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WRITING RESEARCH PAPER, DISSERTATION AND THESIS

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1. Introduction

From the very beginning of the research process, researchers do take the objective and audience of the research they are going to perform into consideration. The nature of the researcher's task during the research process is made clear by understanding the objective of the study. For instance, this might lead to academic success, academic advancement, notoriety, evaluation, etc. When applying for a doctorate, the student scholar must produce a thesis that complies with the rules and requirements of the institutions to which they will submit their work. The research paper is the best type of research if the goal is to get academic recognition or promotion. In doing so, the researcher should adhere to the research paper's design, structure, and style while also considering the objectives, scope, and policy of the journals to which he or she will submit their work. In terms of the research audience (supervisors, examiners, researchers, editors, and reviewers), researchers should consider the tools of assessment that such an audience employs when reviewing or reading the research. As a result, the distinction between a research paper, dissertation, and thesis is based on the nature of the research's purpose and audience. This assignment is devoted to the preparation of 'Research Paper, Dissertation, and Theses' about the following relevant issues:

. Research Paper: Writing, Review Process, and Structure

1. Dissertation and Thesis: Similarities and Differences, Writing, and Review Process

2. Research Paper, Dissertation, and Thesis

Generally speaking, the terms 'dissertation' and 'thesis' are used interchangeably to refer to research submitted to get an advanced degree. They are submitted as a requirement for fulfilling a master's or doctorate. To be specific, the students submit a dissertation to obtain a master's degree while obtaining a Ph.D. entails the students submitting a thesis. This distinction is based on the

British academic institutions while in the American institutions the converse is true (Paltridge and Starfield, 2007).

In general, the terms "dissertation" and "thesis" are interchangeable when referring to research that is submitted to get a graduate degree. They are turned in to meet a master's or doctoral degree requirement. To be more precise, students who want to get a master's degree must submit a dissertation, while those who want to earn a Ph.D. must submit a thesis. This distinction is predicated on British academic institutions, although it is the opposite in American universities (Paltridge and Starfield, 2007).

The length of dissertations, theses, and journal papers are one of the most noticeable distinctions. The length of theses and dissertations varies depending on the university's requirements for Master's and Ph.D. works. Word limits for dissertations are typically around 20,000, but can be as high as 80,000 for humanities thesis (P. 43). Journal papers typically have word limits of 4,000 to 6,000 words, with some papers exceeding 9000. (Renandya, 2012). The following lines will provide a detailed explanation of these terms.

3. Research Paper

The journal article is a "form of research reporting for professional journals or edited collections" (Seliger and Shohami, P. 250). Day (1998) defines it as a written report describing original research findings. These definitions demonstrate that a research paper is submitted to journals briefly and concisely. Furthermore, it focuses on the major aspects of the research, such as the purpose, review of the literature (often referred to as background), procedures used to carry out the research (accompanied by tables, charts, and graphs), and interpretation of results (often referred to as discussion) (Seliger and Shohami,1989).

A research paper is typically written as part of a subject and does not usually count as a separate subject or module, so it does not require a separate supervisor (Paltridge and Starfield, 2007). The research paper's content and emphasis will differ depending on the intended readers (researchers or practitioners). As a result, researchers should be aware of the backgrounds and interests of journal readers. Articles intended for practitioners will emphasize the research's practical implications and recommendations, whereas articles intended for researchers will describe in detail the methods used to collect data, the construction of data collection procedures, and the techniques used to analyze the data (Seliger and Shohami, 1989).

A research paper distinguishes advanced researchers from novices. Academic institutions rely on the publication of researchers in prestigious peer-reviewed journals to assess the competence of their faculty members. Scholars will gain more credit points for their career advancement if they publish in international refereed journals (Renandya, 2012). Academic institutions are similarly ranked based on their publications in top journals with an impact factor[1]. For example, ISI (Institute of Scientific Information) journals are the best, and publication in such journals indicates a scholar's advanced level. *ELT Journal*, *Modern Language Education*, *Language Assessment*, *Foreign Language Annals*, *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *Journal of Linguistics*, and others are among the top ISI linguistics journals. These journals are considered the top in the field of linguistics and English language teaching and learning. Every journal has its regulations for publication. Table (1) Shows Top Seven Journals according to Edbert's (2007) Quality Indicators

No.	Name of the Journal
1.	Applied Linguistics
2.	English Language Teaching Journal
3.	Journal of Second Language Writing
4.	Language Learning
5.	Modern Language Journal
6.	Studies in Second Language Acquisition
7.	TESOL Quarterly

3.1. Writing a Research Paper

The focus here on the writing of a research paper in respect of title, abstract, introduction, materials and methods, results, and discussion. The most common labeling of the parts of a research paper is ‘Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion’ (hence, the acronym IMRAD) (Day, 1998). To determine how to organize such papers, and which general headings to use, you will need to refer to the ‘instructions to authors’ of your target journal.

In the title of the paper, the author should consider that the title will be read by thousands of people, and perhaps few people, if any, will read the entire paper. Therefore, writing the title entails the writer to consider the reader’s comprehension and the main idea of his or her research (i.e. the title should reflect what is the research about). The raising question is: What is a good title? It is the fewest possible words that adequately describe the contents of the paper. This means that the title should be brief and represent the content of the research. Wallwork (2011, P. 165) argues that the researcher should answer these questions to be able to formulate the title:

- *What have I found that will attract attention?*
- *What is new, different, and interesting about my findings?*
- *What are the 3–5 keywords that highlight what makes my research and my findings unique?*

Here, the writer focuses on what attracts the reader’s attention in terms of unique findings. This denotes a relationship between the title and findings. The best title represents the author's findings.

Furthermore, the questions raised above show that the title should be finalized after the research is completed.

Wallwork (2011) defines the abstract as "a single paragraph of between 100-250 words that contains a very brief summary of each of your paper's main sections" (P.179). This means that it should provide a summary of each of the main sections of the paper: introduction, materials and methods, results, and discussion. A well-written abstract allows readers to quickly and accurately identify the basic content of a document, determine its relevance to their interests, and thus decide whether they need to read the document in its entirety" (American National Standards Institute, 1979b cited in Day, 1998). The Abstract should not be longer than 250 words and should clearly define what is covered in the paper. It should be typed as a single paragraph. The number of words in the abstract differs from one journal to another, but the range is between 100-250 words.

Wallwork (2011) and Gustavii (2008) argue that a researcher should write a working abstract at an early stage, which will provide him/her with a framework for the rest of the article. It will guide him/her in deciding what to include and what to omit. Then, when he/she completed the paper, he/she can return to the working abstract and reconstruct it in its final form. As for the name of authors and addresses, authors should write their names, their institutions, and address whether there is only a single author or co-authors. Nowadays, international journals asked authors not to mention their names in the body of the paper for blind review[2] purpose. They can give their personal information in the cover letter[3], enclosed with the paper.

The purpose of the introduction is to explain why the study is important. Researchers should briefly describe their motivation for authoring the paper. Because the researcher initially refers to their problem and the existing knowledge surrounding it, much of the introduction should

be written in the present tense (Paltridge and Starfield, 2007). Here are some guidelines for a strong introduction:

(1) The introduction should present first, with all possible clarity, the nature and scope of the problem investigated.

(2) It should review the pertinent literature to orient the reader.

(3) It should state the method of the investigation. If deemed necessary, the reasons for the choice of a particular method should be stated.

(4) It should state the principal results of other relevant studies.

(5) It should state the principal conclusion reached by other studies (Day, 1998, P. 34).

The guidelines listed above from Day (1998) demonstrate how a literature review and introduction are combined while writing a research paper. The introduction and literature review are typically combined while writing a research paper, as opposed to theses and dissertations, which require a separate chapter for the introduction.

The materials and methods section has several names: methods, materials and methods, and method description and validation (Paltridge and Starfield, 2007). Authors should provide full details of the methods used, justifying their choice to the reader. The past tense should be used for the majority of this section (Wallwork, 2011). The main goal of the materials and methods section' is to describe (and, if necessary, defend) the experimental design and then provide enough detail so that a competent worker can replicate the experiments (Day, 1998). To be specific, when a writer's paper is subjected to peer review[4], a good reviewer will read the materials and methods carefully and if there is serious doubt that your experiments could be repeated, the reviewer will recommend rejection of your manuscript whatever are your results. Wallwork (2011, P. 219) lists important questions that the method section should answer:

- *What / Who did I study? What hypotheses was I testing? Where did I carry out this study and what characteristics did this location have?*
- *How did I design my experiment/sampling and what assumptions did I make?*
- *What variable was I measuring and why?*
- *What protocol did I use for collecting my data?*
- *How did I analyze the data? Statistical procedures? Mathematical equations? Software?*
- *What probability did I use to decide significance?*
- *What difficulties did I encounter?*
- *How does my methodology compare with previously reported methods, and what significant advances does it make?*

So now we come to the core of the paper, the data. This part of the paper is called the ‘result section’. There are usually two elements of the ‘result section’: the overall description of the experiments and the data. Not all journals require a separate results section, often it is integrated with the discussion, under the section ‘results and discussion’. The results should be presented in the past tense. This stage entails a researcher paying due consideration to transfer data from the laboratory or fieldwork notebook to the manuscript. The presentation of this section depends on the researcher’s skills. The researcher should present representative data in the manuscript rather than endlessly repetitive data (Day, 1998). The raising question is: How can a researcher structure this section? Wallwork (2011) recommends the following steps:

1. *Highlight the results that answer your research questions.*
2. *Outline secondary results*
3. *Give supporting information*

4. *Mention any results that contradict your hypothesis and explain why they are anomalous.* (P. 236)

The discussion is more difficult to define than in the previous sections. As a result, it is usually the most difficult section to write (Day, 1998) and (Wallwork, 2011). Many papers are rejected by journal editors due to poor discussion, even if the data in the paper is both valid and interesting. As a result, writers must consider what and how to present their arguments.

What are the essential characteristics of a good debate? The following are the main components of an effective discussion:

1. *Try to present the principles, relationships, and generalizations shown by the results.*
2. *Point out any exceptions or any lack of correlation and define unsettled points. Never take the high-risk alternative of trying to cover up or fudge data that do not quite fit.*
3. *Show how your results and interpretations agree (or contrast) with previously published work.*
4. *Discuss the theoretical implications of your work, as well as any possible practical applications.*
5. *State your conclusions as clearly as possible.*
6. *Summarize your evidence for each conclusion* (Day, 1989, P. 46).

3.2. Review Process of Research Paper

Most journals use one of two types of reviews: single-blind or double-blind. In a single-blind review, the reviewers are aware of the author's identity, but the author is unaware of who the reviewers are. In the case of a double-blind review, neither the author nor the reviewers are aware of each other's identities. Nowadays, double-blind reviews are more common because they ensure the objectivity of the review process (Renandya, 2012). Thus, a manuscript is accepted or rejected based on its value, excluding any other factors that have nothing to do with the quality of the manuscript (Day, 1998). The editor starts the first stage of review before they are sent out for

reviewers. Manuscripts that are poorly written, contain a lot of language errors, do not match the aim and scope of the journals, and do not follow the submission guidelines will most likely result in a swift rejection (Day, 1998). It is therefore crucial that you make sure that you have written your manuscript according to the author/submission guidelines (available on the journal's website). Besides, you have to carefully proofread your manuscript before submitting it to a journal. Failure to do so would cause unnecessary delay in getting your work published and may lead to its rejection. Another important issue is that writers should follow the submission guidelines as closely as possible since one of the most common reasons for rejection is that the manuscript does not follow the guidelines (Renandya, 2012).

It is of utmost importance for the researcher to distinguish between good journals and poor and fake ones. The criterion for reputable journals, which is of vital importance for writers to consider before submitting their manuscripts, is the availability of detailed information about the journal and its publication policy. Reputable journals should provide the following information on their website:

- a. Aim and scope of the journal (research or practice-oriented, topic coverage, etc.)
- b. Submission guidelines (e.g., length, format, font type and size, spacing, referencing style, spelling)
- c. Review policy (e.g., refereed or non-refereed; review wait time)
- d. Frequency of publication (e.g., three times a year, quarter)
- e. Other pertinent information (e.g., research ethics guidelines, copyright, etc.) (TESOL Journal, 2005 cited in Renandya (2012).

If this information is not readily available, there is reason to suspect that the quality of the journal may be questionable.

3.3. Structure of Research Paper

As previously stated, the structure of the research article takes a simple and brief, but succinct and compact organization. This is ascribed to the restricted word limit in papers which tends to mean that you have to be accurate, brief, and to the point when describing analysis methods and techniques (Seliger and Shohami, 1989). Having reviewed many articles from many international refereed journals, I found that the research paper follows such structure: abstract, keywords, introduction, literature review, materials and methods, results and discussion, and conclusions.

3.3.1. Theses and Dissertations

The term ‘thesis’ or ‘dissertation’ is defined as *a 'format for reporting research which graduate students write as a part of fulfilling the requirements for an advanced academic degree’* (P.251). In writing a dissertation or thesis, the student is expected to describe in great detail all the phases of the research, taking into account its readers (i.e. guide(s) and examiners). The thesis or dissertation includes the purpose and significance of the study, the rationale, a thorough review of the literature, detailed information as to the research tools and the procedures involved in their development, an interpretation of the results in the form of conclusions, implications, and recommendations (Paltridge and Starfield, 2007). A detailed description of the process of research is needed to provide the guide and examiners with an indication of the student's ability to carry out research. It is essential for the students to consider the intended audience of their thesis or dissertation, their readers’ role and purpose in reading their text, how their readers will react to what they read, and the criteria they will use for assessing their text.

3.3.2. Differences between Master's and Doctoral Dissertation

A doctoral thesis generally has greater breadth, depth, and intention than a master's dissertation. This demonstrates that a Ph.D. student should search in-depth and extensively investigate his or her research area. Paltridge and Starfield (2007) list the differences between a master's thesis and a doctoral dissertation saying: that a master's dissertation demonstrates:

1. *an original investigation or the testing of ideas;*
2. *competence in independent work or experimentation;*
3. *an understanding of appropriate techniques as well as their limitations;*
4. *expert knowledge of the published literature on the topic under investigation;*
5. *evidence of the ability to make critical use of published work and source materials;*
6. *an appreciation of the relationship between the research topic and the wider field of knowledge;*
7. *the ability to present the work at an appropriate level of literary quality.*

A doctoral thesis demonstrates:

1. *all of the above, plus:*
2. *a distinct contribution to knowledge, as shown by the topic under investigation, the methodology employed, the discovery of new facts, or interpretation of the findings*
(Paltridge and Starfield, P.56)

As a result, the doctoral thesis differs from a master's research degree by providing a more in-depth analysis of the topic. In addition, the student is anticipated to possess an in-depth understanding of their field of study.

4. Writing Thesis and Dissertation

There are almost no universally accepted thesis preparation guidelines. The structure differs from country to country, institution to institution, and even between professors in the same department of the same institution (Gustavii, 2008). Students should consider their university's regulations before beginning to write a thesis. In the event that there is a lack of information in the university's regulations about writing a thesis, students should go to the department/university library and examine the theses submitted by previous graduates of the university in general and their department in particular, particularly outstanding ones. Furthermore, graduates should be familiar with international dissertation writing standards. This is possible by gaining access to the websites of some universities, which provide access to their databases. 'ProQuest Dissertation and Thesis,' which requires a subscription, is a very good website that displays well-written and high-quality dissertations and theses in a variety of fields.

A thesis typically consists of three parts: an introduction, a text, and references. The initial section is written at the end of the research process. Table of contents, abstract, acknowledgment, dedication, certificates, and covers are all included. In terms of the text portion, it makes up the majority of the thesis or dissertation. An introductory chapter describes the researcher's idea for how the investigation will be carried out. The writer begins to lay out the main points of the thesis and asserts the importance or significance of the relevant study in the introduction. The thesis writer who wants to join a community of scholars should explain in the beginning how the thesis relates to and builds upon previous research in the field (Partridge and Starfield, 2007). The introductory chapter contains an overview, rationale, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, limitation of the study, structure of the study, and methods and terminology definitions (Bell, 1999).

There are several reasons for conducting a literature review when writing a thesis or dissertation. A literature review serves an important purpose in contextualizing the student's research. This means that the researcher broadens the research perspective by reviewing related literature and then narrows the research topic until he or she specifies the research questions (Seliger and Shohami,1989). To be more specific, the researcher should describe and synthesize the major studies relevant to his or her research topic. It should also demonstrate the connection between the student's project and previous work in the field (Paltridge and Starfeid, 2007).

A literature review should concentrate on the major findings of the studies that are reported, as well as when and who carried them out. Reports on studies directly related to the student's project should be discussed in greater depth, including information on the study's methodological approach, data collection, and analytical procedures (Paltridge and Starfied, 2007). The literature review should be written critically in the sense that the writer should demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of other studies rather than simply presenting factual information about the studies being reviewed. Furthermore, a literature review should be written in a synthesis, rather than introducing the literature as separate items. It can be organized according to "the research questions to be answered."

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introducing the literature as separate items. It can be organized according to "*the research questions to be asked, various topics and sub-topics that are central to the study, variables in the study, chronologically from oldest to more recent research, different points of view or a combination of these*". (p.101)

The methodology section discusses how the research was carried out and how the data was collected. This means that it is concerned with research design (e.g., experimental research, action research, surveys, etc.) and instrumentation (methods of collecting data such as questionnaires, interviews, etc.) (Manion and Cohen, 2007) This section will necessitate a detailed description of the research processes and procedures, as well as an explanation of why they were undertaken. Writers should consider how much their data has been shaped by the method(s) used. Knowing how the data was gathered allows the reader to assess the validity and reliability of the results, as well as the conclusions drawn from them (day, 1998). The study's replication[5] is also an important consideration and is another reason for the detailed description of methods and procedures.

An effective "results section" is more than just a presentation or reporting; it involves selecting and ordering the data in a way that guides the reader to understand what is reported in such a section (Cohen and Manion, 2007). The writer must demonstrate the significance of the data he obtains and how it differs from that of other researchers.' In presenting the results, the issue of logical presentation is critical. As the 'argument' is built up, linking figures and tables to text and selecting which data to highlight becomes increasingly important (Partridge and Starfield, 2007).

In the discussion section, the student should move beyond their data and integrate the results of their study with existing theory and research (Rudestam and Newton, 2001). They added that a good typical discussion contains the following:

1. *An overview of the significant findings of the study*
2. *A consideration of the findings in the light of existing research studies*
3. *Implications of the study for current theory (except in purely applied studies)*
4. *A careful examination of findings that fail to support or only partly support the hypotheses outlined in the study*
5. *Limitations of the study that may affect the validity or the generalizability of the results*
6. *Recommendations for further research*
7. *Implications of the study for professional practice or applied setting* (Rudestam and Newton 2001, P.121).

An abstract is a synopsis of the thesis. It is a condensed version of a dissertation or thesis. It is a text summary that informs readers of what is in the dissertation and what order. It is mostly written after the researcher has finished the research. Typically, the Abstract aims to provide an overview of the study that answers the following questions:

- *What was the general purpose of the study?*
- *What was the particular aim of the study?*
- *Why was the study carried out?*
- *How was the study carried out?*
- *What did the study reveal?* (Partridge and Satrfied, 2007, P. 155).

4.1. The Structure of Theses and Dissertations

The structure of the thesis is not fixed since many factors influence its organization. Among these factors are the research perspective followed in the study, the purpose, and the regulations of the academic institutions (Prior, 1995). It is also influenced by the values and expectations of the academic discipline in which it is produced and will be assessed (Partridge and Starfield, 2007). In doing so, the student scholars should be exposed to the range of patterns of how to organize a dissertation and thesis.

A thesis typically commences with ‘an introduction and a review of the literature sections. It is then followed by a ‘general methods’ section which is followed by a series of sections that report on each of the individual studies. The thesis ends with a general overall conclusions section. *Table (2) shows the typical content of individual chapters.*

<i>Chapter 1: Introduction:</i> General background information on the project, research problem Purpose of the study Hypotheses or research questions ,Scope of the study ,Significance of the study, Definitions of key terms ,Organization of the thesis
<i>Chapter 2: Literature review</i> General review of relevant literature Specific topics directly relating to the issue under investigation How previous research suggests the study is important to do. The gap in the research that the study will fill
<i>Chapter 3: Conceptual framework and/or methodology:</i> Research design Methods used to collect data Research instruments, Methods used to analyse the data, Details about who, how, when and why For ethnography, description of the setting and participants, Issues of ethics and consent
<i>Chapter 4: Results:</i> The findings of the study, described under themes that emerged from the data, under the research questions or under the data collection techniques that were used
<i>Chapter 5: Discussion and conclusions:</i> A re-statement of the research problem, A re-statement of results, Discussion of what was found in relation to previous research on the topic Limitations of the study Implications for future research.

Cited Paltridge and Starfield, 2007, P.76)

4.4. Review of Dissertation and Thesis

Academic institutions are responsible for reviewing dissertations and theses. Every academic institution has its own set of rules for judging the quality of theses and dissertations. The acceptance of a thesis or dissertation is contingent on compliance with academic institution regulations. Examiners are the primary readers of dissertations and theses. In some cases, the student's supervisor will be one of the examiners, while in others, they will not be. If the supervisor is not one of the student's examiners, they will read the student's thesis as a secondary reader. This distinction between 'primary' and secondary readerships is significant, but it is not always obvious to students. In the case of thesis and dissertation writing, the primary reader is the examiner of the quality of the student's work. Kamler and Threadgold (1997: 53) point out that “*a dominant or 'primary' reader within the academy, 'quite simply counts more than other readers.* It is important, then, for students to consider the examiner who can either accept or reject their work. Therefore, their writing should be coherent and consistent with the conventions of the target discourse community (Paltridge and Starfield, 2007).

5. Conclusion

After distinguishing between a research paper, dissertation, and thesis in terms of the writing process, structure, review, purpose, and audience, it is clear that research has the same basic features regardless of type, style, length, or depth. The terms 'thesis' and 'dissertation' are similar in that they are conducted as a requirement for completing an advanced academic degree; however, they differ in terms of the type of academic degree and the depth and breadth of their investigation. The research paper differs from the previous research in that it is not submitted to

obtain an academic degree. Furthermore, because of the word limit, it is brief, succinct, and informative, exhibiting all of the characteristics of the the former research.

End Notes

[1] It is a measure of how prestigious a journal is. The higher the impact factor, the more widely read the journal is, and the more likely other researchers will cite your paper (Wallwork, 2011, P.5).

[2] The identity of the authors is concealed from the reviewers, and vice versa, lest the knowledge of authorship or concern about disapprobation from the author biases their review (Wallwork, 2011).

[3]It is a letter that you send with documents or a package that gives information about its contents (Online Longman Dictionary).

[4] Evaluation of scientific, academic, or professional work by others working in the same field (Concise Oxford English Dictionary).

[5] Repetition of a scientific experiment or trial to obtain consistent results (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, P.1219, 2008).

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