

Workshop 2: Writing the Problem Statement

Agenda



What is a Problem Statement in a research proposal?



Strategies for writing an effective Problem Statement



In-class writing practice – writing a problem statement

What is a Problem (Statement)?

- It tells the readers what the problem you are trying to solve!
- A difficult concept – problem is something we don't want right?
- In academia we welcome it!
- In academic research, problem statements are used to clearly define the **research objective** (finding the solution to an 'unknown'), the **significance** of the research (**its contribution**), therefore **justify the need** for the study.

Problem statement - what is it so important?

- It explains the relevance and importance of the research but and helps readers to decide if the article aligns with their interests by clearly defining the topic.
- When you write you need to think about the readers.
- To get your research proposal accepted (grants) you need to address a problem that your readers (people who are interested in your topic) that they want to solve i.e. something that they care about!

Basic Writing Strategies for the Problem Statement

- The problem statement aims to highlight the significant issue the research intends to address. It should be concise and to the point.

Ask yourself:

- How can the significance of the research be effectively conveyed to the reader?

• Points to consider:

- Clarify what you aim to achieve with your research.
- Explore why the problem exists and explain how the research helps to solve the problem.
- Outline the potential impact of the research.
- **Explain the potential consequences if the problem is not resolved.**

Three Important Parts of the Problem Statement

- ▶ The **content and length** of the problem statement can vary depending on the type of research.
- ▶ **Research Background**: Explain clearly what problem your research focuses on. Describe how things would be better if this problem didn't exist.
- ▶ **Research Significance**: Explain who will benefit from solving the problem, thus demonstrating the relevance of the research and its contribution to the existing knowledge
- ▶ **Solution**: Describe the research objective and the expected solution or results.

Activity 1 – Link on Canvas

- ▶ Identify these 3 elements in the examples and highlight them in different colours
- ▶ **Research Background:** Explain clearly what problem your research focuses on. Describe how things would be better if this problem didn't exist.
- ▶ **Research Significance:** Explain who will benefit from solving the problem, thus demonstrating the relevance of the research and its contribution to the existing knowledge
- ▶ **Solution:** Describe the research objective and the expected solution or outcomes.

Activity 2: Paper from Workshop 1

1. Re-read *Real-Time Recognition and Translation of Kinyarwanda Sign Language into Kinyarwanda Text*; **applying the First-Pass only.**
2. Individually using Google Slides (Link on Canvas) and write a **Problem Statement for the paper – imagine you are the researcher writing the proposal seeking a grant.**
3. Apply the principle to include the **3 parts** we discussed today

Summary

- ▶ Problem Statements give the background of the research, its goal and its contribution.
- ▶ When writing the Problem Statement, think about how to convince the readers its importance / the contribution and the consequences if the research is not done.
- ▶ The content and length of the Problem Statement can vary depending on the type of research. (Do not include evidence / citations)
- ▶ 3 important parts of the Problem Statement 1. Research Background 2. Research Significance 3. Solution / expected outcomes.

References and acknowledgement

1. <https://scientific-publishing.webshop.elsevier.com/research-process/what-problem-statement-examples/>
2. Niyizamwiyitira, C & Semindu, E “Real-Time Recognition and Translation of Kinyarwanda Sign Language into Kinyarwanda Text” (To be published)