



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH PROCESS FACTORS AND
RESEARCH PROJECT PERFORMANCE AMONG MALAYSIAN
UNDERGRADUATES IN CHINESE STUDIES***

YEE SOW KEE

FBMK 2015 35



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By

YEE SOW KEE

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the degree of Master of Arts**

July 2015

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

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July 2015

Chairman : Wong Ling Yann, PhD
Faculty : Modern Languages and Communication

This study investigated the factors influencing the research process and performance of the final year research projects based on the perceptions of the graduates of Chinese studies in four selected universities in Malaysia. The aims of this study are: 1. to identify the research process factors used in the final research project, 2. to analyze the relationships between research process factors and the performance of the final year research projects obtained by the undergraduates of Chinese study from Universiti Putra Malaysia, and 3. to identify the factors influencing the research process factors towards the performance of the final year research projects obtained by undergraduates of Chinese study from Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Quantitative research methodology was adopted in this study to collect research data. The conceptualization of literacy was used to set the measurement of scales for the questionnaires. This study had two sets of questionnaires which became the instrument of this study to collect feedback from the graduates on the information related to the research projects. The instrument was found to be reliable to be used for factor analysis. The outcomes from the factors analysis indicate that there are six main factors influencing the research process and performance of their final year research projects.

Ranking of the factors was done by using the independent T-test: First, collection of research materials; second, format of the research writing; third, satisfaction with the research project; fourth, difficulties and problems in collecting research materials; fifth, research methodology and sixth, project supervisors. The fourth factor had a significant relationship with the scores of the final year research projects especially for the respondents who did not obtain “very good” results for their research projects. Pearson’s correlation analysis showed that only three factors had correlations with the

scores of the final year research projects produced by the respondents, which were the third, fourth and sixth factors.

This study can provide useful information to help the undergraduates in Chinese study to gain better understanding on the process of conducting the final year research projects. The research outcomes of this study also can provide information to them in relation to the factors affecting the research process and performance of the final year research projects. Furthermore, the findings of this study can persuade present and future undergraduates to have positive attitude to interact and collaborate with their project supervisors in order to produce high quality research projects.

Keywords: undergraduates of bachelor degree in Chinese studies, graduates of Chinese studies, final year research project, factors, research process, performance.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senate Universiti Putra Malaysia Sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sastera

HUBUNGAN ANTARA FAKTOR-FAKTOR PROSES PENYELIDIKAN DAN PRESTASI PROJEK ILMIAH TAHUN AKHIR ANTARA MAHASISWA DAN MAHASISWI PENGAJIAN CINA MALAYSIA

Oleh

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Kajian ini menyiasat faktor yang mempengaruhi proses penyelidikan dan prestasi projek ilmiah tahun akhir daripada persepsi graduan Pengajian Cina di empat universiti yang terpilih di Malaysia. Tujuan kajian ini adalah: 1) untuk mengenal pasti faktor-faktor proses penyelidikan yang digunakan dalam projek ilmiah tahun akhir, 2) untuk menganalisis hubungan antara faktor-faktor proses penyelidikan dan prestasi projek ilmiah tahun akhir yang dihasilkan oleh mahasiswa dan mahasiswi Pengajian Cina dari Universiti Putra Malaysia, dan 3) untuk mengenal pasti faktor-faktor yang akan mempengaruhi faktor-faktor proses penyelidikan terhadap prestasi projek ilmiah tahun akhir yang dihasilkan oleh mahasiswa dan mahasiswi Pengajian Cina dari Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Kajian metodologi kuantitatif digunakan dalam kajian ini untuk mengumpul kajian data. Konseptualisasi literasi digunakan untuk menentukan ukuran skala soal selidik. Kajian ini mempunyai dua set soal selidik yang digunakan sebagai instrumen untuk mengumpul maklum balas daripada graduan yang berkaitan dengan projek ilmiah. Instrumen didapati bahawa boleh dipercayai digunakan untuk menjalankan analisis faktor. Keputusan analisis faktor menunjukkan bahawa terdapat enam faktor utama yang mempengaruhi proses penyelidikan dan prestasi projek ilmiah tahun akhir mereka.

Kedudukan faktor telah dilakukan dengan menggunakan ujian-T sampel bebas iaitu: pertama, koleksi bahan kajian, kedua, kajian penulisan format, ketiga, kepuasan terhadap projek ilmiah, keempat, kesukaran dan masalah dalam pengumpulan bahan kajian, kelima, kajian metodologi, dan keenam, penyelia projek. Faktor keempat mempunyai hubungan signifikan dengan skor projek ilmiah tahun akhir terutamanya kepada responden yang tidak memperoleh keputusan "sangat baik" dalam projek ilmiah mereka. Analisis Korelasi Pearson menunjukkan bahawa hanya terdapat tiga faktor

mempunyai korelasi dengan skor projek ilmiah tahun akhir yang dihasilkan oleh responden iaitu: faktor ketiga, faktor keempat, dan faktor keenam.

Kajian ini boleh menyediakan maklumat berguna membantu mahasiswa Pengajian Cina untuk mendapat pemahaman lebih jelas dalam proses mengendalikan projek ilmiah tahun akhir. Hasil kajian ini juga boleh membantu mereka mengenal pasti faktor yang mempengaruhi proses penyelidikan dan prestasi projek ilmiah tahun akhir. Selain itu, hasil kajian ini boleh dijadikan sebagai pujukan kepada mahasiswa semasa atau bakal mahasiswa supaya mempunyai sikap positif berinteraksi dan bekerjasama dengan penyelia projek mereka untuk menghasilkan projek ilmiah yang berkualiti tinggi.

Kata kunci: Pra siswazah ijazah sarjana muda dalam Pengajian Cina, graduan Pengajian Cina, Projek ilmiah tahun akhir, faktor, proses penyelidikan, prestasi.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest gratitude goes first and foremost to my dissertation chairman, Dr. Wong Ling Yann, for her patient guidance, enthusiastic encouragement and constructive suggestions for this study. She has walked me through all the stages of this study. Her willingness to give her time so generously is very much appreciated. Many thanks too to the committee member, Dr. Khoo Kiak Uei, for his useful and constructive recommendations throughout the study.

I would like to thank Associate Prof. Dr. Bahaman Abu Samad, for his professional guidance and valuable recommendations for this study. My thanks are also extended to the staff of Institute for Social Science Studies for their assistance.

Special thanks are given to Associate Prof. Dr. Soo Khin Wah and Madam Chong Siew Ling, for their professional advice and constructive suggestions for this study.

I wish to thank my beloved parents, Yee Chen Chong and Yep Kwai Heng, for their endless love and selfless support. They always encourage and support me without a word of complaint. Without them, I would not have come so far in my education. I would also like to thank my sister, Yee Sow Ting, for her assistance with data collection for this study.

I would like to thank all the graduates of Chinese studies who helped me with my research and gave their enthusiastic participation.

Lastly, I would like to thank my friends for their encouragement and support throughout this study. Thanks to you all!

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 27 July 2015 to conduct the final examination of Yee Sow Kee on her thesis entitled “Relationship between Research Process Factors and Research Project Performance among Malaysian undergraduates in Chinese Studies” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the degree of Master of Arts (Literacy Studies).

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

This study is related to the graduates who conducted their final year research projects for their bachelor degree in Chinese studies in four selected universities in Malaysia. Their research projects were compulsory courses for their bachelor degree programs in Chinese studies. When they were undergraduates, they had to pass the research projects before they could graduate. For the final year research projects in a public university, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), the learning outcomes are as follow:

Students are able to: 1.) summarize the research topics that are suitable, 2.) apply various research methods to produce research projects in the field of Chinese language, 3.) complete the research projects according to the right process and formats, and 4.) accept new ideas and are capable of autonomous learning¹ (2010/ 2011, p.1)

These learning outcomes are to prepare the undergraduates of the bachelor degree program in Chinese studies in UPM to have the breadth and depth of knowledge of the Chinese language and obtain the appropriate research methods and writing skills, to meet the research requirements to conduct the final year research projects. These learning outcomes also include the learning domains and soft skills² as shown in Table 1.1:

¹ *Synopsis of final year research project (BBC 3990 A and BBC 3990 B)*, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia. 2010/2011, p.1.

² *Self- Review Portfolio for Academic Performance Audit*, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 2009, p.35.

Table 1 .1. Learning Domains and Soft Skills

Learning domain	Soft skill
Cognitive domain: Knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation	Communication skills
Psychomotor domain: Perception, set, guided response, mechanism, overt complex response, adaptation, and origination.	Critical thinking and problems solving*
Affective domain: Receiving, responding, valuing, organising, and internalising	Lifelong learning and problems solving* Team work skills Entrepreneurship skills Morals and professional ethics Leadership skills

This final year course on research projects consists of 2 humanities skills³ which are: 1. critical thinking and problems solving (CTPS1,2 & 3), 2. lifelong learning and information management (LL1 & 2). The main objectives are to train the undergraduates to think critically and have the skills to solve the research problems. Another objective is to involve them in lifelong learning and obtain the skills to manage research information and materials. All these skills can be learned through research methodology in their projects. It is a prerequisite for them to pass the course on research methodology in Chinese before they can do their final year research projects.

The lectures for the research methodology course in Chinese cover the following research concepts related to the Chinese language: Chinese linguistics and Chinese literature, research methodology, linguistics and literature studies, structures and process of the research project, sources and types of research materials and data, research methods and techniques to conduct quantitative and qualitative research studies, bibliography research methods, data collection and analysis, research theories and implementation. Therefore, the undergraduates are trained on how to do their final year research projects during the course on research methodology in Chinese.

In UPM, the undergraduates who major in the bachelor degree program in Chinese studies have to take the course on research methodology in Chinese (course BBC3217) in the fourth semester. After they have passed this course, they are allowed to do their

³ *Matrix of humanities skills for final year research project , Document of Bachelor Chinese program's Course, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia 2010/2011, p1-2*

final year research projects (course BBC 3990 A and course BBC 3990 B) in the fifth semester and sixth semester respectively. The credit hours for the course on research methodology in Chinese and the final year research project are 3 credit hours and 4 credit hours respectively.

Each undergraduate is guided by a research supervisor to do the final year research project. The supervisory meetings should be held at least 6 times per semester. In the fifth semester, the undergraduates need to complete their research proposals. Then, they must complete and submit their research projects in the sixth semester. The written language for their research proposal and research projects is Chinese.

The evaluation for the final year research project⁴ in UPM can be divided into 6 categories: 1. research proposal and research process (30%), 2. introduction (10%), 3. literature review (10%), 4. research methodology (10%), 5. research findings and discussions (30%), and 6. performance (10%). The marks and alphabetical grades for the final year research project is shown in Table 1.2. This information provides an understanding regarding the structure, process, and evaluation of the final year research project offered by the bachelor degree program in Chinese studies in UPM.

Table 1.2. Marks and Alphabetical Grades for Final Year Research Project in Universiti Putra Malaysia

Mark	Grade	Meaning	Grade point average (gpa)
80-100	A	Excellent	4.000
75-79	A-	Very good	3.750
70-74	B+	Very good	3.500
65-69	B	Good	3.000
60-64	B-	Good	2.750
55-59	C+	Satisfy	2.500
50-54	C	Satisfy	2.000
47-49	C-	Weak	1.750
44-46	D+	Weak	1.500
40-43	D	Very weak	1.000
≤ 39	F	Fail	0

Besides UPM, the others local universities in Malaysia which offer the bachelor degree program in Chinese studies are University of Malaya (UM), Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) and Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI). The bachelor degree program in Chinese studies in these universities also have their own courses on research projects. Their undergraduates who major in Chinese literature or Chinese language have to complete their research projects as one of the requirements for their

⁴ *Undergraduate study programme handbook for Academic, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication.*Universiti Putra Malaysia (2011/2012/2013), p.14

graduation. The training to produce the research project is a compulsory subject for the local universities to educate their undergraduates to have critical thinking and skills to solve research problems. In addition, the training from doing the research projects provides the opportunities for the undergraduate to continue their lifelong learning in post graduate studies. The following is the explanation on the research projects offered by the other local universities.

In UM, both the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics offer Chinese degree programs. The former's bachelor program is named as Bachelor of Arts (Chinese Studies) while the latter is known as bachelor degree in Chinese language and linguistics. The undergraduates who major in Chinese studies have to take the course on research methodology in Chinese studies (course AAEA 2103) in the fourth semester. After they have passed this course, they are allowed to do their research projects (course AAEA 3180) in the fifth semester and sixth semester.

The credit hours for the research methodology for Chinese studies and the research project are 3 credit hours and 6 credit hours respectively. The undergraduates who major in Chinese language and linguistics have to do the final year research projects (course TDEC3110) in the sixth semester. The credit hours for this research project are two credit hours. This information reveals that the research project is one of the compulsory subjects that needs to be taken by the undergraduates of Chinese studies in the local research universities, especially UM and UPM. The same as UPM, each student who majors in Chinese literature or language in UM is guided by his or her research supervisor to do the research project. However, the undergraduates must complete and submit their research projects in the sixth semester. The written language for the research project is Chinese.

Table 1.3 shows the marks and alphabetical grades of the final year research project⁵ for the bachelor degree in Chinese studies and the bachelor degree in Chinese language and linguistics.

⁵ University of Malaya, *Marking scheme*,
http://fbe.um.edu.my/?modul=programmes&pilihan=Marking_Scheme(accessed April 10, 2014).

Table 1.3. Marks and Alphabetical Grades used in University of Malaya

Marks	Grade	Meaning	Grade point
80-100	A	Distinction	4.0
75-79	A-	Distinction	3.7
70-74	B+	Good	3.3
65-69	B	Good	3.0
60-64	B-	Good	2.7
55-59	C+	Pass	2.3
50-54	C	Pass	2.0
45-49	C-	Conditional Pass	1.7
40-44	D+	Conditional Pass	1.3
35-39	D	Conditional Pass	1.0
00-34	F	Fail	0.0
0-00	I	Incomplete	0.0

The marks and alphabetical grades shown in Table 1.3 are slightly different from the marking scheme of UPM. However, the differences did not affect this study. Furthermore, the information was useful to this study to compose the structures, process, and marking schemes of the research projects of UM.

The Chinese program offered by another public university, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), is a bachelor degree in Chinese language with education. The undergraduates who major in this program have to take the course of Instruction, Technology, and Assessment 2 (course KPD 3026) in the sixth semester. The credit hours for this project are 6 credits. After they have passed this course, they can do the final year projects in Chinese (course BCR 3996) in the eighth semester. The credit hours for this project are 6 credits. The undergraduates are guided by their supervisors to do the research projects. However, they need to complete their research projects in the eighth semester after they have completed their teaching practical in schools. The written language is Chinese. The marking scheme⁶ for the final year projects is shown in Table 1.4:

Table 1.4. Marks and Alphabetical Grades for Final Year Research Project in Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris

Mark	Grade	Rank	Value
80 – 100	A	Excellent	4.00
75 – 79	A-	Excellent	3.70
70 – 74	B+	Credit	3.40
65 – 69	B	Credit	3.00
60 – 64	B-	Credit	2.70

⁶ Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, *Academic Regulations (Peraturan Akademik)*, http://akademik.upsi.edu.my/webportal/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=130&Itemid=241 (accessed April 10, 2014).

Mark	Grade	Rank	Value
55 – 59	C+	Pass	2.40
45 – 49	C-	Weak pass	1.70
40 – 44	D+	Weak pass	1.40
35 – 39	D	Weak pass	1.00
0 – 34	F	Fail	0.00

The Chinese program offered by a private university, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), is Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) in Chinese studies. The undergraduates who major in Chinese studies have to take the project (course ULSZ3078) in the last 2 semesters in the year 4. The credit hours for the project are 8 credits. The marks and alphabetical grades of the final year research project⁷ are shown in Table 1.5:

Table 1.5. Marks and Alphabetical Grades of the Final Year Research Project in Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman

Grade	Marks	Description	Grade Point
A	80-100	Excellent	4.0000
A-	75-79	Excellent	3.7000
B+	70-74	Very Good	3.3000
B	65-69	Good	3.0000
B-	60-64	Good	2.7000
C	50-54	Pass	2.0000
D	40-49	Passing	1.0000
F	0-39	Fail	0.0000

The marks and alphabetical grades of the final year research project in Table 1.5 are different from the two marking schemes mentioned earlier. These marking schemes provided in this study can show the structures of evaluation for the research projects offered by these local universities. Such information can identify the structures, process, and marking schemes of the research projects from the local universities. In addition, the information is useful for this study to design the questionnaires for the survey.

Furthermore, the information reveals that the research project is one of the compulsory subjects in the bachelor degree program in Chinese studies offered by both the public and private universities to train the undergraduates to have critical thinking and skills to conduct research projects. This is a meaningful study as this research investigated responses from the local university graduates on their experience in conducting their research projects and their problems in order to give useful feedback to the local universities. Then these universities can improve the quality of the research projects for the bachelor degree programs in Chinese studies.

⁷ Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, *Grading system*, <http://www.utar.edu.my/deas/index.jsp?fcaticid=387&fcontentid=1757&f2ndcontentid=2957> (accessed April 10, 2014).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The issues related to the research project for the bachelor degree programs in Chinese language and literature in foreign universities are research methodology, research theory, research frameworks, format of research writing, research problems, research topic and title which have been discussed in previous studies. These studies have pointed out the research problems faced by the undergraduates. The research problems include the undergraduates' lack of professional knowledge (Li, 2009), innovative and creative thinking (Liu, 2008b, Sun, 2005, Ren & Li, 2014), selection of relevant research topic and title (Liu, 2008b, Wang, 2013), design of research framework (Wang, 2013), quality of research studies (Wang, Tao, Jiang & Xu, 2012, Liu & Zhang, 2014, Li & Ou, 2012, Chen, Yang, Shi & Wang, 2014, Jin, Chen, Zhong & He, 2014), research methodologies and theories to conduct research (Li and Chen, 2003); attitude and discipline problems (Li, 2009); lack of time (Li, 2009); and communication problems with research supervisors (Li, 2009). Constructive suggestions and comprehensive solutions have been proposed by these studies.

Based on the research outcomes from the previous studies mentioned earlier, this study summarizes the findings of these previous studies into three aspects. First, these studies investigated the factors influencing the quality and performance of the final year research projects produced by the undergraduates from different bachelor programs in China from the aspect of theoretical studies. These studies have been conducted by Li and Chen (2003), Sun (2005), Liu (2008b), Li (2009), Wang, Tao, Jiang, Xu (2012), Wang (2013), Ren & Li (2014), Liu and Zhang (2014), Chen, Yang, Shi and Wang (2014). These scholars have discussed the research problems, professional knowledge, attitude and discipline problems, research design and framework, research topic and title, and research capabilities of the undergraduates from China based on their observations.

Second, among the previous studies which have discussed the quality and performance of the final year research projects, only one study has investigated the factors influencing the quality of the final year research projects by using quantitative research method. This study was conducted by Li and Ou (2012). Their research discovered the influence of factors on the performance of the final year research projects produced by the undergraduates from the bachelor program of education in Southwest University, China by using factor analysis. The outcomes of their analysis still can be further discussed because Li and Ou (2012) have not shown the different levels and relationships of these factors and the performance of the final year research projects produced by the undergraduates. This study considers this research gap as one of the statements of problems for discussion.

Third, among the previous studies discussing the quality and performance of the final year research projects, only one study has investigated the factors influencing the quality of the final year research projects by using survey method and text analysis. This study was conducted by Jin and others (2014). The findings of their study have revealed that certain factors could influence the undergraduates from China who did not perform well in producing high quality final year research projects. However, the

study of Jin and others does not show the relationships of the factors influencing the results of the final year research projects produced by the undergraduates from China through their survey and text analysis. Their discussion is based only on the statistical data from the surveys and research projects produced by the respondents. Their research methodology indicates that the number of 99 respondents is not large enough for them to do factor analysis to find out the different levels and relationships of the factors and the performance of the final year research projects produced by these undergraduates. Therefore, this study considers this aspect as one of the statements of problems to be further discussed.

However, these studies seldom discuss the research problems and feedback from the views of university graduates who have completed their research projects. Therefore, this study investigated the direct feedback to provide useful information to identify the research problems.

These previous studies discuss the research problems faced by the undergraduates who study in foreign universities. However, the research problems faced by our local undergraduates who major in Chinese studies have not been discussed in local or foreign scholars, to the best of this writer's knowledge.

To the best of this writer's knowledge, none of the local and overseas publications have published any research paper or article regarding the research issues of the undergraduates in Malaysia. The local undergraduates lack the related information on the research process and research problems. Therefore, this study investigated these problems by conducting this research study.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

Based on the purposes of this study, the following specific objectives are identified:

1. To identify the research process factors used in the final research project
2. To analyze the relationships between research process factors and the performance of the final year research projects obtained by the undergraduates of Chinese study from Universiti Putra Malaysia.
3. To identify the factors influencing the research process factors towards the performance of the final year research projects obtained by undergraduates of Chinese study from Universiti Putra Malaysia.

1.3 Research Questions

In light of the objectives of this study, three research questions are formulated to guide this study as follow:

1. What are the research process factors used in the final year research project produced by Malaysian undergraduates of Chinese studies?
2. Do these research process factors have relationships with the performance of the final year research projects produced by the undergraduates of Chinese study from Universiti Putra Malaysia?
3. How do the factors influencing the research process factors towards the performance of the final year research projects produced by the undergraduates of Chinese study from Universiti Putra Malaysia?

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is related to the feedback and experience of the graduates who conducted their final year research projects before they graduated with the bachelor degree in Chinese studies from local universities. Their responses are useful for this study to investigate how they conducted their research projects. This study conducted two surveys to get the responses from the graduates and collect related information from two questionnaires to identify the factors affecting the research process and performance of the final year research projects done by the target respondents. This study also investigated whether factors such as research methodology, data collection and analysis, previous studies, supervisory meetings, and format of research writing affected the research process and performance of the final year research projects done by the respondents.

The scope of this study is divided into 2 parts. The first part involved the respondents who were the graduates of the bachelor degree programs in Chinese studies in four local universities: Universiti Putra Malaysia, University of Malaya, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman. The first survey collected the information related to the feedback and experience of the respondents doing their research projects.

The second part involved the graduates of Chinese studies from UPM only. The second survey collected the perceptions of the respondents regarding their final year research projects. From their feedback, this study could identify the factors affecting the research process and performance of their final year research projects.

The scope of this study involves documentation research especially in UPM. The relevant documentation include the documents of the bachelor degree program in Chinese studies for course BBC 3990 A and course BBC 3990 B. The undergraduate's handbook program for the academic session with the guidelines for the final year research projects were also collected for documentation research.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is as follow:

In the statement of the problem, this study has revealed that there is a lack of relevant local and foreign studies regarding the final year research projects conducted by undergraduates. A significance of this study is to provide useful information to the undergraduates to gain better understanding of the process when conducting their final year research projects.

The second significance of this study is to provide the information related to the research problems and factors affecting the process and performance of the final year research projects. This information can be helpful to local undergraduates to avoid some research problems while doing their research projects. The feedback and experience from the local graduates who had completed their final year research projects can provide constructive suggestions to other undergraduates produce better research projects.

The third significance is that the research findings of this study can reveal the actual situations of the graduates who participated in this study. Insights can be gained from their experience in conducting their final year research projects. The findings on the research problems faced by these respondents can assist both local and foreign undergraduates to find better solutions to solve their research problems. This study aims to take actions to investigate the research problems faced by the undergraduates in local universities. This study can provide constructive suggestions to assist the local undergraduates to solve their research problems.

1.6 Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined by their contexts in this study:

1. **Graduates of Chinese studies:** The graduates in this study refer to the graduates who have completed their bachelor degree in Chinese studies in local universities, namely, Universiti Putra Malaysia, University of Malaya, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, and University Tunku Abdul Rahman. The target respondents in this study are the graduates from these four universities.
2. **Correlation, Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient (r):** These terms are related to "A procedure for calculating the relationship between two interval / ratio variables" (Bryman and Cramer, 2009, p.356). The terms on Pearson's correlation appear in chapter 4 of this study to show the relationships between the independent variable and dependent variable in this study.
3. **Dependent variable:** This term means "A variable that is affected by an independent variable" (Bryman and Cramer, 2009, p.367). The term of dependent variable appears in chapter 4 of this study. The dependent variable is identified as the results of the final year research projects evaluated by the research supervisors of the target respondents and investigated on how the factors could affect these results.
4. **Documentation:** This term refers to "Documents (i.e., video and audio recordings, written notes) are collected, revisited, and then shared only at the end of a learning experience, and not during, one loses the tremendous opportunity to actually gain new meanings that could deepen the experience being documented (Turner and Wilson, 2009,p.6)." The term of documentation

in this study means the assessment forms for the final year research projects [Borang pemarkahan laporan proyek ilmiah tahun akhir, Code document: PU/PS/BR38/AJR] and the implementation forms for the final year research projects [Borang pelaksanaan proyek ilmiah tahun akhir, code document: PU/PS/BR07/AJR]. The first document provides the information related to the research process of the final year research projects conducted by the target respondents. The second document provides the information of the results of the final year research projects produced by the target respondents.

5. **Factor:** This term means “ A circumstance, fact, or influence contributing to a results” (Tulloch, 1995, p.530). The term of “factor” in this study means that considerations were given by the respondents in conducting their research projects and could influence the research process and performance of the final year research projects. Factor analysis was adopted to verify whether the considerations given by the target respondents could be recognized as the factors influencing to the scores of the final year research projects produced by the respondents.
6. **Frequency:** This term means “The number of times that something occurs.” (Bryman and Cramer, 2009, p.86). The term of “frequency” can assist in the frequency tables in chapter 4 of this study to show the number of times that something occurs. The frequency refers to the responses of the target respondents in this study to choose their answers in the questionnaires.
7. **Final year research project:** This term is found in the handbook, Guidelines of Final Year Research Projects, of the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, UPM (2009, p.2). The final year research project is refers to a research project that can provide understanding and skills to help undergraduates to plan and implement a research study. This research project gives them an opportunity to plan and conduct the research projects related to their studies under the guidance of research supervisors. The objectives of the final year research project are to provide knowledge, training, and skills to the undergraduates. Therefore, they can : 1. conduct research studies in specific fields related to their program studies, 2. analyze and interpret research data, and 3. produce scientific research reports.
8. **Independent variable:** This term means “A variable that affects a dependent variable” (Bryman and Cramer, 2009, p.367). The term of “independent variable” appears in chapter 4 of study. This study could verify if the independent variable could affect the results of the final year research projects produced by the target respondents.
9. **Literacy :** This term means “The ability to read and write; it contrasts with illiteracy, the two poles now being seen to demarcate a continuum of ability. Discussion of the problem, either within a country or on a world scale, is complicated by the difficulty of measuring the extent of literacy in individuals. The notion of functional literacy was introduced in the 1940s, in an attempt to identify minimal levels of reading/writing efficiency in a society, such as being able to write one’s name; but defining even minimal levels is difficult, especially today, with increasing demands being made on people to be literate in a wider range of contexts. National literacy campaigns in several countries have raised public awareness, and standards are slowly rising. Biliteracy is the ability to read and write in more than one language. The term of “literacy” is also now often used in a broader sense, referring to the ability to understand a technical or cultural domain, as in computer literacy and graphic literacy (Crystal, 2009, p.286).” The term of “literacy” in this study means the ability to

produce the final year research projects related to Chinese studies, by analyzing research data and producing research projects.

10. **Mode:** This term refers to “The value or values that occur(s) most frequently in a distribution of value” (Bryman and Cramer, 2009, p.361). The term of “mode” appears in chapter 4 of this study to show the value that occurs most frequently in a distribution of value. For example, the mode of difficulty of data collection, the mode of times for research materials processing, and the mode of research methods.
11. **Perception:** This term refers to “The ability of the mind to refer sensory information to an external object as its causes” (Tulloch, 1995, p.1128). The term of “perception” in this study means the awareness of the target respondents on their considerations to produce their final year research projects, and their consciousness of the research problems which can hinder the research process and performance of their research projects.
12. **Performance:** This term means “The act or process of performing or carrying out” (Tulloch, 1995, p.1130). The term of “performance” in this study refers to the process of conducting the final year research project until the whole process of research writing is complete.
13. **Quantitative research:** This term refers to “An approach to research that emphasizes the importance of quantification in the collection of data and in the analysis of data. It is strongly influenced by a natural science model of the research process” (Bryman and Cramer, 2009, p.362). The term of “quantitative research” appears in chapter 3 of this study as the research method used in this study. In addition, research materials and data collected in this study were processed and analyzed by using the software of SPSS.
14. **Questionnaire:** This term means that “A questionnaire is considered to be the written document used to obtain information from respondents. It consists of a predetermined set of questions used to collect data (clinical data, social status, etc.). There are two main types of questionnaires: structured (close-ended, standardized, formal) and unstructured (unstandardized, informal). Close-ended questions will refer to those in which all possible answers to questions listed in the questionnaire, whereas the term open-ended will apply to questions in which the possible answers are not listed in advance. The three common ways of obtaining information are: by sending a questionnaire by mail to individual to fill in and return, or interview by phone or target respondents answer on the spot. Sometimes combinations of these methods are used” (Kirch, 2008, p.1226). The term of “questionnaire” is a word that frequently appears because this study adopted this method to do data collection. The structures of the questionnaires in this study can be divided into 2 types which are close-ended questions and partially close ended questions. The provided answers in the close-ended questions followed the Likert’s five scales. However, the partially close-ended questions provided columns for the respondents to fill in their answers.
15. **Reliability:** This term states that “The reliability of a measure refers to its consistency. This notion is often taken to entail two separate aspects – external and internal. External reliability is the more common of the two meanings and refers to the degree of consistency of a measure over time... Internal reliability is particularly important in connection with multiple-items scales. It raises the question of whether each scale is measuring a single idea and hence whether the items that make up the scale are internally consistent” (Bryman and Cramer, 2009, p.76-77). Internal reliability is estimated using the

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients (Bryman and Cramer, 2009, p.353). The term of "reliability" appears in chapter 4 of this study as this study adopted the reliability test to analyze Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of each item to be tested. "Cronbach's alpha essentially calculates the average of all possible split-half reliability coefficients. The rule of thumb is that the result should be 0.8 or above (Bryman and Cramer, 2009, p.77)." All these items to be tested and Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients are shown in chapter 4 of this study.

16. **Research process:** Research process in this study means that an account of the research process is made by the target respondents in each stage of their research projects such as the research process in data collection, data analysis, report writing, and discussions with their supervisors.
17. **Scale:** According to the Oxford Dictionary & Thesaurus (1995, p.1372), a scale means a series of degrees, relative dimensions, or a set of marks on a line used in measuring. The term of "scale" appears in chapter 4 of this study to show that the scales related to the conceptualization of literacy were used to design the questionnaires. There are a total of 7 scales used in the questionnaires of this study.
18. **SPSS:** The term "SPSS" is the abbreviation for Statistical Package for the Social Sciences and the name of the company responsible for it (Bryman and Cramer, 2009, p.365). This software is probably the most widely used program for statistical analysis in the social sciences (Bryman, 2009, p. XXIV). In this study, all the research materials and data collected from the documents and questionnaires were analyzed by using SPSS software.
19. **Survey research:** This term "Usually refers to research using a cross-sectional design, involving the administration of structured interviews or questionnaires to a sample" (Bryman and Cramer, 2009, p.365). The term of "survey research" appears in chapter 3 of this study as this study adopted this research method to do data collection.

1.7 Summary

This chapter discussed the background of final year research project conducted by Malaysian undergraduates of Chinese studies. The study found that the research process to conduct final year research project can be divided into five parts which included statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, scope and significance of the study. This chapter also explained the definitions and concepts of terms used to conduct this study.

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