

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses research direction, research design, research setting and participants, data collection techniques and data analyses.

3.1. Research Direction

This research is to collect information about writing supervision feedback at a Tourism School of Higher Education in Bandung. In particular this study attempts to find the nature of feedback in terms of feedback providers and receivers, strategies, contents and sources to assist students in revising their thesis and to examine the contribution of feedback to the development of students thesis writing. The participants are three last semester students who were writing thesis from three study programs: Tourism Management, Hotel Management and Travel Management together with their six supervisors. These students were expected to be able to provide deep information regarding their experiences, feelings, attitude and problems (Jannetti, 2005) about nature of feedback. The data were collected on the basis of textual evidence of feedback on student's draft of thesis, interview with the students and supervisors, supervision observation, and the three thesis documents assessed by an independent evaluator.

3.2. Research design

To answer the two research questions, a qualitative method was employed to examine the nature of feedback and the contribution of feedback to the quality of students' theses writing. This study explored one particular instance of educational practices in real-life environment to find the complexities of real life situations such as experiences, feelings, attitude and problems (Freebody, 2003, p. 81; Zainal, 2007). The purpose was to help the researcher in deciding whether supervision practices needed "to be modified or altered in any way so that objectives may be achieved more effectively" (Nunan 1992, p. 185).

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This research employed a case study design that used multiple sources of data that include document analysis (textual evidence of feedback on student's draft of thesis), observation, interview with the students and supervisors, and the three thesis documents assessed by an independent evaluator based on the rubrics (thesis assessment criteria in Appendix 11).

The purposes of using multiple data sources are to allow for "in-depth study" (Connole, 1993), to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the study seen from various perspectives (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 674) and to present a more valid and reliable account of what appeared to be happening with regard to the practices of thesis writing supervision (Knafl & Breitmayer, 1991, Cohen & Manion, 1994) and also to provide opportunities for comparison of data among and between participants as well as among different types of data sources (Stake, 1998).

The research design started from reviewing the theories related to the study of feedback contribution to the students' thesis development in writing supervision. The theories were used to develop questionnaires and to design thesis assessment rubrics. The questionnaires were used to collect the data based on the document analysis (students' drafts of the thesis), the supervision observation, the interview with students and supervisors, and thesis assessment. The data were put in tables based themes and codes. The codes were applied to extract text and interpret the data.

3.3. Research setting and participants

The research was undertaken at a Tourism School of Higher Education in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. The school has three majors: Tourism Management, Hotel Management and Travel Management. This research site, at tertiary level, was chosen for several reasons.

First of all, the choice of the tertiary level was appropriate and relevant because it was at this level that students were required to write thesis and to attend research supervision or to conduct research. (Glatthorn & Joyners, 2005, p. 6; Davinson, 1977, p. 11)

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The next reason was related to the research supervision that was reported to have serious problems, including the dissatisfaction (Armstrong, 2004), the interaction and relationships between students and supervisors (Morrison et al., 2007), and the feedback provided by supervisors (Rowe & Wood, 2006, and Nicol, 2008).

The other reason was that the familiarity of the researcher with the setting in the research site helped him get easy access to the research site. It increased feasibility of the study and lead to a more natural conduct of research in the context where the study took place.

Participants of the study were three (3) students obtaining the best achievement in their classes from the three study programs (Tourism Management, Hotel Management and Travel Management) of the Tourism School. They were semester eight (8) students writing their thesis. Beside the three students, the other participants were six (6) supervisors. Each student was supervised by two supervisors. The data of the student's achievement was not only the scores of the subjects taken but also the other academic involvement and achievement. They were also chosen and recommended by their heads of study programs to become the research participants. The reasons for choosing the three best students were to find out how each student's thesis quality improves on the basis of feedback from the supervisors having different experience and disciplines. The participants were selected in such a way from a large group and they were expected to be able to "best add to the understanding of the phenomenon under the study" (Gay et al., 2006, p.115) or to give deep information about the phenomenon based on their experiences, feelings, attitude and problems (Jannetti, 2005)

3.4. Data collection

This research employed multiple sources of data. The purpose of using multiple data sources aimed to enhance the construct validity of the study (Yin, 1993; Cohen and Manion, 1994), to maximize the range of data that might contribute to the

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researcher's understanding of the case (Knafl & Breitmayer, 1991); and to provide opportunities for comparison of data among and between participants as well as among different types of data sources (Freebody, 2003; Stake, 1998).

The data collection involved prolonged engagement and persistent observation to identify the characteristics and elements in the setting that are most relevant to the object being studied. The data were collected from: (1) Supervisors comments on students' drafts of thesis as textual evidence of feedback (Appendix A); (2) Interview with students about the feedback they received (Appendix B); (3) Interview with supervisors about the feedback they provided (Appendix C); and (4) Description of the recorded supervision observation (Appendix D) and (5) Independent evaluators of student' thesis (Appendix E);

The five types of data were collected from feedback providers and receivers, feedback strategies, feedback contents and feedback sources. The first was the data of textual evidence (document analysis). The second was the data of students' comments on the feedback they received. The third was the data of supervisors' comments on the feedback they provided. The fourth was the data of observation. The fifth was the data of thesis assessment by the independent evaluator.

3.5. Data analysis

The data were analysed by assigning codes to categorize information, identifying patterns and connections between categories, and interpreting the data from the multiple sources. This coding process was to assemble or reconstruct the data in a meaningful or comprehensible fashion (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 107). The codes served to summarize, synthesize, and sort many observations made of the data. The researcher used codes to pull together and categorize a series of otherwise discrete events, statements, and observations identified in the data (Charmaz, 1983, p. 112).

The first four main data include the document analysis of feedback on students' drafts of thesis, the data of interview with the three students (Students 1, 2 and 3), the data of interview with the six supervisors (Supervisors 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a and 3b) , and data of supervision observation. These four data were to answer the first research question about the nature of feedback in terms of feedback providers and receivers, strategies, contents and sources in thesis writing supervision. The feedback providers and receivers included selecting supervisors, responsibilities of supervisors, responsibilities of student and the relationship between the supervisors and the student (Ray, 2007; Baldwin, 1999; Green, 2005). The feedback strategies included timing, amounts, modes and audience (Brookhart, 2008). The contents were identified or classified by the focus, comparison, function, valence, clarity, specificity and tone. The feedback sources consisted of supervisors, tutors and peers. The data was also quantified to describe the frequency that shows the trend of the feedback.

The last data, the thesis assessment from the independent evaluator were to answer research question about the contribution of feedback on the development of the students' thesis writing. The theses were assessed after the writing supervision completed and the six supervisors approved the theses for examination. The assessment was done by reading and scoring each aspect of the thesis based on the criteria of well written thesis such as the topic/title, contents and organisation (Introduction, Review of literature, Methodology, Findings and discussions, Conclusion and Recommendation), Cohesion and Coherence, Grammar and Vocabulary, and Convention.

The data are presented in tables such as: Table 4.1. Data of feedback providers and receivers, Table 4.2. Data of feedback strategies, Table 4.3. Data of feedback contents, Table 4.4. Data of feedback sources, Table 4.5. Thesis Document Assessment, Table 4.6. Data of the Contribution of Feedback Providers and Receivers, Table 4.7. Data of the Contribution of Feedback Strategies, Table 4.8. Data of the Contribution of Feedback Contents, and Table 4.9. Data of the Contribution of Feedback Sources.

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The codes for the participants of the study are indicated by student 1, student 2 and student 3 for the three students. The codes for the two supervisors of students 1 are supervisors 1a and 1b; for student 2 are supervisors 2a and 2b; and for student 2 are supervisors 3a and 3b.

The score parameter for Table 4.1. to 4.4. is indicated in column A, the highest score of the textual evidence, interview with supervisors, and observation is six (6) as there are six supervisors providing feedback on the students' drafts of thesis. In column B, the highest score of interview with students is three (3) because there are three students who got the feedback. Score two and half (2,5) in the relationship between the students and supervisors means each of the two (2) students had close relationship with both supervisors and one (1) student had close relationship with only one of her two supervisors. Blank (-) means that the category is not applicable. For example, in the selecting supervisors, there is no evidence in the students' drafts of thesis (textual evidence) and observation.

The score parameter of feedback contribution for Table 4.6. to 4.9. is indicated by high, medium, low and no contribution of feedback. High contribution means that the feedback is effective, medium contribution means the feedback is rather effective (moderate), and low contribution means less effective.

The assessment of the thesis was grouped by the topic/title, content, organisation, style and tone, and conventions. All items of the thesis quality were scored from zero (0) to ten (10) according to evaluators' opinions. The data showed the assessment of the thesis quality in terms of the topic/title, content, organisation, style and tone, and conventions. Each item is scored from one (1) to ten (10) and is valued one (1), three (3) and four (4) based on the level of weight of the aspects. In total, the highest score is ten (10) or similar to four point zero (4.0). The range of the scores referring to the Tourism School is as follows: A (8.2 -10 or 3.25-4.00) passed; B (7.0 - 8.1 or 2.75 – 3.24) passed; C (6.2 - 6.9 or 2.50- 2.74) failed; D (3.9 - 6.1 or 1.50 – 2.49) failed; and E (0.0 - 3.8 or 0 – 1.49) failed. The result of the thesis assessment of the three students by the

independent evaluator indicated the contribution of feedback to the students' thesis writing quality.