (DK) involves learners' skills, intellectual resources, and processing capabilities. Procedural knowledge (PK) includes learners' knowledge of how implementing and completing specific tasks in the learning process. Conditional knowledge (CK) refers to learners' knowledge of when and why employing some strategies based on the contextual demands tasks.

Metacognitive strategies refer to regulation employed by learners in learning process to control their thinking and learning (Sato, 2022). The theoretical model of meta-cognitive strategies proposed by Schraw (1998), includes planning, monitoring, and evaluating, has been widely adopted in metacognition research. Planning (P) involves learner's capability to judge and determine appropriate strategies, gather sufficient and useful resources in preparation for related tasks. Monitoring (M) refers to learner's capacity to observe, track, and check their task performances. Evaluating (E) pertains to learner's competence in assessing regulatory process and learning out-comes. Scholars have expanded upon this model by adding additional strategies to suit their research objectives (Schraw & Dennison, 1994; Schraw, 1998; Shimamura, 2000; Veenman & Elshout, 1999; Yanyan, 2010). For example, Schraw & Dennison (1994) introduced two additional metacognitive strategies based on their research focus: information management strategies (IMS) and debugging strategies (DS). IMS encompass learner's skills in processing, organizing,

interpreting, and summarizing information effectively. DS refer to learner's ability to identify and correct errors that occur during the learning process.

Doctoral students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) face significant challenges when developing written literacy skills in English. These writing difficulties are further compounded by inadequate exposure to English language input (Teng, 2019). The core ideas remain the same: EFL doctoral students struggle with English writing skills, and this problem is made worse by not having enough English language exposure. The reference to Teng (2019) is maintained to support the claim about insufficient English input contributing to the difficulties. In Indonesia, doctoral students are obligatory to write dissertations and writing dissertation in English is paid less attention, as well as not being accommodated in the doctoral school's curriculum. The critical importance of English in academic writing for Indonesian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students cannot be overstated; however, exposure to and usage of English within Indonesian society remains considerably restricted. English continues to serve as the primary language for international conferences and academic gatherings where English-speaking participants are involved. Indonesian students encounter English instruction from the junior high school level through their undergraduate studies. While Bahasa Indonesia dominates both formal education and everyday communication, students must simultaneously develop their English writing abilities. Consequently, their proficiency in English academic writing has emerged as a significant concern, leading learners to adopt various approaches and techniques for mastering English composition. These same challenges persist even at the postgraduate educational level. Doctoral students in English major are required to write dissertation in English.

In Hungary, doctoral students come from many other countries all over the world pursuing their doctoral degrees funded by some available scholarships such as *Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship*, *Erasmus Mundus Ph. D Scholarships*, European research joint sponsors, etc., or self-funded international student. The international students must have English language proficiency certificate with a minimum level determined by the Host Institutions. Regarding the required

minimum the language proficiency is depended on the students' selected study program. English is the medium of instruction used by professors and lecturers while they were in the classrooms or other academic forums for instance international conferences. The doctoral students were also allowed to join Hungarian classes offered for international students in Bachelor and Master Degrees. They could communicate using either Hungarian language or English, when they interacted with Hungarian people in their daily lives. The doctoral students in Hungary are also required to write dissertation in English, even though English academic writing course is not available on the curriculum.

To respond the current issue on doctoral dissertation practices, particularly in the context of EFL in a South East Asia and Central European country, the researcher identifies a need for further investigation into doctoral dissertation practices in the two selected countries. This research investigates the question: "What are the differences in academic writing practices among doctoral students between a doctoral school in Southeast Asia and one in Central Europe, within English as Foreign Language (EFL) settings?" The research examines the formats and structures of doctoral dissertations produced by these students, the challenges they face during the dissertation writing process, and the approaches they use to successfully complete their dissertation writing.

This dissertation begins with problem statement based on the literatures on doctoral dissertation practiced by doctoral students and how these literatures relate specifically in EFL contexts. The research method is followed by a discussion of the methods to answer the research questions. The data analysis process and findings will be presented and discussed. The dissertations are concluded by highlighting the key results and reflecting on the limitations of the study as well as potential directions for future research.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

The current study focuses on the practices of doctoral dissertation practiced in EFL settings in a South East Asia and Centre European country during their doctoral programs. Unfortunately, doctoral students in the two countries have not been provided any academic writing courses or facilitated by

any writing tutors/ centres. Therefore, this study is aimed at investigated doctoral dissertation practices by comparing the two selected countries in EFL contexts.

Having a good mastery of doctoral dissertation writing is fundamental capabilities for doctoral students because such kinds of competences are needed to complete their studies and enhance their further employability. Currently, the students in widespread all over the world are required to write any genres of English academic texts, including in EFL contexts where the current study presented in this dissertation located. It is noted that the doctoral students had diverse difficulties when they are expected to write doctoral dissertation. The problem of the research associated with doctoral dissertation practices either in EFL settings are identified, as follows:

1. Over the last several decades, the perceived of academic texts in EFL contexts have exhibited distinct genres and conventions characteristics, influenced by the linguistic backgrounds and academic needs of doctoral students.

EFL contexts often emphasize the development of academic vocabulary and genre-specific writing skills necessary for professional and academic communication and focus more on general English proficiency and foundational writing skills (Nagao, 2018). These skills include mastering the writing process, understanding academic writing conventions, and developing critical thinking abilities (Hamamah et al., 2022; Zhang, 2018).

2. There are greater needs of doctoral dissertation writing skills EFL students.

Doctoral students are expected to adopt well-established English academic discourse to achieve successful academic writing standards and participate in the EFL community (Othman & Lo, 2023). They, hence, should be able to demonstrate critical argumentation in their academic writing and associated skills, such as evaluation and analysis. EFL doctoral students need to both master language skills and successfully communicate subject-specific knowledge in English when they write research paper requirements (Pratumtong et al., 2021).

3. Doctoral students have difficulties to write doctoral dissertations.

Generally, EFL learners appeared to face many problems in organizing their ideas, form coherent and well- reasoned writing content and providing supportive

evidence. Therefore, the ability to write academic text effectively is important especially required for EFL learners as academic writing acts as an indispensable part of it that often used by learners at a higher educational level. The keystone of higher education relied on the quality research especially during tertiary level as tertiary learners need to present their research paper (Ying & Or-Kan, 2019).

4. The highly demand publishing research outputs in English emphasize doctoral students in EFL settings.

The trend for the non-Anglophone researchers (including the doctoral students) decide to publish their findings in English rather than in their own language can be explained by the increased use of English as a lingua franca in international scientific communication (European Commission, 2003) and, as a result, the researchers' "desire for their research to be recognized and rewarded" (López-Navarro et al., 2015). In spite of its importance in preparing doctoral students as researchers, the "publish or no degree" policy has been reported in several studies as an additional source of "pains" for the doctoral students (e.g., Lei, 2021; Li, 2016; Robins & Kanowski, 2008) who already face multiple challenges (Schmidt & Hansson, 2018) in their highly challenging endeavour.

5. The students in EFL settings have not any preparation in academic writing skills before they enrolled to doctoral schools.

Research examining challenges encountered by international students in universities within English-speaking nations reveals that many students across different academic programs struggle to achieve satisfactory performance primarily due to inadequate preparation in scholarly writing abilities, combined with additional difficulties in understanding academic English language requirements (Al-Mudhi, 2019; Alzaharani, 2016; Chittum & Bryant, 2014).

6. Doctoral students in EFL settings need writing services or assistance in writing doctoral dissertations.

Students believe that writing support services or assistance are essential for enhancing their ability to compose English academic texts. In order to maximize the advantages of the doctoral dissertation writing experience, doctoral students

should begin developing their academic writing skills from their first year in the program, as this early preparation can strengthen and streamline their academic writing abilities. The students joining a doctoral program are unprepared to engage in academic writing (Maher et al., 2014) and require institutional language support services such as credit-bearing writing courses, workshops, and writing groups, which are delivered in group settings, or one-on-one advice through individual consultations with Learning Skills Advisers (Ma, 2019).

Since there are numerous factors influencing the doctoral dissertation writing practiced by students in EFL contexts, the present study investigated the practices between the two selected countries, dissertation formats, challenges faced by the students, and strategies to complete their dissertation. As a result, this current research covers a set of factors that have not previously been thoroughly examined in the EFL contexts. The potential to diverse the practices of doctoral dissertation within the two selected countries and find out the various strategies to solve their problems is a significant contribution of this research. By figuring out which different doctoral dissertation practices experienced by doctoral students in each context, instructors will be able to construct interventions targeting specific outcomes by applying particular strategies in higher education.

When the researcher identified the research gaps in this study, she started by reviewing literature studies. A research gap is, simply, a topic or area where there is missing or inadequate information to make a conclusion for a question. Kumar (2020) proposed one of various technique and approaches to identify research gaps. As a result, the researcher identified several research gaps in this study, as follows:

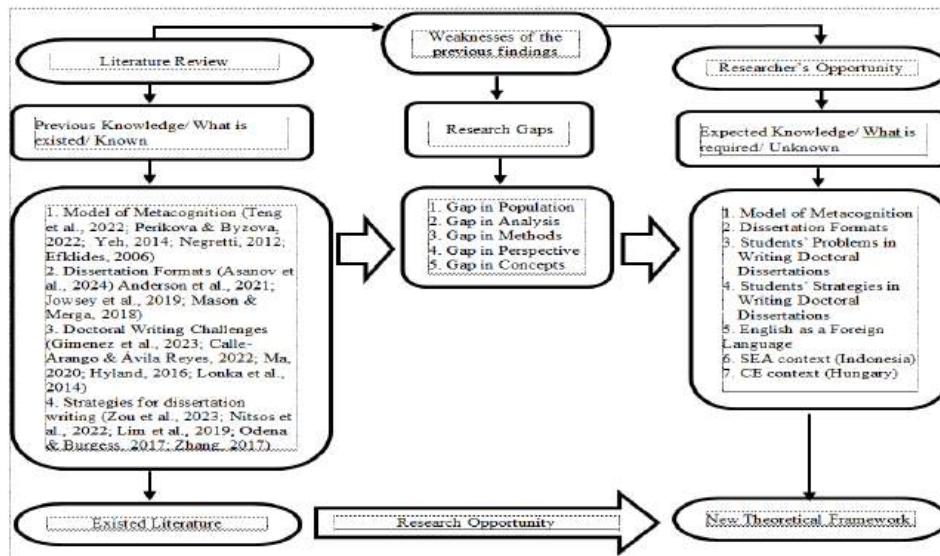


Figure 1.1. Identifying the Research Gaps and Research Opportunity

Furthermore, Publish or Perish and VOSviewer applications were used to explore novelty for the current research and the keyword is “doctoral dissertation”. It is discovered that there are still very few researchers all over the world investigating doctoral students’ academic writing practices in EFL settings, particularly in the context of graduate students in the two selected countries. Following stages using the application both Publish or Perish and VOSviewer are:

1. Open Publish or Perish application
2. Search for bibliometric data with the keyword “doctoral dissertation”
3. The result from Publish or Perish application then be saved into RIS file
4. Open the VOSviewer application
5. Choose Create a map based on text data using the key word
6. Choose Read data from reference manager files
7. Open the RIS file that already been saved
8. Choose title and abstract files, follow the instructions in the application and click finish

The result of VOSviewer is demonstrated by the three different figures below;

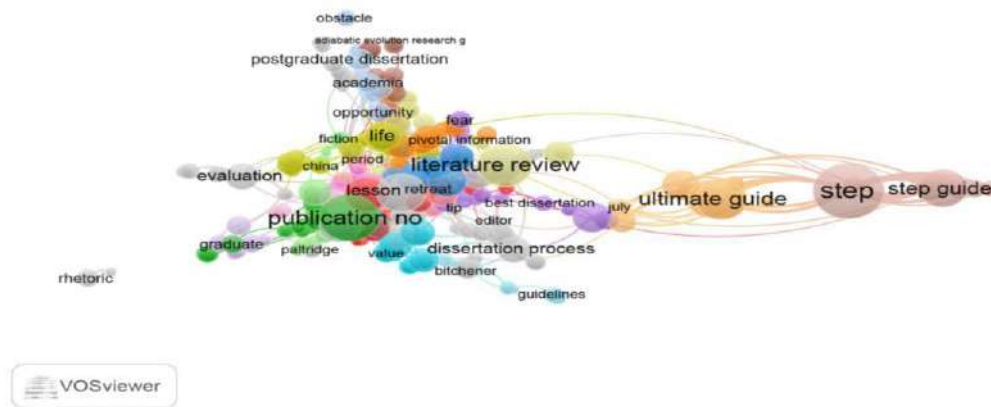


Figure 1. 2. Exploring the Research Opportunity by Using VOSviewer

1.3 Limitation of the Research

This study investigated doctoral students' academic writing practices in the contexts EFL in a South East Asia and Centre European country. The research focused on different practices, dissertation formats, challenges experienced by the students' in writing doctoral dissertation, and strategies employed by the students to complete their dissertation in the two selected contexts.

1.4 Research Questions

The present study investigated doctoral dissertation writing practiced by students in the contexts of EFL in a South East Asia and Central European countries. This research addressed the following research questions:

1. How did students' dissertation writing practices differ between a doctoral school in a South East Asia and Central European country in the contexts English as Foreign Language (EFL)?
 - 1.2. What doctoral dissertation formats did the students make?

Why did they make so? Where are papers included?
2. What were problems encountered by the students in their doctoral dissertation writing across the two selected sites?
3. What strategies did the students have to complete their dissertation writings?

1.5 Objectives of the Research

1. To analyze doctoral dissertations writing practiced by the students in English as Foreign Language (EFL) settings.
 1. 2. To examine doctoral dissertation formats/ structures made by the students.
2. To investigate problems encountered by the students in their doctoral dissertation writing.
3. To explore strategies employed by the students to complete their dissertation.

1.6 Significance of the Research

Dissertation writing is demanded skills for doctoral students in EFL contexts facing the 21st century learning which emphasizes lifelong learning and they are responsible for their own learning. The skill is valuable not only for completing their academic purposes but also achieving their further employments. In addition, within the framework of 21st century learning competences, students must be able to think creatively and critically, solve problems (critical thinkers and problem solvers), communicate (in spoken or written texts), collaborate with others and adapt to technology. Both native speakers and second/foreign language learners encounter difficulties when writing dissertations, as this academic task involves complex problem-solving that demands advanced cognitive abilities (Chen et al., 2022; Hacker et al., 2009; Zhang, 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to investigate academic writing practices experienced by doctoral students in the contexts of EFL in a South East Asia and Centre European country.

This research has academic, practical, and personal significances. Firstly, it contributes to the expanding literature on doctoral dissertation practices in the two selected contexts. The study provides essential information for developing and improving doctoral dissertation writing experiences which are different between the two settings. The information of the current study becomes resources and references for those who are interested in researching the doctoral dissertation practices in the two settings.

Secondly, it provides practical recommendation of the comparative analysis of academic writing experiences among doctoral students in EFL contexts for doctoral education policies and support services. This study, hence,

informs the design and implementation of language support programs tailor to the needs of doctoral students in diverse language contexts.

Thirdly, it contributes to influence curriculum development and assessment guidance in doctoral program to promote linguistic diversity and inclusivity. The contribution can be made for enhancing supervisors/ instructors training and guidance to better support doctoral dissertation writing.

1.7 Operational Definitions

Doctoral dissertation is defined as an innovative research work employed for doctoral degree by through multifaceted literature review composition and data analysis which is assessed by professionals who are comprehensively familiar with the form and content genre of dissertation documents.

EFL: English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to the teaching and learning of English in areas where it is not the main language used for the speakers' daily communication. In Indonesia and Hungary, English is merely used in formal places or forums for instance in academic settings, international meetings/ conferences, etc. Thus the current study is carried out in the two selected countries.

Metacognitive Knowledge contains how doctoral students' cognitive processes in dissertation writing practices should be understood or controlled. Metacognitive knowledge provides the students with essential components for using cognitive and metacognitive strategies in the dissertation writing process.

Declarative Knowledge (DK) refers to doctoral students' general abilities to process some available factors that could influence their dissertation writings.

Procedural knowledge (PK) concerns on doctoral students' knowledge to overcome difficulties or complete dissertation writing manuscripts successfully.

Conditional knowledge (CK) denotes to doctoral students' awareness of time and reasons to implement specific dissertation writing strategies.

Metacognitive strategies refer to guidelines or rules applied by doctoral students in the dissertations writing process to control their thinking and writing activities.

Planning (P) comprises the doctoral students' ability to determine and review appropriate strategies in collecting sufficient and beneficial resources in preparation for dissertation writings.

Monitoring (M) refers to the doctoral students' ability to observe, track, and check their dissertation writing performances.

Evaluating (E) pertains to doctoral students' competences in assessing the regulatory dissertations writing process and products.

Information Management Strategies (IMS) encompasses doctoral students' skills in processing, organizing, interpreting, and summarizing information needed in their dissertations.

Debugging Strategies (DS) concern on doctoral students' capability to identify and correct errors occurred during dissertation writing process.