

Writing the Abstract and General introduction

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22/03/2022



Objectifs

Level: Master 1 Language and Communication

Module: Research Methodology

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Course Description:

The course of research methodology introduces students to the process of conducting an academic research in the field of language education. It familiarizes them with the main criteria of selecting a working research topic, how to write an abstract and a general introduction.

Course Objectives: Throughout this course students will be able to:

- Understand how to frame a research topic
- Outline their chapters
- Write an abstract and a general introduction
- Follow the main guidelines of the dissertation format (the form)

Course Content

1. Review of research process
2. Discussion of results
3. The selection of a research topic
4. Table of contents
5. Writing an abstract
6. Writing a General Introduction
7. Writing a General Conclusion

Writing an Abstract



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A. What is an Abstract



Définition

It is a **one paragraph** which **summarizes** the most important elements of the research work providing **maximum information** with **minimum words**. It begins on a new page and its heading should appear centered on the first line.

Format

No indent of the first sentence, it comprises of 150 to 350 words depending on the length of the work and degree. It includes:

- A short statement about the field of research and **the issue studies**
- The main **objectives**
- A brief presentation of the research type, **methods and sample**
- A condensed summary of **results**
- Conclusions reached in the study and **recommendations** (Hamzaoui and Negadi. 2013)

More and more recent studies have indicated the advantages of incorporating literary works in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching. However, students' interest and perceptions of literature in this context have rarely been investigated. This study aims to investigate the interest and perceptions of teachers training students majoring in English on the inclusion of short stories in language skills classrooms. The study employed an explanatory mixed method design and used a questionnaire and the focused semi-structured open-ended interview to collect the data. The participants were 45 sixth-semester students of the English Education Program. The findings revealed that most participants found short stories interesting to use both as materials for self-enjoyment and of as components language skill classes and believed that English teacher candidates should master the skills of employing short stories to teach language skills. The statistical analysis revealed that the students' interest and perceptions were positively and significantly correlated, and both variables significantly affected each other. Therefore, including short stories in language skills classrooms is advantageous. Curriculum designers, lecturers, and policymakers are recommended to take students' interest, perception, and perceived needs into consideration in every curriculum and learning-material revision.

B. IMPORTANT Considerations

1. it is a one block
2. The abstract does not contain any referencing or quotation
3. It does not contain any information which is not included in the work
4. It is coherent and concise
5. It covers only the essential elements

The general introduction

A. Components

introduction

the general introduction is one of the main elements in the dissertation. It is set in order to provide a clear understanding about the outline of the dissertation. It familiarises the reader with the issue at stake and should be written in a way that pushes his/her to carry on reading the other sections of the proposed research. It consists of the following components as shown in figure 1

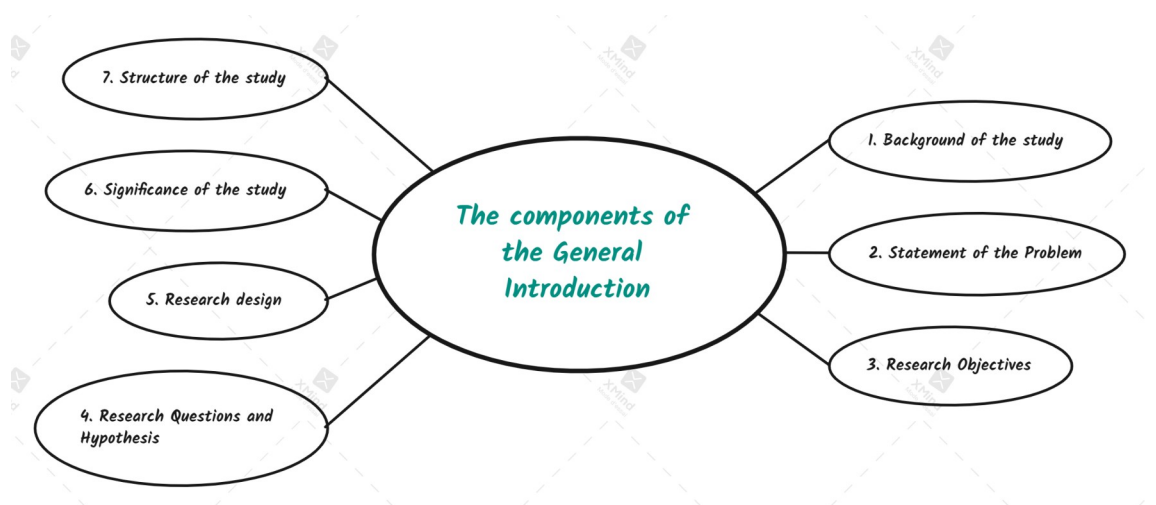


Figure 1

Background of the study (context, introduction)

It is commonly recognized that the background of the study is an introduction to the researched topic; it provides the reader with a broad understanding about the proposed study and its main roots in which it narrows down the topic from general to specific and places it in a clear context as in the example below:



Example

The need to communicate coupled with the demand of modern time has resulted in studying a foreign language. The aim is to easily get contact with the speakers of the target language either orally or through writing. Foreign language teaching and learning consists of mainly four skills; these skills are divided into two categories, receptive skills and productive skills. Teaching these competencies requires following certain gradual order, listening, speaking, reading, and then writing. It is argued that "adults devote 45% of their energies to listening, 30% to speaking, 16% to reading, and 9% to writing" (Hedge 2000, p. 305). It is placed before the end (writing) because it is rarely referred to in a foreign language context.

Reading is one of the basic skills that foreign language learners should acquire, since it is the skill through which a learner can be exposed to a large amount of language. Reading is not an easy task to define because of the subtleties it implies, researchers and educationists find it very complex to make sense of it. Roughly it is said to be the process of extracting meaning from the given text. Grabe (1988) (cited in Elba, 2006, p.9), for example, defines it as "a dialogue between the reader and the text." Besides, Widowson (1979) views the process of reading as:

Not simply a matter of extracting information from the text. Rather, it is one in which the reading activates a range of knowledge in the reader's mind that ...may be refined and extended by the new information supplied by the text.

On the other hand, reading includes two types: intensive and extensive reading. While the former involves a close study of short passages usually dealt with in the classroom and under the teacher's guidance, the latter involves reading a great deal of interesting materials either for a given purpose or for pleasure. Extensive Reading is an advantageous language skill that plays a significant role in learning in EFL classes. Linguistically speaking, learners may gain a large amount of vocabulary while involved in a task of extensive reading.

Statement of the Problem

A research problem may be defined as an area of concern, a gap in the existing knowledge, or a deviation in the norm or standard that points to the need for further understanding and investigation. The statement of the problem briefly addresses the question: What is the problem that the research will address? Baker (2000) argues that "the first step (in the development of the proposal) is to define the issue or problem to be addressed in clear and precise terms so that there can be no ambiguity about what is to be attempted". The problem shall provide motivational interest, should be relevant to the field of study of the researcher, enable to produce important results, triggers further research, hypothesis can be formulated and tested based on it, (Wyatt and Guly, 2002).

Before you state the objective (s) of your research, set the scene; i.e. give the reader some information about the background of the study. Inform the reader of the general topic or problem by answering the following questions:

- What is the context of your research? (as illustrated above "background of the study")
- How did you become aware of the problem (a workshop, contact with learners, teachers, observations... etc (i.e. Motivation behind the selected theme). The Elements of writing a statement of the problem: A good statement of problem is usually written in three parts as shown in figure 2 below :

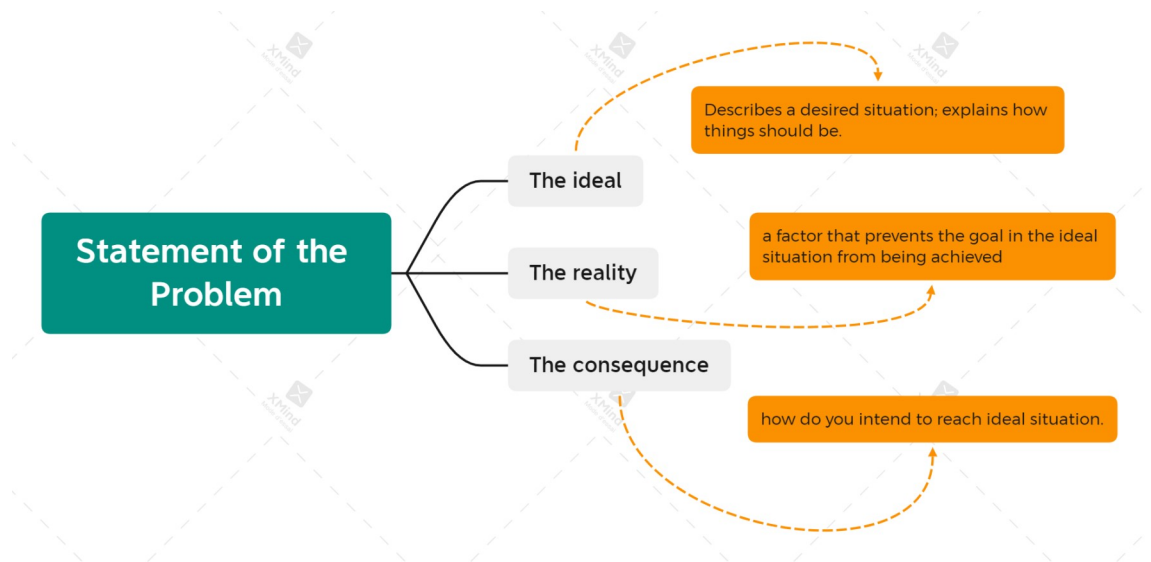


Figure 2



Exemple

In order for EFL students to be involved in different conversations and communicative situations, they are expected to possess certain lexical background knowledge. Vocabulary is the foundation of spoken and written texts, they are likely to help students expressing ideas, sharing experiences and negotiating meanings. To this end, it is argued that reading extensively is one of the most important strategies to enrich vocabulary; however, as mentioned earlier, EFL students at Ahmed Zabana University rarely read as they are not exposed to reading materials inside and outside the classroom. Being in such context where extensive reading is somehow ignored has resulted in poor vocabulary. The present study, therefore, tackle the problem of extensive reading in relation to vocabulary acquisition.

Objectives of the Study

1. Objectives should be clearly stated in declarative statements.
2. Use action verbs such as 'to determine, to find out, to ascertain can be used in formulating specific objectives.
3. Objectives should specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound



Exemple : The main objectives of this study are:

- To investigate the effect of an extensive reading strategy on first year students' vocabulary development;
- To raise teachers' awareness regarding the importance of extensive reading in enhancing students' vocabulary.
- To figure out the extent to which extensive reading may foster a positive attitude towards reading in English as a foreign language.

Research questions and or hypotheses

1. **Questions:** a **good research question** defines the nature of the investigation, sets its parameters and provides direction. It should be worth investigating and researchable. The research question should meet the following features:
 - Make sure that the types of research questions are fit for the purpose of the study
 - Make your research questions as **brief, clear, specific**, concise and precise as possible
 - The main question and the sub-questions should have a logical relationship
 - Ask **only one question** at a time
 - Avoid making research questions **too simple**
 - Avoid making research questions **too broad**
 - Avoid making **false assumptions**
 - Avoid making your research question your questionnaire questions
 - Avoid **tautological questions** (Cohen et al, 2018)
2. **hypotheses :** Hypotheses are assumptions about the tentative solution. They are based on personal experience and review of related literature. Hypotheses are stemmed from the research questions as follows:

Significance of the Study

This part answers the following questions: Why is the research important? How is the research important? For whom the research is important?

Study Design

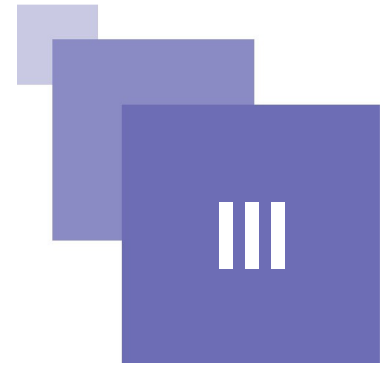
In this section, the researcher needs to set the methods which will be used for data collection and analysis, population, research sample, research procedures and the overall research approach. Data analysis must also be considered in this section. Questions in this section relate to the following:

1. What **type** of research is it?
2. Why is this **method(s)** the most appropriate for the planned research?
3. What are the **instruments** to be used for data collection (questionnaires,...)
4. Who are the research **participants**?
5. What characteristics of the overall **population** do they represent?
6. Which **sampling technique** will you use?
7. The way the data will be **processed** (will the data be analyzed qualitatively, quantitatively, using SPSS, Anova...ect)

Structure of the study

In brief, in this section, the researcher is required to mention how many chapters does his/her work compose, and what does each chapter include.

Exercise



Activity One: Read the following abstract and answers the questions below

In this digital age where plagiarism is a growing phenomenon in universities, it is imperative that senior management, tutors and staff understand collectively how to deal with the problem. The term plagiarism itself is often vague, leading to misunderstandings about what is acceptable and unacceptable practice (Kumur, 2011, p.12). Similarly, at the chalk-face level, tutors may lack the skills necessary to detect plagiarism. At a wider, institutional level, procedures may lack coherence and consistency, leading to potential claims by students of unfair treatment. This dissertation develops a workable definition of plagiarism, explores how students plagiarize, offers guidance on how to detect plagiarism, and presents a formal model on how to deal with cases of suspected plagiarism. The research methods consisted of a wide review of relevant literature on plagiarism, coupled with the collection and analysis of empirical data. The latter is based on a survey of staff from 10 universities in the UK, using questionnaires. The findings from this research show that cheating in exams is often due to laziness, lack of preparation and fear of failure. Students cheat because they are not confident of their ability or skills in academics.

Question 1

- Based on the content of the abstract, propose a title of the theme discussed.
- On what ways the abstract is different from the general introduction?
- What makes the abstract above unacceptable sample?

Activity Two: Read the passage and answer the questions below

“On several occasions, during examinations in the English Department at Relizane University, some students have been observed to try to cheat. After discussions with some teachers, it appeared that cheating may be a frequent and widespread behaviour.”

Question 2

1. What does the passage above represent?
2. Propose a research theme for the researched topic
3. Complete the statement to have a well-defined research problem