MISTAKES IN CONSTRUCTING RESEARCH PROBLEM FORMULATION

Agung Budi Kurniawan
Dwi Rahayu
Indah Puspitasari
STKIP PGRI Pacitan
agungbudi430@yahoo.co.id

Abstract
This article is one of our research outputs. We present one of our research finding and discussion. Our research data is 40 English S-1 thesis of English study program of STKIP PGRI Pacitan in the academic year 2014-2015. We analyze them one by one separately. Our research object is chapter 1 and chapter 3 in which we only include research design statement and explanation for chapter 3 data. We present about 13 macro or general mistakes of constructing research problem formulation and 5 causes of the problem. Those 13 mistakes consist of Coherence problem with research topic, Coherence problem with background of the study, Coherence problem with identification of the problem, Coherence problem with research design, Using overgeneralization phrase, Presenting unrelated research questions, Presenting incomplete research questions, Presenting overlap questions, Using wrong writing rules, Using question tag or yes / no question, Using superficial questions, Problem of chronological order, Utilizing missed questions, and Less creative. Those 5 general causes for the mistakes consist of; Misunderstanding the research topic, Constructing wrong concept in the background, Identifying wrong problems in the identification of problem sub-chapter, Never reading previous studies, Having low competence of research methods. We give short explanation for every point. One important thing taken from this research is that the extent of fatal impact of research problem formulation. It determines what a researcher has to do, find out, describe, analyze, conclude, till implement the research totally. We expect that this article could give new information, knowledge, and references especially for researchers.

Keywords: Mistake, Constructing, Research, Problem Formulation

Introduction
Research problem formulation is a crucial part in a research. It is the orientation of the research. It determines what a researcher has to do in the process, find, analyze, and conclude. It gives effect to almost all aspect in a research. It also influences the choice of theories, previous studies, framework, findings, analysis, till conclusions and discussions. It is the heart of a research. It is often stated directly or indirectly by a researcher. Because of its important rule and position, a researcher needs to be careful in constructing research problem formulation. Wrong or mistake in constructing it could give wrong concept of the research. The effect of problem formulation is very fatal for all process, result, and analysis. It is a very serious project in a research process. On the other hand, it is a must for a research to attach it. A research cannot be carried out without the existence of the research problem formulation.

The position of the formulation of the problem is actually the accumulation of previous part in a research. In S-1 thesis, generally, its position is after background and identification of the problem. Based on our research, we also find that research title background of the study and identification of the problem, and research design are the basis for constructing research problem formulation.
The format of research problem formulations are 3 types based on our research findings. First, it is a complete question which uses a question word. Second, it is a statement which uses a positive sentence. Third, it is a question tag or yes / no question.

We analyze 40 S-1 English thesis of English study program of STKIP PGRI Pacitan in the academic year 2014-2015. We have some research problems, purposes, and orientation. We present one of them is to analyze the mistakes and the cause of the mistakes in constructing the research problem formulation in this article. We hope that it could give new knowledge and view point about how to construct research problem formulation especially for researchers.

We can see the important of formulation of the problem which determines almost the whole quality of the scientific writing. Meyers (2005) explains “writing also an action a process of discovering and organizing your ideas, putting them on paper, and reshaping and revising them”. It is about coherence as one key point to keep the quality. One serious mistake that we found is also irrelevant ideas among the components of research problems. It needs deep analysis for researchers.

The development of writing research problem formulation could adopt the steps of genera writing process. Planning is the first step to build the concept of research problem formulation. According to Richard and Willy (2010) stages of process writing are: Planning, Drafting, Editing, Revising

According to Knapp and Watkins (2005: 14), “Learning to write is a difficult and complex series of processes that require a range of explicit teaching methodologies throughout all the stages of learning”. Generally, academic and scientific writing is more difficult rather than free writing such as literary and journalism. Academic and scientific writing requires empiric and logic ideas and facts. It is not allowed to apply imaginary or unfounded argumentation. Related with the material of this article, research problem formulation also has criteria of academic and scientific writing. Scientific writing characteristic according to Goldbor (2006): 1).Purpose, 2).Generality, 3).Writer vs. Subject., 4).Audience: Scientific peers, 5).Form vs. content, 6).Reader interest, 7).Accuracy and clarity, 8).Passive voice, 9).Source of terial,10).Graphics,11).Format.

In order to check whether our academic or scientific writing has been standard enough or not, we can use some criteria. It could make the criteria by ourselves or by taking from expert. Guindon (1989) explains that in order to detect or start of building scientific writing, we need to answer these 4 questions according to parts of a scientific writing: 1).What is the? = Introduction, 2).What did you do? = Methods, 3).What did you find? = Results, 4).What does it mean? = Discussion. We need to remind that the standard is flexible. It depends on researchers’ necessary, research design, problems, purposes, and orientations.

On the other hand, we also find other criteria for evaluating our academic or scientific writing work. Tropical Biology Association Department of Zoology Downing Street, Cambridge (2007) suggest some reasons why need to be always develop our research and scientific writing “be realistic about trying to get your work published. Your article must be suitable for the journal, and you should be prepared to make revisions. In short, the writing can be just as challenging as the research! You must work out why you are writing an article”: 1).You have made a minor, but very interesting, observation, 2).You have made a useful advance, 3).You are putting published information into a new context, 4).You are synthesizing information in a novel way that will be of interest to others”. We must widen our view point,
knowledge, skills, and references to increase our writing quality.

Hypothesis and research problem formulation has similar characteristic. It is about research problem that needs to be solved. Research problem, question, or hypothesis must be high qualified because it determines almost all action inside a research. Journal of young investigator (2005) explains that “Clear Statement of Hypothesis. This is the “If-Then” statement that underlies the author’s whole study. If rampart craters on Mars form because of groundwater then we should see a correlation between groundwater and rampart crater distributions”. Meanwhile, Tropical Biology Association Department of Zoology Downing Street, Cambridge (2007) also suggests that formulation of the problem should be placed inside the introduction “This is the first thing that anybody will read. You need to grab the reader’s attention and convince him or her that it is worth reading the rest of the paper”. We also conclude that research problem must be easy to be understood and interesting for readers. We cannot be selfish to ignore them.

Determining research problems or questions should be prepared before writing a research proposal. It needs special attention and calculation for the implementation. Eric D’Hoker (Spring 2004) from Department of Physics and Astronomy University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90095, USA suggests that “The information has been organized and your audience has been chosen. Now, it is time to define the aims of your paper. The aims of your paper and the choice of your audience are intimately interrelated. Here are a few extra questions that may help you in defining your aims; 1).Justify your subject; why is it interesting, important and timely?, 2).Justify the specific problem; why is it interesting and important?, 3).What was known in the subject prior to your work?, 4).What was known on your specific problem prior to your work?, 5).What are your results; to what extent are they new?, 6).What are your methods and arguments; are they new?, 7).What is the range of applicability of your results?”.

Method of the Research
The research was conducted by using descriptive qualitative. We took 40 S-1 English thesis of English study program of STKIP PGRI Pactian in the academic year 2014-2015. We took them by using purposive sampling technique because we consider about the quality of the data. Our research data consist of chapter 1 and 3 which we only take research design statement and explanation for chapter 3. We analyze them based on ideas and coherence relationship. Our main target is to analyze the quality of research problem formulation in the chapter 1.

Findings and Discussion
We present our two materials of findings and discussion. First, it is general mistakes in constructing research problem formulation. Second, it is causes of mistakes in constructing research problem formulation. Here are our findings and discussion:

A. General Mistakes in Constructing Research Problem Formulation
We analyze our 40 data of S-1 English thesis which focus on research problem formulation. We find 14 general or macro mistakes made by researchers. We call it as general or macro because we conclude them in holistic view point. Here are the general mistakes of constructing research problem formulation:

1. Coherence problem with research topic
Some researchers construct research questions which not relevant with research topic in which it is out of the main material. Research question must reflect the research topic directly.
2. Coherence problem with background of the study
   Some researchers construct research questions which have no correlation with the material inside the background of the study. It seems that they stand alone or separated to one another.

3. Coherence problem with identification of the problem
   the exploration of materials of identification of the problems. Some researchers constructed them which no relevant with identification of the problem. They present different problems between identification with formulation of the problem.

4. Coherence problem with research design
   There 2 general causes. First, researchers do not understand their research topic and orientation. In this case, the research topic and research design is correct, but the research questions are incorrect. Second, researchers understand their research topic, but they do not conquer kinds of research methods. In the second case, the research topic and research questions are correct, but the research design is incorrect.

5. Using overgeneralization phrase
   Some researchers used overgeneralization phrase and criteria in their research question. It makes them become unclear questions. We the use of “testing advantages and disadvantages of a specific method in improving learning condition”. We view that the question of “advantages and disadvantaged” is a overgeneralization concept. It does not reflect research topic and a specific research design.

6. Presenting unrelated research questions
   We also found that some researchers apply unrelated research questions to one another.

7. Presenting incomplete research questions
   There are 2 problems of presenting incomplete research questions. The first problem is presenting one or single research question. The second case is presenting more than one research question, but they are still incomplete. We judge incomplete because all of the research questions are data finding questions, or all of them are analysis questions.

8. Presenting overlap questions
   Some researchers present overlap questions. One example condition is that one data present 3 research questions which the second and third question have been covered by the first question.

9. Using wrong writing rules
   We also find that some researchers have low writing competence. They construct wrong research question because of the problem of grammar, vocabulary, even punctuation.

10. Using question taq or yes / no question
    We find some researchers utilized question taq or yes / no question. It is still debating whether it is allowed or not to utilize question taq.

11. Using superficial questions
    A research should be as deep as possible to find and analyze solution for a or some problems. Scientific questions are deep questions. It is different with ordinal questions which applied in daily interaction or non-scientific occasions.

12. Problem of chronological order
    Research questions in S-1 thesis should be presented in chronological
system. research finding question first. We found mistake that some researcher placed them all in wrong order. One example is that one data presents 3 research questions which are placed research data question in the second place, and research analysis questions in the first and third place.

13. Utilizing missed questions

Some researcher applied missed questions or questions which cannot be answered. The first problem is to ask fixed-theory. The example is the question of “what is humanistic value”. Humanistic values are a theory or concept from literary experts. The question has had the answer. The second problem is to ask research methodology. The example for the second case is the question of “what are the cause of culture shock?”. It has had question from experts that culture shock causes consist of posture and gesture, face and eye (facial expression and eye.

14. Less creative

It is just a little of 40 data which use creative research questions. Most of research questions are general research questions. On other understanding, readers could guess the research question by reading the research title. Researcher needs to be creative to create unique research questions.

B. Causes of Researchers’ Mistakes in Constructing Research Problem Formulation

It is related with the first discussion above, we present our finding and analysis about the cause of researchers’ mistakes in constructing research problem formulation. This is also general material in which based on our holistic view point. The causes are:

1. Misunderstanding the research topic
2. Constructing wrong concept in the background
3. Identifying wrong problems in the identification of problem sub-chapter
4. Never reading previous studies
5. Having low competence of research methods

Conclusions

We conclude some points from this article material. Understanding research topic which is reflected by the research title is really crucial. It is the first step. If the first step is wrong, it is very possible to carry wrong research concept. Researchers’ competence of the research topic gives serious influence to the quality of the research concept. We suggest to researchers to consider their capacity or competence before determining a research topic. The other important aspect which influences the quality of research problem formulation is the mastery of research methods. A researcher must conquer types of research methods.

References


