

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter addresses the research design of the study as well as the research site and respondents. The data collection technique and procedures, and data analysis will also be discussed. It aims to respond to these research questions: 1) How do postgraduate students self-assess their writing? 2) What benefits and challenges do the students face in practicing self-assessment in thesis proposal writing?

#### **3.1. Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative research method and a case study as the research design since the focus of this study was to explore a certain phenomenon, in this case, postgraduate students' self-assessment practice in writing a thesis proposal. A case study was designed to comprehensively understand a phenomenon by investigating processes, actions, and occurrences in their natural setting (Creswell, 2014). Yin (2014) explains that a case study enables researchers to focus on a "case" while maintaining a broader and real-world perspective, such as in studies of small group behavior or school performance. In the context of this study, the case study was used as it focused on investigating postgraduate students' practice of self-assessment in writing thesis proposals and the benefits and challenges they encountered while self-assessing their thesis proposals. Merriam (2009) asserts that a particular program or a particular classroom of learners can be the unit of analysis for a case study. Therefore, from the formulated research questions and the aims of this study, a case study was relevant to be applied in this study.

#### **3.2. Site and Participants**

The study took place at an English Language Education program at one state university in Bandung at the postgraduate level. Merriam (2009) suggests the researcher choose a sample from which the greatest information can be obtained. The institution was chosen due to some considerations. First, it is a reputable

educational institution that has received excellent from the BAN-PT accreditation. Second, the postgraduate school institution was established in 1998, which means it has changed the curriculum over time until it applied its most relevant curriculum. Third, there was also another consideration from the participant accessibility. According to Hamied (2017), qualitative research emphasizes the ease of selecting the research site using purposive sampling methodologies.

This study involved four postgraduate students who majored in the English education department from the academic year 2020. They were Gamila, Rossi, Renata, and Sarah (all were pseudonyms). They were chosen purposively based on the researcher criteria: they have finished their thesis proposals and have presented them to the thesis proposal examiners in December - January 2022. They also had several supervision meetings with their academic supervisor and obtained feedback in several drafts as a requirement for successful self-assessment. It is mentioned by Lichtman (2006) that there are no hard rules about how many participants should be included in the study since qualitative research aims to describe and interpret rather than to generalize. As a result, the study site and participants can provide the information required for this study (Kumar, 2011).

### **3.3. Data Collection**

The data in this study was gathered through document analysis and interviews that intended to explore the practice of self-assessment on writing, and the benefits and challenges of implementing self-assessment on their writing. Each of the data collection techniques was described in the following section.

#### **3.3.1. Document Analysis**

The documents used as the data resource were the drafts of master's thesis proposals and other relevant writing tasks. In this study, the documents were used since they provided empirical information about postgraduate students' writing, and it could be the resource that provided some questions that needed to be asked in the interview (Bowen, 2009). In the context of this study, document analysis was used to answer research question number one, which was about the practice of self-assessment. It aimed to see how postgraduate students self-assess the drafts of their

thesis proposals. By exploring the practice of self-assessment on the drafts of their thesis proposals, the benefits and challenges they encountered could also be explored. The document analysis was done before and during the interview.

### **3.3.2. Interview**

The interview was the second data collection technique applied in this study. The purpose of the interview session was to validate the data obtained through document analysis.

Semi-structured interviews were administered in this study. A semi-structured interview allowed for the flexibility of changing the order and type of questions to follow up on the participants' answers. The interview questions were created based on the components and principles of self-assessment theories (Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009; McMillan & Hearn, 2008) to gain some key points. The guiding questions consisted of fifteen items with the adaptation of the item numbers during the interview sessions. There were also some probing questions to gain more in-depth data. To increase its validity, the writing experts also reviewed the interview questions. The list of the interview question questions can be seen in Appendix 1.

The researcher individually contacted the four respondents to ask about their willingness to be interviewed and conduct the interviews after the researcher made the appointment based on the availability of the participants. The interview was done through two to three sessions which lasted for around 45 – 60 minutes in each session. The interview between the researcher and the respondents was recorded in the process of obtaining the data. Following the completion of the interviews with each participant, the audio was transcribed and analyzed. There were also follow-up interviews using WhatsApp chats.

## **3.4. Data Analysis**

This section outlined how the document analysis and interview data were organized following the suggestion from Merriam (2009).

### **3.4.1. Document Analysis**

The document analysis was in the form of master's thesis proposals. Following the guidance from Bowen (2009), the data from documents were analyzed through

some steps: first, students' thesis proposal was separated into their first and revised drafts. The revised drafts were the proposals that had received feedback from the student's supervisor and the students themselves. Second, the data was divided into some themes, such as the practice of students' self-assessments, revisions, and challenges. Last, the conclusion was drawn.

### **3.4.2. Interview**

Three stages were done in assessing the interview data. The first stage was to transcribe the information gathered by interviews. The interview data was condensed based on key patterns identified by self-assessment practice theories. The interview's excerpts can be found in Chapter 4, and the condensed interview can be found in the appendices. After that, the data transcribed were organized and open-coded to identify the findings according to students' practice of self-assessment. The major findings were interpreted based on the theories from some scholars such as Andrade (1999, 2010); Falchikov (1989); Lam (2010); Muñoz and Alvarez (2007); Oskarsson (1989). Finally, a detailed description of the data on key components of this focus, including the benefits and problems students encountered while doing self-assessment in writing, was elaborated.

### **3.5. Concluding Remarks**

This chapter has addressed the research methodology of this study. It has explained the research design of this study as well as the research site and participants. The data collection technique, the research procedures, the data analysis, and the framework used in analyzing the data have also been elaborated. The next chapter will outline the data presentation and discussion.