

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The preceding chapter presents literature review which covers theories and previous studies related to variables investigated in this study. Then, the present chapter presents how the study was conducted. The items covered in this section are research design, research site and participants, data resources, and procedure of data analysis.

3. 1. Research design

The research approach of this study is qualitative coupled by descriptive statistics. Data needed were collected and analyzed mostly in a qualitative way, but simple descriptive statistics was applied to present the percentages of the students with their perceptions. The qualitative approach was chosen since the present study fits the characteristics of a qualitative study which is designed to deeply understand “the way things are and how the participants in the context perceive them” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 12). In the context of this study, what the students needs and whether the course accommodates the students needs are two crucial points under investigation. The concern of this study was on the participants of this study, namely their perceptions. This concern of study is also in line with the characteristic of the qualitative study stated by Heigham & Croker (2009, p. 7) and Nunan (1992, p. 4) who state that qualitative study concerns on understanding the phenomenon from the participants’ perception insider of the phenomenon under investigation.

To be precise, this study is a qualitative single case study since it fits the characteristics of the single case study design. The main characteristic of a case study is its boundaries (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009; Malik & Hamied, 2014). In this study the boundary is the students’ needs in a particular institution. It focuses on investigating the students’ needs and designing a syllabus based on those needs in one of university institutions in Palopo, a town in South Sulawesi, Indonesia.

Therefore, the syllabus produced might only fit the students' needs in the institution where this study takes place.

Moreover, another characteristic of the case study design is its purpose to explore all peculiarities of the case in detail (Singh, 2006). In this study, detailed information about the students' needs in terms of learning materials and learning activities is necessary to design the syllabus. Then, the detailed information about what sections of the *research paper* difficult to be written by the students are also important to be gathered in order to determine which materials should be emphasized. Based on the information, the syllabus was designed to determine what the students should learn and what they should do in the learning processes.

3. 2. Research site and participants of the study

This study was conducted in a university institution in Palopo, South Sulawesi. This institution was chosen as the results of a pilot study conducted by Tangkelangi & Widayari (2015) revealed that even though an academic writing course was provided for the students at campus, the students still had problems regarding to their academic writing tasks. Those problems pertain to plagiarism, grammatical errors, vocabulary lacking, and less comprehension on data analysis and research question formulation which should have been overcome in academic writing courses offered at campus. Therefore, the present study was conducted in this institution.

The participants of this study were the sixth semester students of English Education Department who were taking an academic writing course. There were 60 student participants in this study who were taken from 6 different classes: 10 students from each class. The 10 students were chosen by considering to what extent they could provide information needed in order to answer the research questions of this study. Thus, in determining the participants, their lecturers' points of view were considered.

In addition to the students, the lecturers of the course also participated in this study. They were asked their perception about their students' needs and also their consideration in designing the syllabus used in their classes. They were taken as the participants of this study since it was believed that they would provide

important information about their students' needs since they knew their own students' competences and weaknesses in academic writing. The rationales of the syllabus design they used were also asked since they were the designers and the users of the syllabus.

Based on the description above, there were two groups of participants in this study, namely the students and the lecturers. They were taken as participants of this study since in a qualitative study, participants were taken based on consideration of who will provide important insights related to the case under investigation (Gay et al., 2009; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Malik & Hamied, 2014). The students and the lecturers were believed to provide such information to answer the research questions examined in this study.

3. 3. Data resources

The data of this study were gathered from questionnaire and interview. The concept of triangulation was applied where the three data resources were cross-referenced to ensure the validity of the data gathered. Questionnaire and interview were chosen since they provided in detail and in depth information to answer the research questions.

The questionnaires used in this study were semi-close-ended. They were distributed to the participants with two different formats. The first format was distributed to the students to discover their needs in the academic writing, their perception on the existing course, and their suggestion for the next design of academic writing course. The second format of the questionnaire was distributed to the lecturers to find out their perceptions on their students' weaknesses and what materials were necessary for the students. All of the formats of the questionnaire were adapted from Cai (2013, pp. 18–22) presented in Appendix I (p. 126), II (p. 130), and III (p. 134).

Then, for the interview as the second research instrument, semi open-ended questions were asked to the participants. The questions were related to the students' needs, the course, and the syllabus. The students were interviewed about their needs and perception of the existing course, while the lecturers were interviewed about their perception on their students' needs on academic writing

and the rationales of designing the syllabus used. The data gathered from the interview were directed to have clearer picture of data gathered from the questionnaire and also used to confirm the validity of the data gathered.

At the beginning of the study, it was planned to utilize document analysis as the third data recourse. However, since the document which was planned to be analyzed did not exist, document analysis was rendered inapplicable. In this case, the plan to analyze the syllabus used by the lecturers in academic writing courses did not take place. Thus, there were only two data resources in this study, namely questionnaire and interview.

3. 4. Procedure of data analysis

In analyzing the data, three big steps were followed based on Alwasilah (2009) and Miles & Huberman in Malik & Hamied (2014): data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Firstly, the data collected were segmented, summarized, and looked for the points of the students' needs from the questionnaire and interview. Secondly, the data were organized, compared, and assembled between one into another source. Finally, conclusion was drawn based on the data gathered. The detail procedure is presented in the following schema:

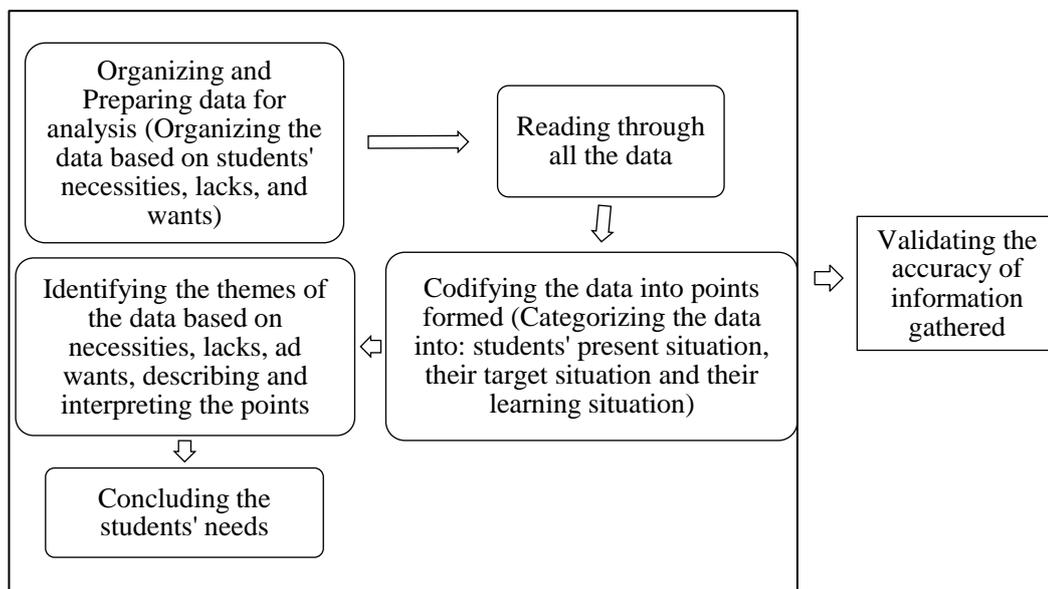


Figure 1. Schema of data analysis procedure

(Adapted from Craswell in Malik and Hamied, 2014)

The detailed steps of data analysis are presented below:

1. Organizing and preparing data for analysis

In this step, the original data were backed up by copying the data and then use the copies for analysis. Then, the data were organized based on units of analysis namely students' needs in terms of necessity, lacks, and wants (Nation & Mecalister, 2010, p. 33).

2. Reading through all the data and coding the units for analysis

In this step, the data were read and broken down into units. They were chosen which units of data were needed to analyze in order to answer the research questions.

3. Categorizing the data

After finding out the units of data to analyze, information gathered were categorized in units of analysis in three categories from Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, pp. 123–124): the students' present situation (related to what the students have known and mastered; what skills needed to be trained more and what materials or concepts needed to be learnt more), the students' target situation (to what extent the students should comprehend the concept and master the skills) and the students' learning situation (related to how the students want to learn).

4. Identifying themes

After categorizing the data about the students' necessities, lacks, and wants, the themes of each category were identified by looking for and interpreting the pattern formed by the data.

5. Generalizing the students' needs

6. Returning to the field to check the validity of the data by asking to the participants to read the themes of data gathered.

7. Concluding the results of the study.