

**UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND**

**IMPROVING STUDENTS' COMPETENCE IN THE THESIS DEFENCE  
EXAMINATION (TDE) IN TWO UNIVERSITIES IN ACEH, INDONESIA:  
A GENRE APPROACH STUDY**

**(Case study at Nanggroe University and Syiar University)**

A Dissertation submitted by

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## **DEDICATION**

To my beloved parents  
Drs. A. Samad Hasan, MBA  
and Sumiati

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## **ABSTRACT**

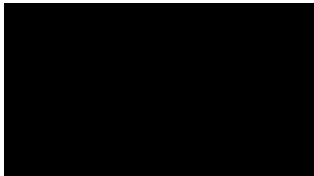
The Thesis Defence Examination (TDE) is a vital step for students in many countries to complete their degree. The TDE is defined as a class of communicative events; and it is assumed that, to succeed in performing a specific genre, students should understand the elements of the genre and perform appropriately. Although in some countries, such as Australia, the TDE is not commonly practised, in other countries such as the USA, the UK and Indonesia, the TDE is necessary before students can graduate. In Indonesia, the issue of the poor performance of undergraduate students in their TDEs has been raised by academic communities: many students appear to be competent in their general English, but most of them perform poorly in their TDEs. This thesis will discuss this discrepancy and propose a possible solution. The field research was carried out over eight months at two well-established universities, Nanggroe and Syiar Universities in Aceh province, Indonesia. Fifty-two participants, consisting of ten examinees, seven examiners, seven lecturers, fifteen alumni and thirteen students, were recruited. The data for this research were collected using mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative methods) over two phases (the Ethnographic and the Experimental phases), and employing five techniques: observations, in-depth interviews, questionnaires, pre-test and post-test. These data were analysed carefully through the lens of the Genre Approach (GA). The results from the ethnographic phase showed that the poor performance was due mainly to a mismatch between the elements of the TDE genre and the information presented to the students and the inadequacies of teaching and learning process in the Thesis Defence Preparation Units (TDPUs). Then, the results from the experimental phase showed that the participants in the Experimental group for whom the GA was implemented for teaching, performed better than the participants in the Control group for whom the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach was implemented. In conclusion, improving the match between the elements of the TDE genre and minimising the inadequacies in the TDPUs improve students' performance.

**Keywords:** Thesis Defence Examination, Poor Performance, Genre Approach, Communicative Language Teaching and Undergraduate students.

## CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged.

I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.



Iskandar Abdul Samad  
Candidate

17 August 2015

Date

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AMS	: Algemeene Middlebare School
CLT	: Communicative Language Teaching
DIKTI	: Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi (Directorate of Higher Education)
EED	: English Education Department
EFL	: English as A Foreign Language
GA	: Genre Approach
GAM	: Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (Free Aceh Movement)
IELTS	: International English Language Testing System
ISUNE	: Indonesian Studies at the University of New England
MULO	: Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs
NAD	: Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam
TDE	: Thesis Defence Examination
TDPU	: Thesis Defence Preparation Unit
TNI	: Tentara Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian Military)
TOEFL	: Test of English as a Foreign Language

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