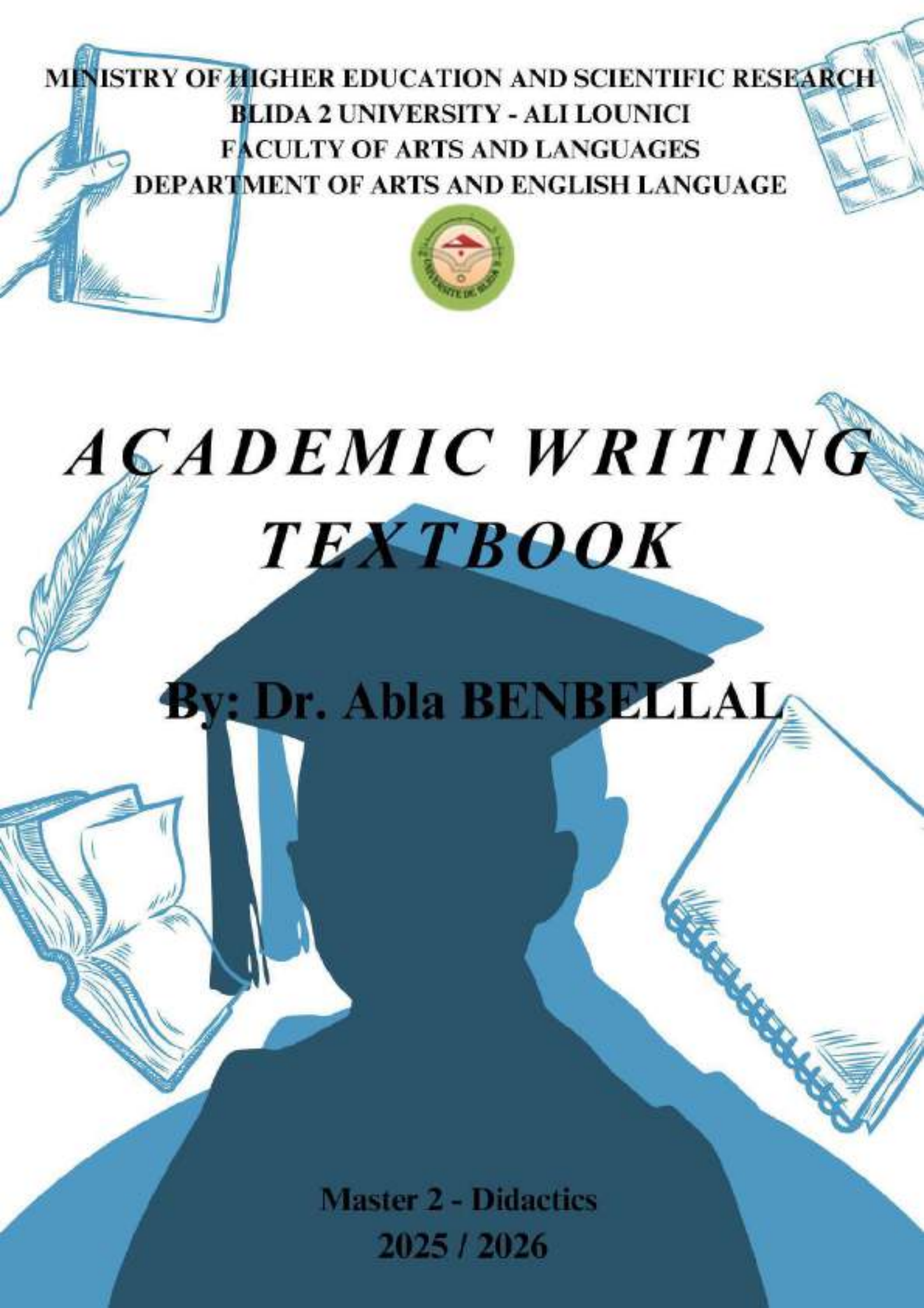
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
BLIDA 2 UNIVERSITY - ALI LOUNICI
FACULTY OF ARTS AND LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE



ACADEMIC WRITING TEXTBOOK

By: Dr. Abla BENBELLAL

Master 2 - Didactics

2025 / 2026

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
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ACADEMIC WRITING TEXTBOOK

Level: Master 02 in Didactics of foreign languages

Academic Year: 2025 / 2026

Semester: 03

Unit: Methodology

Course Title: Academic Writing

Teacher in Charge: Dr. Abla BENBELLAL

Credits: 3 **- Coefficient:** 2

Class Hours by Semester: 45 hours

Class Hours by Week: 1h30 Lecture (CM) + 1h30 Practice (TD)

Course Objective: The primary objective of this course is to help Master's students develop the skills necessary for successful dissertation writing.

Course Description

Academic writing plays a central role in graduate studies as Master's students are expected to engage in independent research and communicate their findings in a clear, coherent, and academically appropriate manner. However, many Master's students encounter difficulties when writing their dissertations particularly in understanding the structure of academic texts, adopting an appropriate scholarly style, and organizing their ideas effectively. Developing these skills requires explicit instruction and guided practice. The academic writing course, therefore, aims to equip Master's students with the necessary skills to produce high-quality dissertations and foster their awareness of the rhetorical and communicative function of each chapter.

1. Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand the structure and components of the Master's dissertation.
- Develop a clear research problem and formulate good research objectives and questions.
- Understand the organization and purpose of the different dissertation sections and chapters including the abstract, the general introduction, the literature review chapter, the methodology chapter, and the results and discussions chapter.
- Conduct a critical analysis of research papers.
- Write an effective literature review.
- Present and analyze research findings effectively.
- Identify and apply formal academic language, appropriate citation styles, and discourse structures used in dissertations and journal articles.

2. Assessment Method

Course mark/ 20 = Exam (20 pints) + Continuous assessment (20%) / 2

2.1. Continuous Assessment (40% of the final mark). It consists of:

a. **Participation (2 points):** Students are expected to actively engage during lectures by preparing the assigned lessons in advance, asking and answering questions, and contributing to classroom discussions.

b. **Presentation (4 points):** Students are divided into groups. Each group is assigned a specific section of the dissertation (e.g., the introduction, the literature review chapter, and the method chapter). Groups are required to design an analytic rubric to evaluate the assigned section, apply the rubric to analyze that section, and present both the rubric and the analysis to their classmates.

c. **Assignment (14 points):** Students are required to write the general introduction of their dissertation and submit it during the final week before the winter break.

2.2. Exam (60% of the final mark): Assessment of students' performance in the exam is based on the demonstration of procedural knowledge. That is, students are required to show that they know HOW to apply the knowledge and analytical criteria covered in class. For example, in one activity, students are given a set of questionnaire items and asked to analyze them by identifying

problems and suggesting improved versions of the questions. In another activity, students may be provided with a general introduction or selected parts of an introduction and asked to analyze them in light of the criteria discussed during the lecture.

3. Useful Resources

1. Bhatia, V.K. (2013). *Analyzing genre: Language use in professional settings* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
2. Biggam, J. (2011). *Succeeding with your master's dissertation: A step-by-step handbook*. McGraw-Hill Education.
3. Biklen, S.K. & Casella, R. (2007). *A Practical guide to the qualitative dissertation*. Teachers College Press.
4. Bitchener, J. (2009). *Writing an applied linguistics thesis or dissertation: A guide to presenting empirical research*. Macmillan International Higher Education.
5. Bui, Y.N. (2014). *How to write a master's thesis*. SAGE.
6. Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). Routledge. Cooley, L. & Lewkowicz, J. (2003). *Dissertation Writing in practice: Turning ideas into text*. Hong Kong University Press.
7. Evans, D., Gruba, P. & Zobel, J. (2014). *How to write a better thesis*. Springer.
8. Furseth, I. & Everett, E.L. (2013). *Doing your master's dissertation: From start to finish*. SAGE.
9. Lunenberg, F.C. & Irby, B.J. (2008). *Writing a successful thesis or dissertation: Tips and strategies for students in the social and behavioral sciences*. Corwin Press.
10. Paltridge, B. & Starfield, S. (2007). *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language: A handbook for supervisors*. Routledge.

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1 *Introduction to the Master's Dissertation*

Learning Objectives: By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Identify the key characteristics of a high-quality dissertation,
2. Describe the basic structure of a Master's dissertation using a standard template.

1.1. What Is a Dissertation?

A dissertation refers to a research project required of Master's students upon completion of their programme as a condition for graduation and the award of the degree. It is a comprehensive piece of academic writing in which students formulate a clearly defined research problem, explain the methodological framework and instruments used to address it, and present the results obtained from the investigation.

1.2. Why Dissertation Writing Matters

Lovitts and Wart (2009) argue that the dissertation serves multiple academic purposes. Primarily, it functions as an evaluative document through which examiners assess the quality and rigor of the research undertaken by the student. In this way, the dissertation enables examiners to determine the extent to which the student demonstrates the competence and skills required to be an effective member of the academic community. In addition to its evaluative role, the dissertation is also viewed as a training document that allows students to develop essential academic skills including research, academic writing, critical thinking and problem-solving, and prepares them to become experts in their field of study.

1.3. Key Characteristics of a High-Quality Dissertation

According to Evans et al. (2014) and White (2002), the following are some of the key features that a high-quality dissertation should exhibit:

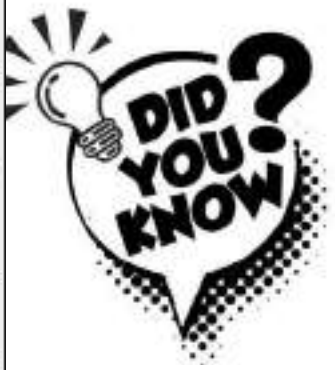
1.3.1. Clarity and Academic Writing Standards: A good dissertation should be written clearly and follow academic writing rules. Students need to pay attention to correct language use including grammar, spelling, and punctuation. They should also use linking words and cohesive devices to show how ideas and paragraphs are connected. In addition, a dissertation should follow an accepted academic format and referencing style.

1.3.2. A Thorough Knowledge of Literature: An effective dissertation should reflect the researcher's solid command of existing scholarly work, awareness of relevant studies, and capacity to critically engage with them by identifying their contributions and limitations.

1.3.3. Originality/Novelty: A strong dissertation makes a distinctive contribution to its field of study.

Originality in research can manifest in several ways:

- **Introducing new knowledge:** This involves discovering aspects that were unknown or overlooked in previous research.
- **Employing a new approach or methodology:** This entails using a different method or perspective to investigate the problem.
- **Offering new interpretations** or ways of understanding existing data, theories or hypotheses.
- **Addressing gaps:** This involves investigating questions, populations or contexts that have not been explored before.



1.3.4. Researcher's Critical and Analytical Thinking Skills: These are mainly shown in three parts of the dissertation: the literature review, the research design, and the discussion chapters. In these sections, students are expected to show a good understanding of their topic and express their own academic voice. In the literature review, students should go beyond description by analyzing previous studies, identifying key theories and variables, linking studies together, evaluating ideas, and highlighting research gaps. In the research design chapter, they should justify their methodological choices and explain how their study addresses limitations in earlier research. In the discussion chapter, students are expected to interpret their findings clearly and relate them to previous studies by showing similarities and differences.

1.4. MA Dissertation Template

Section/ Chapter	What to Include?
Page Layout	a. **Margins:** (Left 2.5 cm, Right 2.5 cm, Top 2.5 cm, Bottom 2.5 cm) b. **Main Text Font:** Times New Roman c. **Font Size:** Body text (12), Chapter Title (16), Section Heading (14), Subsection heading (12 or 13). d. **Line Spacing:** Main Text (1.5)

Title/ Cover Page	**a.** People's Democratic Republic of Algeria **b.** Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research **c.** University Name (Blida 2 - Ali Lounici) **d.** Faculty (Arts and Languages) **e.** University Logo **f.** Thesis Title (Centered, Bold) **g.** Candidate's Name (left) **h.** Supervisor's + (Co-supervisor's) Name (right) **i.** Panel of Examiners (Names + University) **j.** Academic Year
Dedication	
Acknowledgements	
Abstract	Between 250 and 500 words. It should include: **a.** Background (brief) **b.** Aim of the Study **c.** Methods **d.** Main Findings **e.** Main Implications **f.** Keywords (between 5 and 7 words)
List of Abbreviations/ Acronyms	**Examples: EFL** : English as a Foreign Language **ESP:** English for Specific Purposes
List of Tables	Numbered according to chapters as: Table 1.1., Table 1.2……
List of Figures	Numbered according to chapters as: Figure 1.1., Figure 1.2…..
Table of Contents	Full List of Chapters, Headings, and Sub-headings
General Introduction	It should include: **a.** Background of the Study **b.** Problem Statement **c.** Research Rationale (Significance) **d.** Aim(s) of the Study **e.** Research Question(s) **f.** Research Hypotheses (if any) **g.** Operational Definitions of Key Terms **h.** Structure of the thesis
Chapter One: Review of Related Literature	It should include: **a.** Theoretical Background (theories, main concepts, models…etc) **b.** Critical Review of Related Studies **c.** Conceptual/Theoretical Framework
Chapter Two: Methodology Chapter	It should include: **a.** Research Paradigm (philosophy) **b.** Research Strategy

	c. Population and Sample **d.** Data Collection Instruments **e.** Data Collection Procedures **f.** Data Analysis Tools **g.** Data Analysis Procedures **h.** Research Validity and Reliability **i.** Ethical Considerations
Chapter Three: Data Presentation/ Research Findings)	The results may be presented in more than one chapter depending on the research instruments used and the amount of data collected. It should include: **a.** Presentation of Quantitative Findings Through: Tables and/or Figures **b.** Presentation of Qualitative Findings: Themes, Categories, Sample Excerpts.
Chapter Four: Discussion of the Findings	It should include: **a.** Discussion of Findings by Research Questions **b.** Pedagogical Implications **c.** Unexpected Findings (if any) **d.** Limitations of the Study **e.** Recommendations for Further Research
General Conclusion	It should include: **a.** Summary of the Study **b.** Significance of the Findings **c.** Evaluation of the Study
List of References	It should follow the required citation style (e.g.; APA, MLA, Harvard…etc)
Appendices	Examples: **Appendix A:** Students' Questionnaire, **Appendix B:** Interview Consent Form
Abstract in Arabic	

References

1. Evans, D., Gruba, P. & Zobel, J. (2014). *How to write a better thesis*. Springer
2. Lovitts, B.E., & Wert, E.L. (2009). *Developing quality dissertations in the humanities: A graduate student's guide to achieving excellence*. Stylus Publishing, LLC.
3. White, B. (2002). *Writing your MBA dissertation*. Thomson Publisher.

2 Abstracts

Learning Objectives: By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Identify the key academic elements of an effective abstract,
2. Write clear, concise, and informative abstracts that conform to the universal conventions of academic writing.

Please note that, in the examples presented in this unit, only the dissertation titles are shown; all other details have been omitted to preserve the authors' anonymity.

2.1. What is an Abstract

An abstract is the first part of the dissertation that readers encounter. It provides a concise summary of the work and typically comes after the title page and the acknowledgments. Its communicative function is to present the main elements of the study clearly and concisely.

2.2. Features of a Good Abstract

A good abstract:

- Is presented as a single, well-structured paragraph that is clear, concise and can stand alone as a complete unit of information.
- Includes all the essential academic elements of the full paper namely: background, purpose, methods, main findings, main conclusions.
- Does not introduce any information that is not presented in the main body of the dissertation.
- Typically avoids the use of references.

2.3. Schematic Structure and Content of the Abstract

Among the most widely recognized frameworks for analyzing abstract structure is the five-move framework proposed by Hyland (2004), as shown in the following table:

Moves	Communicative Functions
Move 1: Introduction	Establishes context of the paper and motivates the research or discussion.
Move 2: Purpose	Indicates purpose, thesis or hypothesis, outlines the intent behind the paper.

Move 3: Method	Provides information on design, procedures, assumptions, approach, data…etc
Move 4: Product	States main findings or results, the argument or what was accomplished.
Move 5: Conclusion	Interprets or extends results scope of paper, draws inferences, points to applications or wider implications.

Source: Hyland (2004, p.67)

Another influential analytical framework was developed by Bhatia (1993, 2013) who emphasized the informative function of the abstract and proposed the following four-move model:

Moves	Communicative Functions
Move 1: Introducing Purpose	This move gives a precise indication of the author's intention, thesis or hypothesis which forms the basis of the research being reported. It may also include the goals or objectives of research or the problem that the author wishes to tackle.
Move 2: Describing Methodology	The author gives a good indication of the experimental design, including information on the data, procedures or method(s) used and, if necessary, the scope of the research being reported.
Move 3: Summarizing Results	This is an important aspect of abstracts where the author mentions his observations and findings and also suggests solutions to the problem, if any, posed in the first move.
Move 4: Presenting Conclusions	This move is meant to interpret results and draw inferences. It typically includes some indication of the implications and applications of the present findings.

Source: Bhatia (2013, pp. 148 - 149)

As shown in the table, the four moves aim at answering the following research questions:

Move 1: ***What did the author do?***

Move 2: ***How did the author do it?***

Move 3: ***What did the author find?***

Move 4: ***What did the author conclude?***

2.4. Which of the frameworks (Hyland's or Bhatia's) appears to be the most appropriate to follow when writing the dissertation abstract?

Bhatia's schematic structure appears to be the most suitable model for analyzing and writing abstracts across various disciplines. It has been widely adopted by researchers in studies of abstracts from research articles, Master's dissertations and doctoral theses. This is because, within

the process of scientific inquiry, the four-move framework captures the core elements of scholarly work, and it is frequently cited in numerous manuals and guidelines on writing research articles and theses (Hyland, 2004). This does not imply that following Hyland's framework is incorrect; either framework can be used. The key is to ensure that the four essential elements (aim, methods, main findings, main conclusions) are included. The fifth element, Background, suggested by Hyland, is optional.

2.5. What Should Not Be Included in Abstracts?

When writing the abstract, you should avoid including the following:

- Lengthy background information
- References to other literature
- Elliptical or incomplete sentences ending with (...)
- Unknown abbreviations or terms that might be unclear or confusing to readers.
- Any illustrations, figures, tables or references to them.

Examples of Good Abstracts

Abstract 1 (*Hyland's Framework*):

Thesis Title: ***An Investigation of Lecture Comprehension and Note Taking Strategies of Second Year Students of English of the University of Blida***

For many years (1995-2002), the Department of English of the University of Blida witnessed low rates of academic achievement of students preparing for an English Degree. An analysis of the second year students' course grades in academic years 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 and data from a preliminary survey with some teachers reflected signs that the students were experiencing learning difficulties. This situation prompted an investigation of a suspected factor behind those difficulties, namely, comprehending and taking notes from lectures. Listening to lectures and taking notes from them are the most widely used academic skills in the English Department. ***(BACKGROUND).*** The main purpose of the present study is to examine the students" lecture comprehension and note taking strategies ***(AIM OF THE STUDY)*** Effective listeners employ certain strategies to understand lecture content and note down useful information. Five research tools (observation of authentic lectures, a test of lecture comprehension, the subjects" lecture notes, survey questionnaires and an analysis of instruction in listening and note taking in the English Department) were used **(*METHODS*)** to investigate the strategies the subjects use to comprehend lectures and take note from them. The findings obtained seem to indicate that most of the subjects were not using efficient lecture comprehension and note taking strategies, and that listening instruction was not providing adequate training in these strategies **(*FINDINGS*).** Recommendations are offered to improve the ability of students in Algerian English Departments to learn better from lectures **(*RECOMMENDATIONS*).**

Abstract 2 (*Bhatia's Framework*):

Thesis Title: ***Developing Metacognitive Awareness in Writing: An Instructional Framework for LMD EFL Students.***

This research work attempted to explore the interrelationship between writing, learning and thinking, and to suggest an academic framework that would promote learning and writing strategies alike by developing metacognitive awareness in the writing process, through a blended learning instructional model that combined principles from the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach and Computer-Assisted Instruction. **(*PURPOSE*).** For this purpose an experimental study was conducted with first year students at the English Department (Blida University) using different teaching and investigative techniques, mainly a metacognition-raising questionnaire, self and peer reflection/evaluation sheets, classroom conferencing, a distant learning platform, and the analysis of the students' writing and EFL grades. The implemented framework proved to be successful in raising students' metacognitive awareness in writing, and led to the informants' academic achievement both in writing and in English learning. Nevertheless, the consideration of the different analytical procedures highlighted students' writing and learning needs and consequently required enriching the formerly-suggested model with another approach (Writing Across the Curriculum) in order to meet those needs and arrive to a more effective writing and EFL university instruction **(*METHODS*).** Therefore, this experimental study resulted in acknowledging the importance of raising students' metacognitive awareness in writing for academic success, and recognised the need for technology contribution in EFL learning/teaching, in order for students to adhere to digital communication **(*MAIN FINDINGS*).** The proposed instructional model is then highly recommended, mainly within the LMD context where reflective and self-regulated learning as well as learner autonomy represent major objectives **(*MAIN CONCLUSIONS*).**

Comment: The two abstracts meet the requirements of effective abstract writing and include all the key elements identified in both frameworks.

Example of Ineffective Abstract

The following abstract is extracted from a Master's dissertation titled: **"*An Exploration into the EFL Learners' Speaking Skills Difficulties*."**

Please note that:

- Except for the title, no information from the dissertation has been cited in order to preserve the author's anonymity.
- The abstract has been copied and pasted exactly as it appears. No changes have been made, and we are not responsible for any linguistic errors that may be present.

English has become increasingly the vehicle language used for communication across the globe. This fact led to the increase in demand and urgent need of learning and teaching the target

language. Historically speaking, the Algerian educational system paved the way for making the progress of teaching/learning process by adopting several approaches and methods. It is virtually certain that the main pre-requisite of mastering the language, is to speak accurately and fluently. Nevertheless, our traditional classrooms still emphasis on writing and reading at the expense of speaking skills and make no attempt to assessment during the academic year. Therefore, teaching speaking skills represents a great challenge for both the EFL teachers and their learners who display low achievements in their oral skills. **(*BACKGROUND*)**

The current study is conducted with first-year secondary school pupils at Said Messoud lycée in Ouled Mimoun, a small village around Tlemcen. It tends to explore the main causes and factors that determine the difficulties of pupils' oral proficiency; and to find out the remedial strategies that can be approached for promoting speaking skills. **(*PURPOSE*)**

This dissertation is split up into four interrelated chapters; the introductory chapter is a theoretical background of the speaking skills and deals with some principal tools and techniques of assessing oral proficiency as far as EFL context is concerned. The second chapter describes the teaching/learning situation in Algerian secondary education, with the focus on research procedures used for collecting and analyzing data.

The third chapter reports on the results obtained from the research tools, and provides both qualitative and quantitative analyses. Lastly, on the basis of the findings obtained in this chapter, some recommendations and implications are drawn for EFL teachers and learners to overcome the common obstacles that hinder the oral performance in the target language. **(*DISSERTATION STRUCTURE*)**

Comment: This abstract exhibits several weaknesses, which are listed as follows:

- It is presented in multiple paragraphs, whereas it should be written as a single, cohesive block.
- Three core elements are missing: Methods, Main findings, and Main conclusions.
- The background section is overly lengthy and contains unnecessary details.
- The author refers to the structure of the dissertation (i.e.; its chapters), which is inappropriate for an abstract; such detail belongs in the general introduction.

<u>Activity:</u> In light of what you have learnt in this unit, assess the quality of the following abstract:

This research work highlights the important role of Information and Communication

Technologies (ICTs) in enhancing EFL learners' oral language proficiency. Firstly, it gives a general overview on ICT and speaking skill.

It provides a theoretical description of its integration as a new tool for education that is used in EFL classes; then students' speaking ability will be improved and consequently they will be interested in learning the oral production module. Then, they will be competent speakers of the target language. To confirm these hypotheses, two research tools: interview for teachers, questionnaire for first year in the English Department students at Abou Bekr Belkaid University are used to investigate this topic.

The present research is organized into three chapters. Being the literature review of the present thesis, the first chapter discusses some key-concepts used in the work, including a theoretical overview of ICT, its evolution in foreign language learning, speaking skill and the teaching of oral production in EFL classes. Then, it describes the importance of using ICT in oral courses to enhance EFL learners' speaking abilities. At last but not least, the second chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from teachers' interviews and students' questionnaires. Next, the main results are discussed and interpreted by making reference to the major findings of the gathered information. Finally, chapter three provides some suggestions and recommendations for further research related to the effective role and impact of ICTs in oral expression lectures.

References

1. Bhatia, V.K. (2013). *Analyzing genre: Language use in professional settings* (2nd ed.). Routledge
2. Hyland, K. (2004). *Disciplinary Discourses*, Michigan Classics Ed: Social Interactions in Academic Writing. University of Michigan Press.

3 General Introduction of the Dissertation

Learning Objectives: By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Identify the main parts that make up a successful introduction
2. Analyze sample introductions to identify strengths and weaknesses based on the criteria discussed in the lecture.
3. Write the general introduction for a Master's dissertation

Please note that, in the examples presented in this unit, only the dissertation titles are shown; all other details have been omitted to preserve the authors' anonymity.

The general introduction is a key component of any academic paper, including dissertations. It is considered one of the most difficult sections to write because it must capture the reader's interest and demonstrate the significance of the study and its contributions to the field.

3.1. Schematic Structure of the Introduction

Genre writing scholars (e.g.; Creswell, 2012; Hyatt & Roberts, 2024; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007) agree that the introduction of a dissertation should include the following key elements:

3.1.1. Background of the Study

This section aims to familiarize the reader with the research topic and set the context for the study by:

- Identifying the context in which the study takes place and providing any necessary background information to clarify this context.
- Highlighting the key constructs and theoretical frameworks relevant to the study.

When writing this section, make sure to address the following questions:

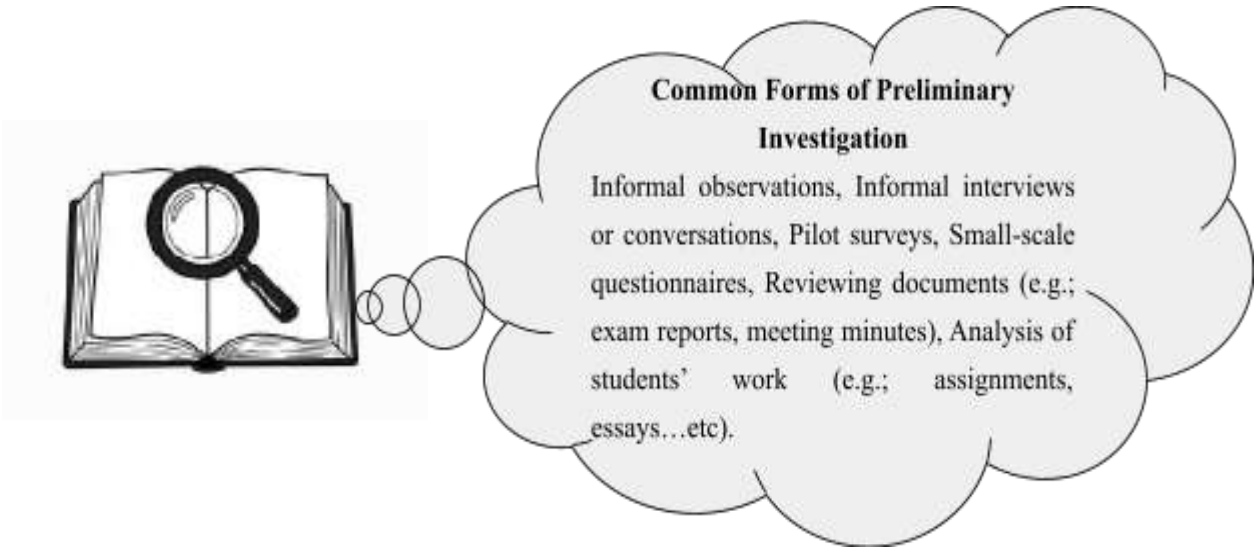
Q1: Are there any theories, concepts, or ideas that the audience may not be familiar with and require further explanations?

Q2: Is there any historical or contextual information needed to explain why the current issue has emerged?

Q3: Are there any concepts borrowed from other disciplines that might be unfamiliar to readers and need clarification?

3.1.2. Problem Statement

- This section provides a detailed description and explanation of the issue under investigation, clearly linked to the context and population of the study.
- Any claims made by the author in this section should be supported by concrete evidence. In other words, you should explain how you identified and became aware of the problem. This can be done by conducting a preliminary investigation to ensure that the issue is relevant to the specific context of your study.
- When formulating your problem statement, avoid including unsupported assumptions and overgeneralized claims that extend beyond the scope of your research.



Example of Good Problem Statement:

Title of the Dissertation: ***The Effect of Peer Review on the Writing Skills of Undergraduate Students of English as a Foreign Language***

The following problem statement is well constructed and effectively aligns with the requirements previously discussed.

> The awareness of the issue stemmed from classroom observations and discussions with students and teachers of the Reading and Writing course at the English department of University of Blida 2, revealing that traditional teaching methods such as lecturing and homework assignments were inadequate in addressing students' writing proficiency challenges. Conversations with educators echoed concerns about the inefficiency of current feedback mechanisms, encouraging more interactive and student-centred approaches. To confront this issue, a pilot study was conducted with undergraduate EFL students and writing teachers at University Blida 2, aiming to unveil the problems faced by the students with writing. The study sought answers to three main questions: (1) *What are the prevalent writing challenges faced by EFL students?* (2) *How do students and teachers perceive the effectiveness of current feedback methods?* (3) *What preferences do students have regarding the type of feedback they*

receive? This pilot study took place during the second half of 2022-2023 academic year. Different groups of students of English were sent the links to the short online questionnaire about the difficulties they face in writing, and the feedback model given to them in class. The teachers of writing were also sent an online questionnaire inquiring about their methods used in teaching writing and the type of feedback they used in class. The short study revealed consistent challenges with grammar, vocabulary, structure and a lack of clarity regarding effective feedback mechanisms. Students expressed a preference for both written and verbal feedback and emphasised the importance of increased practice and instruction in writing techniques to improve proficiency.

Examples of Poorly Written Problem Statements:

Problem Statement 1:

Title of the Dissertation: ***Enhancing Students' Writing Skills through Cooperative Learning***

In an English learning classroom the teacher aims to develop the four skills of language. Writing is one of the most important skills which needs to be given great attention, because it is considered as the most difficult process. Nowadays, EFL students at the Department of English at Biskra University face a lot of writing problems that impede them from using and practicing English appropriately. To overcome these obstacles teachers are required to employ different methods and strategies, this will be through cooperative learning, which is the main strategy that helps learners to develop their writing and interaction in the classroom.

Problem Statement 2:

Title of the Dissertation: ***The Place of Culture in the Teaching of English in the Algerian Middle and Secondary Schools***

Foreign Language teaching has always been associated with foreign culture teaching. What is language if not a means of communication operating in a defined socio-cultural context. According to our experience as a teacher of English at the University (and before, at the Secondary School), the majority of the Algerian learners of English find tremendous difficulties to communicate in English, even after several years of study, and even after they pass the Baccalaureate exam. General dissatisfaction with English language teaching in Algeria, particularly at the Middle and the Secondary School has led us to wonder whether the cultural component is adequately taken into account of in the English class at these levels.

What is wrong with the two statements: Several weaknesses can be identified in the two statements:

a. **Both statements contain unsupported assumptions that require concrete evidence.** Examples include claims such as: "*Writing is one of the most important skills ….because it*

is considered as the most difficult process", and "*EFL students at the Department of English at Biskra University face a lot of writing problems*" **(statement 1)**, and "*General dissatisfaction with English language teaching in Algeria, particularly at the Middle and the Secondary School has led us to wonder…*" **(statement 2)**. → In both cases, the authors make strong assertions without providing proof of how they became aware of these problems. This could have been done through a preliminary investigation, needs analysis or contextual data from their research settings.

b. **Problem statement 2 contains overgeneralizations that extend beyond the scope and context of the study**. For instance, the author claims that "*The majority of the Algerian learners of English find tremendous difficulties to communicate in English*"**,** and refers to **"***General dissatisfaction with English language teaching in Algeria, particularly at the Middle and the Secondary School levels*" → In both cases, the author moves beyond the limits of her study by making sweeping claims about ALL Algerian learners and about general dissatisfaction among teachers without presenting any evidence to justify such broad conclusions.

c. **In problem statement 1, the author proposes a solution within the problem statement itself,** as observed in the claim: "*To overcome these obstacles …. this will be through cooperative learning, which is the main strategy that helps learners to develop their writing and interaction*"**.** → In this section, the focus should remain on defining and explaining the problem in relation to the research context. Thus, introducing a solution at this stage undermines the rationale for the study and leaves us (readers) questioning why the research needs to be conducted if the solution has already been identified.

3.1.3. Significance of the Study/Research Rationale

In this section, you should demonstrate the significance of your study by:

- Highlighting its theoretical and practical contributions to the field,
- Identifying the gap in the literature and explaining how your study will address that gap.
- Clarifying how your study differs from previous research on the same topic.

Example of a Good Research Rationale

Thesis Title: *Learning Strategies of Learners of English as a Foreign Language*

The following research rationale successfully serves its communicative function. It is convincing and clearly demonstrates the significance of the study and its contributions to the field.

> In this study, we pay particular attention to showing how cognitive psychology has emphasized the importance of learners' cognitive processes and strategies, as well as pointing out the extent to which learners' individual psychological and affective characteristics can influence the rate of success in the acquisition process. Furthermore, our study also tries to show how some areas which until very recently were neglected, have now come to be the focus of

intensive research because of their relation, albeit indirect, to the acquisition process. E.g. the nature of the 'input', the problem of 'maturation', and so on.

Our prime concern is to show that the development and findings of cognitive science were at the basis of the shift which took place among second and foreign language acquisition researchers, a shift which was characterized by a renewed interest in the learners' cognitive processes and strategies which assist them in their learning task. We pay attention to showing how despite the lack of agreement on a common definition, and a common labeling of the strategies among researchers they have nevertheless come to agree (i) on the existence of learning strategies in the learning process, and (ii) on the necessity of investigating them for pedagogical purposes.

Our study varies from the works reviewed in the literature in many aspects:

a. Most, if not all previous works on learning strategies have been carried out in English-speaking countries (mainly in the US) where the acquisition of English can be equated to the acquisition of a second language in a natural environment, that is to say a language which is used in the learner's everyday life. Our study, instead concentrates on the acquisition of English as a foreign language which is used nowhere outside the classroom environment.

b. Most studies have concentrated on the study of learning strategies at one particular level of language proficiency (either 'immediate' or advanced learners). Our study will look simultaneously at the use of learning strategies at two distinct levels of language proficiency to see if this difference has an effect on the use of learning strategies.

c. Except for Oxford (1990), very few studies have looked at the possible interactions of learning strategies with the acquisition of specific areas of the learning strategies.

d. No study has so far tried to compare students' and teachers' awareness of learning strategies.

Example of a Deficient Research Rationale

Title of the Dissertation: ***The Use of Autonomous Learning as a Factor to Enhance EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension***

This research rationale is very brief and unconvincing as it does not justify the need for the research. It does not identify a specific research gap in the literature or explain what is missing or underexplored in previous studies. In addition, the rationale fails to articulate the study's expected theoretical or practical contributions.

The present study is deemed to be significant in terms of discussing the effectiveness and importance of the reading skill for EFL learners, because it is required not only for successful use of English language but also for their pursuit of higher education and future career, which requires a total self reliance through using several autonomous learning strategies.

3.1.4. Purpose of the Study

- In this section, you are expected to briefly explain what you aim to accomplish in your study and indicate how you intend to address the problem previously outlined in the problem statement.
- When writing the problem statement, make sure to include information about three core elements: **(1)** the variables (for quantitative studies) or the central phenomenon being explored (for qualitative studies), **(2)** the participants, and **(3)** the research setting.
- You may also specify the research approach or design you are adopting such as exploratory, descriptive or experimental.
- An effective purpose statement should be:
  - ➢ **Specific and precise**; not general or too broad
  - ➢ **Concise and clear**; not too vague or confusing
  - ➢ **Goal-oriented:** Expressed in terms of the desired outcomes.

Common Introductory Phrases for Purpose Statements

The current study investigates the relationship between.....
The focus of this study will be on.....
The main purpose of this study is.....
The objective of this research is to determine.....
The present study is designed to examine.....
The purpose of the present study is.....
The purpose of this study is to determine.....
The purpose of this study is to explore the .....

Example of an Effective Purpose Statement

The aim of this **experimental research (*Research design*)** is to investigate the impact of **AI writing tools (*Independent variable*)** on the **quality of academic essays (*Dependent variable*)** produced by **third year EFL students (*Participants*)** at **Blida 2 University (*Research setting*)**. Specifically, the study seeks to determine whether the use of artificial intelligence enhances clarity, structure, and grammatical accuracy.

Example of an Ineffective Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to talk about **some issues** related to **students** and their writing problems **in general**.

Comment: This purpose statement is ineffective because it is:

- **Too broad:** "*some issues*" and "*in general*" do not indicate the clear focus of the study.

- **Not specific:** It does not specify which students, in which context, and what types of writing problems are to be studied.
- **Too vague:** It does not clearly state what the study intends to investigate or measure.

3.1.5. Research Questions

When formulating your research question(s), ensure that:

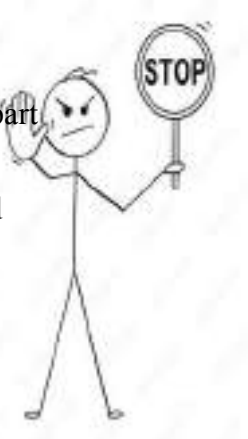
- They are clear enough to guide the direction of your study. This means that any unfamiliar terms of concepts should be defined in *The Operational Definitions of Key Terms*' section so that both you and your readers share a common understanding.
- The research question(s) should be sufficiently focused and specific to be investigated within the particular context of the study.
- Your research question(s) should be intellectually complex. This means, they should not be answerable with a simple yes/no response, nor should they be something that can be typed into a search engine and answered immediately. Instead, they should require critical inquiry, systematic investigation and analysis on the part of the researcher.
- Your research question(s) should include information about three core elements: **(1)** the variables (for quantitative studies) or the central phenomenon being explored (for qualitative studies), **(2)** the participants, and **(3)** the research setting.

Examples of Well-Formulated Research Questions

1. How does the use of collaborative learning techniques impact the writing proficiency of first year EFL students at the English Department, Blida 2 University?
2. What are the main organizational difficulties faced by second-year EFL students, at Blida 2 University, in essay writing?
3. What are teachers' attitudes towards the use of AI tools in Master's students' research writing in the English Department at Blida 2 University?

Important Notes:

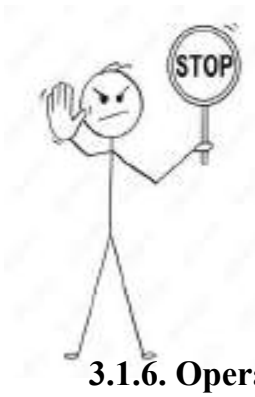
- Avoid framing your research question(s) in a way that asks two or more questions at the same time but expects a single answer. This is because each part of the multi-part question carries different implications for the type of data that must be collected and the methods used to analyze it. For this reason, research questions should be focused and address one clear issue at a time.



Example:

What are the difficulties second-year students face in essay writing, and how effective are teachers' strategies in helping them overcome these difficulties?

Comment: This is problematic because it asks **<u>two different</u>** questions (students' difficulties + teachers' strategies) but expects one answer. Each part requires different data sources and different types of analysis.



- Avoid framing questions that presuppose something untrue or unverified.

Example:

Why are second-year EFL students unwilling to participate in collaborative learning activities?

Comment: The question assumes that students are unwilling even though this has not been established.

3.1.6. Operational Definitions of Key Terms

In this section, you are expected to provide operational definitions of the key terms. This means defining and explaining each term as it is used within the specific context of your study.

Example:

Title of the Dissertation: ***An Investigation of First Year Students' and Teachers' Perspectives toward the Impact of English-French False Friends' Transfer on EFL Writing Skills***

a. **False friends:** In the context of this study, false friends refer to pairs of words between French and English that have, in most cases, the same spelling but do not express the same meaning.
b. **Language transfer:** In the context of this research, this term refers to both the positive and negative effects the French language has on the English language.
c. **Language interference:** In the context of our study, this term refers to the negative impact of French during the learning process of English. Interference, as a word, is going to be used interchangeably with negative transfer throughout this research.

3.1.7. Layout of the Dissertation

In this section, you are expected to provide an overview of the structure of your dissertation, including the number of chapters and a brief description of the content of each one.

Example:

Title of the Dissertation: ***The Effect of Peer Review on the Writing Skills of Undergraduate Students of English as a Foreign Language***

In the subsequent chapters, the dissertation will explore various facets of the influence of peer review on the writing skills of EFL undergraduate students at University of Blida 2 (UB2), Algeria.

In Chapter 1, the Literature Review delves into the historical background of EFL education,

outlining the definition of writing and its application within EFL contexts. It examines the concept of peer review, its historical evolution, and its theoretical framework within writing instruction, emphasising its integration into pedagogical approaches. It also points out several studies on the impact of peer review on writing skills by numerous scholars and researchers in the field of EFL education.

Chapter 2, Research Methodology, provides a detailed account of the research design, participant selection, and data collection methods. Employing a mixed-methods approach, this chapter explains the procedures for conducting experiments on writing skills, distributing questionnaires to students, and conducting interviews with teachers.

The subsequent chapter, Reporting the Results presents the empirical data collected from the study. This will include quantitative data such as pre-test and post-test scores, as well as qualitative data from surveys and interviews.

Chapter 4, Discussion of the Findings and Pedagogical Implications, critically interprets the findings in relation to the research questions, theoretical framework, and existing literature. It explores the implications of the findings, addresses any limitations, and provides insights into how the study contributes to the broader field of Didactics of EFL.

Finally, General Conclusions will summarise the key findings and reflect on the significance of the research in advancing understanding of the role of peer review in enhancing writing skills among EFL undergraduate students at UB2, Algeria.

<u>Activity 01 (Group work):</u> Designing a rubric to assess the general introduction

1. With your team, identify the key elements that should be included in a well-written general introduction of a Master's dissertation.
2. Based on these elements, design an assessment rubric that includes clear assessment criteria, performance levels (excellent, good, fair, weak), and brief qualitative descriptors that explain what each performance level looks like for every criterion.

<u>Activity 02:</u> Comment on the following <u>problem statement</u> and <u>research question</u> based on the criteria discussed in the lecture

1. **Problem statement**

Note: Title of the dissertation is: *"Enhancing Reading Speed for Comprehension in EFL classes."*

'Reading' is by far the most eminent skill that plays a significant role in improving readers' language proficiency, especially in a foreign language setting. Actually, EFL learners basically rely on this skill to acquire knowledge as the FL is seldom spoken outside the classroom. Nevertheless, students tend to handle reading without adequate skillfulness, and this negatively affects their reading efficiency and causes comprehension deficiencies that are not easy to discern.

EFL students, in general, endure serious reading difficulties which are mainly caused by several factors. This is revealed through the great amount of time and effort they invest when they read. Added to this is their inefficient reading which is no more advanced than when they were young children. The majority of students tend to plough through a written print struggling in a word-by-word reading stumbling at every unknown word. This makes it more difficult to grasp the meaning of what they read and causes them to get struck on individual words which may not be absolutely essential to the general understanding of a text.

2. **Research Question:**

Note: Title of the Dissertation: '*An Exploratory Study on Students' Reading Difficulties*'

What are the difficulties encountered by students in reading and what should be done to improve their comprehension?

<u>Activity 03:</u> Read the following introduction carefully and analyze it by identifying and evaluating its main components according to the criteria discussed in class.

Title of the Dissertation: *Teaching and Learning Vocabulary Through Spelling Strategy: A Case Study of First Year LMD Students*

1.Statement of the Problem

Within the context of English as a Foreign Language, it has been observed that students have serious problems in writing. Spelling is one such area where students seem to struggle. Accordingly, should we teach first-year students at the University of Constantine, vocabulary by using spelling strategy? If we do so, this strategy would certainly help them improve their ability to write correctly.

2. Aim of the Study

This research aims at highlighting the importance of word-form; that is, drawing the students' attention to the way words are spelled. We would attempt to discuss the effects of using spelling as a vocabulary strategy on the students' achievement toward mastering the word form.

3. Research Questions

- Should teaching vocabulary be focused on the use of language for purposes that are genuine as much as classroom context would allow students to gain more language competence in the long run?
- To meet students' needs and teachers' academic goals, would spelling strategy be adopted to promote students' proficiency to acquire as much as possible English words?

4. Hypothesis

The following study is related to the nature of the relationship between spelling as a vocabulary strategy and the mastery of vocabulary forms. We hypothesize that if first-year students were trained for better vocabulary writing through the appropriate spelling strategy, they would make fewer mistakes in their writing.

5. Means of Research

To reach the aim of the study, we rely on the dictation test. The test is held through the administration of a pre-test and a post-test to the learners. The pretest paves the ground to view the current level of students' writing, and the posttest reveals the effectiveness of spelling strategy which was the central point in the two lessons given in the intermediate period.

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1. Creswell, J.W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson.
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3. Lunenburg, F.C. & Irby, B.J. (2008). *Writing a successful thesis or dissertation: Tips and strategies for students in the social and behavioral sciences*. Corwin Press.
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The Literature Review Chapter

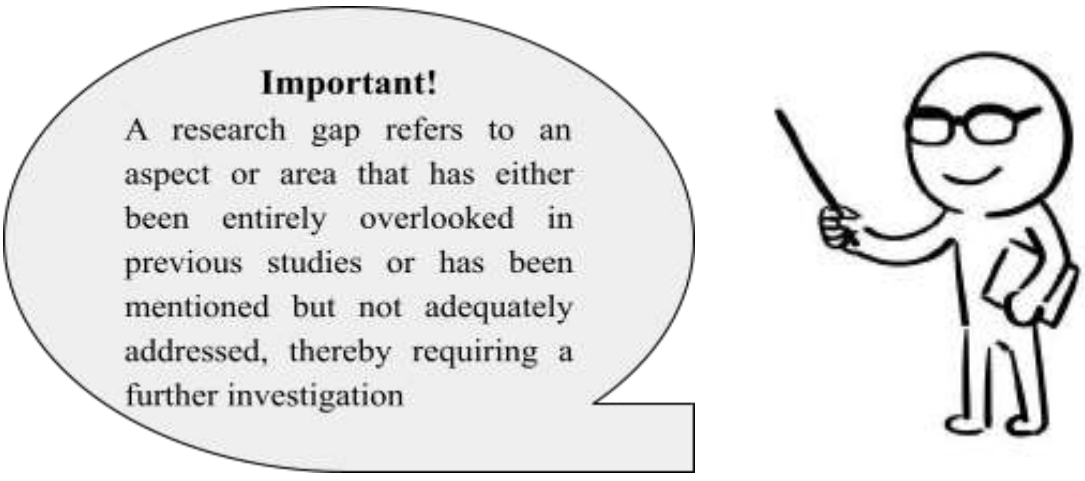
Learning Objectives: By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Explain the purpose and functions of the literature review in academic research.
2. Locate relevant academic sources using appropriate search strategies.
3. Evaluate sources in terms of relevance, credibility and methodological quality.
4. Produce a coherent and logically structured literature review chapter appropriate for a Master's dissertation.

Please note that, in the examples presented in this unit, only the dissertation titles are shown; all other details have been omitted to preserve the authors' anonymity.

4.1. What Is a Literature Review?

A literature review is not merely a descriptive summary of previous studies. Rather, it involves an **analytical and critical evaluation** of existing research within the field of interest. This process requires identifying **areas of agreement and disagreement** among sources, **critically examining the ideas** advanced by other scholars, demonstrating how the literature **supports or contradicts** the problem under investigation, and identifying the **research gap** that the study seeks to address.



Among the various definitions of *Literature Review*, the one proposed by Paltridge and Starfield (2007) is considered particularly comprehensive as it outlines the major steps involved in reviewing previous related research. For them,

> A literature review needs to focus on the major findings of the studies that are reported on, when they were carried out and who they were carried out by. Reports on studies directly related to the student's project should be discussed in more detail, including information about the methodological approach used, data collected and analytical procedures used on the study. The literature review also needs to include critical comment on these studies, telling the reader which are the best studies, and why, rather than just presenting factual information about the studies that are being reviewed (p. 100).

4.2. What a Literature Review Is Not?

- A literature review is NOT an annotated bibliography in which individual sources are merely summarized or described. Instead, it involves synthesizing relevant studies around common themes and guiding concepts.
- A literature review is NOT a platform for presenting personal opinions, assumptions, or unsupported arguments. Rather, all claims should be grounded in empirical studies conducted by other researchers or in theories advanced by established scholars in the field.
- A literature review is NOT a position paper. When engaging with existing research, you should avoid selecting only studies that confirm your own views and ignoring those that offer opposing perspectives. In case you want to share a particular position and justify it, you should do that within a balanced discussion that recognizes the value of different approaches and perspectives. An effective literature review, therefore, involves comparing and contrasting different viewpoints and critically discussing the strengths and limitations of each.

4.3. Purposes of the Literature Review

Reviewing relevant literature serves the following purposes (Hyatt & Roberts, 2024; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007):

- It provides conceptual clarity by defining key terms and concepts relevant to the research context.
- It acknowledges influential scholars and foundational works in the field.
- It offers an overview of ongoing debates, unresolved issues and areas of scholarly disagreement.
- It examines the relationships between theories, ideas, and their practical applications.
- It critically evaluates the methodological approaches and research techniques adopted in previous studies.
- It helps you identify appropriate methodologies and research instruments that can inform the design of your study including data collection and analysis procedures.

- It helps you uncover weaknesses and limitations in earlier research and avoid similar methodological shortcomings in your own study.
- It justifies the relevance and significance of your study through highlighting gaps and underexplored areas in previous research.
- It demonstrates how your research is linked to the studies reviewed and contributes to the existing body of knowledge.

4.4. Source Materials for the Literature Review

According to Efron and Ravid (2019), sources can be broadly categorized into the following types; each type varies in terms of originality, perspective, and level of analysis:

4.4.1. Primary Sources: They are original, firsthand accounts created by the researchers who conducted the study. They provide direct insights into the research process and findings. Examples include research reports, field notes, articles authored by the researchers themselves, interviews, diaries, videos, and audio recordings.

4.4.2. Secondary Sources: They interpret, summarize or analyze primary sources. They offer critical comments or discussion of the original research rather than presenting new or firsthand data. Examples include journal articles or reports that review or critique prior studies.

4.4.3. Tertiary Sources: They provide an overview, synthesis or critical evaluation of primary and secondary sources. Common examples include encyclopedias (such as Wikipedia), textbooks, handbooks and manuals.

4.5. Conducting and Writing the Literature Review

This process involves the following key steps. Each step contributes to developing a comprehensive, coherent, and critical review of relevant literature (Leite, Padilha, & Cecatti, 2019; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007; Ridley, 2012).

4.5.1. Gathering and Reading Sources: This involves searching for relevant academic sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, theses and conference papers. These sources are then read carefully and critically to understand key concepts, theoretical frameworks, methodologies and findings. Consequently, this process enables the researcher to identify gap(s) and debates in the existing literature.

4.5.2. Evaluating Sources: This involves:

- ➢ Critical assessment of the relevance and quality of the materials consulted before incorporating them into your literature review.
- ➢ Examining the reliability of the publication, the strengths and limitations of the study (e.g.; problem statement, research design, sampling, instruments, analysis), and the extent to which the material directly addresses the research problem.

For further details on assessing the relevance and quality of sources, refer to the following handout by Dr. Missoum, M.:
https://www.academia.edu/143767886/Research_Skills_Course_Evaluating_the_Relevance_and_Quality_of_Sources

Open Access Literature

1.CORE: Aggregating the world's open access research papers: https://core.ac.uk/

2. British Library EThOS: http://ethos.bl.uk/Home.do

3. Dissertations and Theses:https://pqdtopen.proquest.com/search.html

4. B-ok.org: http://b-ok.org/

5. EBOOKEE: https://ebookee.org/

6. Booksee. Org: http://en.booksee.org/

7. Memory of the world: https://memoryoftheworld.org/#/books/

8. Sci-Hub: https://sci-hub.se/

9. Theses and Dissertations: http://search.ndltd.org/

10. Z- Library: http://fr.booksc.org/

Questions to Consider When Critically Evaluating a Research Article

1. Does the abstract include all the essential elements? If Not, what is missing?
2. Is the research problem clearly stated? If Not, what is the problem?
3. Is the research rationale clearly stated? if Not, what is wrong with it?
4. Is the purpose of the study clearly stated? If Not, what's the problem?
5. Does the researcher provide a detailed description of the research design (type, rationale for selection?...etc)
6. Does the researcher provide a detailed description of the research participants (How many? rationale for selection? criteria for inclusion?)
7. Does the researcher provide a detailed description of the research instruments (what are they? rationale for selection?)
8. Does the research discuss the findings?
9. Does the researcher offer pedagogical implications based on the research findings?
10. Does the researcher acknowledge the limitations of the study?
11. Do the conclusions made by the researcher make sense to you?
12. Does the researcher answer the research questions?

4.5.3. Writing the Literature Review: The literature review has the format of a standard essay. It consists of three main parts: introduction, body, and conclusion.

a. **Introduction:** This part aims at:
   - ➢ Establishing the focus of the study by clearly identifying the topic under investigation.
   - ➢ Highlighting the significance of the topic.
   - ➢ Outlining the main themes and arguments covered and the sequence in which they will be presented in the body along with a brief explanation of the rationale for this organization.

b. **Body:** It is organized into clearly defined sections and sub-sections. Its primary function is to:
   - ➢ Provide a comprehensive overview of the research phenomena relevant to the study.
   - ➢ Critically examine previous related research by highlighting both its strengths and limitations.
   - ➢ Identify and explain gaps in the existing literature.
   - ➢ Synthesize earlier studies by demonstrating points of convergence and divergence among scholars' ideas, and establishing clear link between prior research and the focus of the current study.

c. **Conclusion:** It brings the literature review chapter to a close by:
   - ➢ Synthesizing the key themes discussed throughout the chapter.
   - ➢ Connecting the review to your study by demonstrating how your research addresses the research gap and contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the topic.

4.6. Common Structure-related Issues in the Literature Review Chapter

4.6.1. Irrelevant Content: Based on my experience in supervising and assessing Master's dissertations, many students often refer to studies or ideas that fall outside the scope of their topic or fail to address their research question(s). To ensure coherence and relevance, the literature review should include only studies that are directly connected to the research topic, and the aspects discussed from each study should clearly align with the guiding sub-headings and research question(s).

4.6.2. A Shopping List: Another frequent issue in literature reviews is treating them as a mere catalogue of sources where books and articles are listed one after another without meaningful connection. Instead, an effective literature review moves beyond simple description by synthesizing existing studies and demonstrating how they relate to one another. It should also draw attention to inconsistencies among findings and identify gap(s) in the body of research.

4.6.3. Over-reliance on Low-quality Sources: Excessive use of sources that lack academic rigor, such as blog entries, opinion-based texts, and daily news articles, represents another serious issue in many literature reviews. To ensure scholarly quality, a literature review should be grounded primarily in journal articles published in reputable, peer-reviewed academic journals. In addition, books authored by recognized experts in the field and issued by established academic publishers may be consulted.

4.7. Common Writing and Style-related Issues in the Literature Review Chapter

4.7.1. Using Emotional Phrases: The literature review should be written in an objective and neutral style. Since its purpose is to report and synthesize existing scholarly perspectives on the research topic, your role is limited to presenting what has been established in the literature. As a consequence, subjective language and emotional expressions should be avoided as they are incompatible with the academic nature of this section.

Examples of Subjective Language and Emotional Expressions

Subjective Language	Objective/academic Language
This is a **very important** study.	This study addresses a significant issue in the field.
The results of the study are **shocking and disappointing.**	The results of the study indicate unexpected patterns.
The author provides **an excellent** analysis of the problem.	The author provides a detailed analysis of the problem.
The research findings **prove** that students hate academic writing.	The research findings suggest negative attitudes towards academic writing.
Unfortunately, the results were **not convincing**.	The results were inconclusive.

4.7.2. Including Long URLs (Web addresses) in the Body of the Literature Review: Rather than inserting URLs in the literature review to point to cited articles or research reports, sources should be acknowledged through standard in-text citations using the author's last name and year of publication. The corresponding URL should then be provided only in the reference list under the full bibliographic entry for that source.

„PRACTICE"

<u>Activity 01:</u> Write a critical analysis of the following article:
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042814012117

<u>Activity 02:</u> Based on what you have learnt in this unit, design a detailed assessment rubric to evaluate the literature review chapter.

<u>Activity 03:</u> Use the rubric you designed in activity 02 to assess the following excerpt from the literature review chapter of the Master's dissertation titled: *The Impact of Integrating English in the Algerian Universities: Language Proficiency and Students' Academic Performance: The Case of L2 Biology Department at University of Saad Dahleb, Blida, Algeria*
Link to the document: ***Literature review for analysis (1).pdf***

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1. Efron, S.E. & Ravid, R. (2019). *Writing the literature review: A practical guide*. The Guilford Press.
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4. Lunenburg, F.C. & Irby, B.J. (2008). *Writing a successful thesis or dissertation: Tips and strategies for students in the social and behavioral sciences*. Corwin Press.
5. Paltridge, B. & Starfield, S. (2007). *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language: A handbook for supervisors*. Routledge.
6. Ridley, D. (2012). *The literature review: A step-by-step guide for students*. SAGE

APA Style

Learning Objectives: By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Identify situations that require citation in academic texts including summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting.
2. Apply APA in-text citation rules accurately for different types of sources.
3. Compile a correctly formatted reference list in accordance with APA style requirements.
4. Recognize common APA citation and referencing errors in sample academic texts.

Please note that, in the examples presented in this unit, only the dissertation titles are shown; all other details have been omitted to preserve the authors' anonymity.

Sources referred to in the dissertation, whether published or unpublished, must be clearly stated. All sources of information must be properly acknowledged both in the text and in the list of references. There are several referencing systems used in academic writing, including the author-date system of the American Psychological Association (APA), commonly used in the social sciences and education, and the Modern Language Association (MLA) style which is typically used in literature and civilization studies. At Blida 2 University, students in Didactics are advised to follow the APA style guidelines for citation and referencing.

6.1. In-text Citation Rules

6.1.1. Author Citation:

A. Provide brief information on the author, year of publication in round brackets.

Examples:

a. According to **Lorés (2004),** on the basis of their structure, content and communicative functions, abstracts can be categorized into two major types: indicative and informative abstracts.

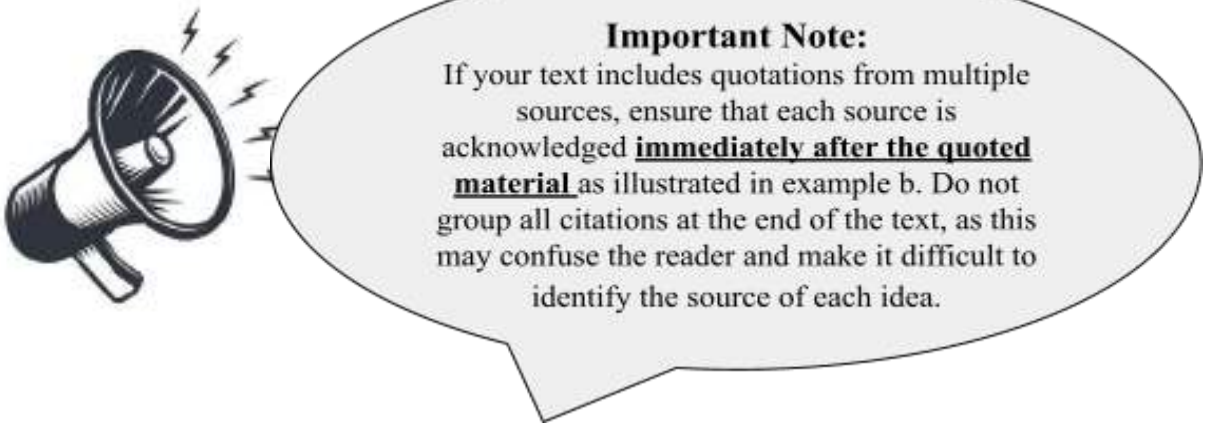
b. The aim of abstracts is to inform readers of the main points of the whole paper whereas, introductions aim at stating research in context and showing why the research is important to do **(Swales, 1990)**.

B. When material is quoted verbatim, the page number must be included.

Examples:

a. **Halperin and Heath (2012)** state: "once you have formulated a good research question, the rest of the research process becomes far easier and clearer, and moves along much faster" **(p.102).**

b. One assumption is that "…grammatical shifts do not occur in literary texts arbitrarily" **(Johns, 2002, p.23)** and should "not be treated lightly" **(Panavelil, 2011, p.12)**



C. If the quoted material spans more than one page, use the following format:

(Brown, 2002, pp. 120-130) Or Brown (2002) "....." (pp. 120-130)

6.1.2. Single Author:

➢ The author's name and year of publication should be included at the appropriate place within the text. If the author's name is mentioned as part of the sentence, the year of publication should appear in round brackets immediately after the author's name.

Example:

Moreover, **Creswell (2012)** notes that qualitative research questions are divided into two types: the central question and sub-questions.

➢ When the author's name does not appear in the sentence, the author's last name and the year of publication should be placed in round brackets at the end of the sentence, before the period.

Example:

The literature review is an ongoing activity which involves two main processes which are selecting relevant documents to the researcher's topic and evaluating their academic quality **(Hart, 1998)**.

6.1.3. Co-authors:

➢ When a source is written by two authors, both authors' names should be mentioned whenever the source is cited in the text.

Example:

> **Richards and Rodgers (1986)** point out that there are two main language learning theories: process-oriented theories and conditionoriented theories.

➢ When a source has more than two authors, all authors should be cited the first time the reference appears. Subsequent citations should include only the first author's last name, followed by "**et al.**" and the year of publication.

Examples:

> **a. First Citation:**
> According to **Scheneider, Whitehead, LoBiondo, and Haber (2013)**, sample size in qualitative research is not as important as in quantitative research due to the fact that main focus in the latter is on the representativeness and inclusiveness of the sample whereas, qualitative research aims at gaining in-depth understanding of the problem being explored.
> **b. Subsequent Citation:**
> This is why researchers who conduct qualitative studies usually start without "a pre-determined sample size" as the answer to "how many people should be included in the study?" is not clear **(Scheneider et al., 2013, p.127).**

6.1.4. Organizations as Authors:

➢ When an organization (e.g., association, corporation, research group) is the author of a source, its name should be written in full in in-text citations. In the case of well-known organizations, the full name should be provided in the first citation and maybe abbreviated in subsequent citations.

Examples:

> **First Citation:**
> The **American Psychological Association [APA] (2020)** provides detailed guidelines for academic writing.
> **Subsequent Citation:**
> According to **APA (2020)**, consistency in referencing is essential.

6.1.5. Authors with the Same Last Name:

➢ When citing two authors who share the same last name, add their initials or first names in the in-text citation to avoid confusion.

Examples:

a. **Two authors with the same last name and different initials:**

Smith, J. (2020) studied language acquisition in children.
Smith, L. (2018) investigated second language learning strategies**.**

b. **Two authors with the same last names and same initial. Add their full first names if available**

Brown, Amanda (2015) explored classroom motivation
Brown, Anthony (2019) examined assessment methods.

6.1.6. Multi-references:

➢ When citing multiple sources simultaneously, list them in parentheses, separated by semicolons.

Example:

This is due to the fact that conducting a literature review is the most daunting task for almost all students which requires hard work and competency **(Cooley & Lewkowicz, 2003; Mathews & Kostellis, 2011; Oliver, 2012; Shaw, 1991; Swales & Feak, 2000).**

➢ When an author has more than one publication, the years of publication should be separated by commas.

Example:

Richards and Rodgers (1993, 2002) argue that language teaching methods are grounded in theoretical assumptions about language and learning, and are realized through specific classroom practices.

➢ When two or more works by the same authors are published in the same year, lowercase letters (e.g., a, b, c) should be added to the year of publication to distinguish between them.

Examples:

a. **Smith (2020a)** argues that academic writing requires clarity.
b. **Smith (2020b)** emphasizes the role of coherence and cohesion in research reports.

6.1.7. Sources with No Years of Publication:

When the work has no year of publication, the author‟s name is followed by a comma and “n.d.” (no date).

Example:

Smith (n.d.) argues that academic writing requires careful source acknowledgement.

6.1.8. Citing Religious Sources:

To cite a specific part of the Qur'an, write down the source, i.e., Qur'an, the Surah name and verse number in text.

EXAMPLE

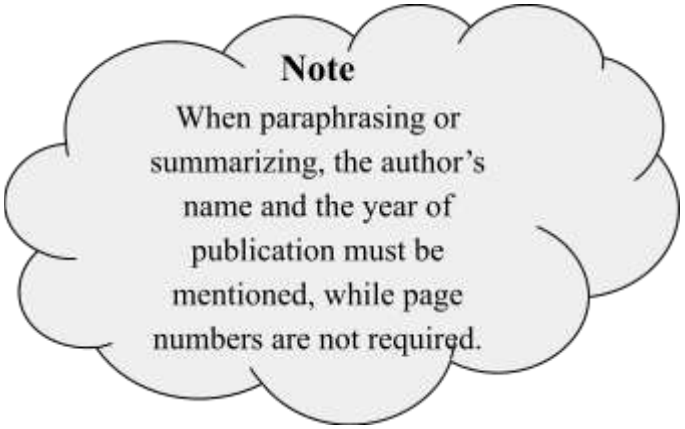
"As for those who devour interest, they behave as the one whom Satan has confounded with his touch. Seized in this state they say: "Buying and selling is but a kind of interest" - even though Allah has made buying and selling lawful and interest unlawful. Hence, he who receives this admonition from his Lord, and then desists [from usury], may keep his previous gains, and it will be for Allah to judge him. As for those who revert to it, they are destined for the fire, therein to abide." **(Qur'an, AlBaqarah: 275)**

6.2. Techniques for Incorporating Material from Sources

The following are the main techniques used by researchers to incorporate material from other sources in their writing:

6.2.1. Paraphrasing: This involves using a material from another source to support the researcher's own idea(s) by restating the original idea in the researcher's own words and structure.

6.2.2. Summarizing: The researcher may summarize a cited text in their own words in order to present the key points of an author's arguments or ideas without changing the original meaning.



6.2.3. Quoting: This occurs when researchers incorporate verbatim material from a source into their own text.

6.2.3.1. Short Quotations:

They consist of verbatim excerpts of up to three lines (approximately 25 - 30 words) that are incorporated into the researcher's own text. These excerpts are enclosed in quotation marks.

Example:

Breen (1984) states that **"**a process syllabus addresses the overall question: "who does what with whom, on what subject matter, with what resources, when, how, and for what learning purpose(s)?**" (p.34).**

6.2.3.2. Long Quotations:

They consist of more than three lines (or more than 30 words). They should be indented and set off from the main text as a separate paragraph to indicate that they are not part of the researcher's own text. In long quotations, the font size may be reduced and the period is placed at the end of the quoted text before the parenthetical reference with no full stop after the citation. In this case, quotation marks are not used.

Example:

In the task-based syllabus, many problems become apparent. These problems are better presented by **Burcu (2014)** as:

> The limits with second language acquisition and classroom research because of inconsistent methodology; little empirical support available for parameters of task classification and grading; the difficulty of defining the concept 'task'; decreased learner autonomy due to preplanning and guidance; no complete implementation and evaluation of this type of syllabus. **(914)**

IMPORTANT NOTES

- The page number must be mentioned when using direct quotations. If the page number is not available, the sentence(s) should be paraphrased.
- Three dots indicate an ellipsis (i.e.; omitted material). Four dots are used between sentences to indicate that the final dot represents the period.
- Direct quotations must be verbatim; they must be exactly the same as the original source; even if the source contains errors.
- The word 'Sic' may be inserted in square brackets immediately after the error to indicate that the error appears in the original source.
- You can highlight specific expressions within a quotation.
  - ➢ When part of the quoted text is italicized, the phrase *[italics added]* should be placed in square brackets at the end of the quotation.
  - ➢ If emphasis is added using bold type, the phrase **[emphasis added]** should be used instead.
- **Use square brackets,** not parentheses, to enclose material such as an addition or explanation inserted in a quotation by some person other than the original author.

Examples:

a. Long and Crookes (1992) declared that "grading task [sic] are left partly to real time

impressionistic judgments by the teacher." (p.37)

In this example, the term **[sic]** is placed immediately after the word 'task' to indicate that the grammatical error appears in the original source. The author should have written ***tasks*** (plural) rather than *task* (singular).

b. **"They are studying, from an evolutionary perspective, to what extent *[children's]* play is a luxury that can be dispensed with when there are too many other competing claims on the growing brain . . ." (Henig, 2008, p. 40).**

In this example, the researcher adds a word in square brackets to clarify what the pronoun refers to in the quoted text.

c. **In Kwan (2006)'s words, "the differential roles that these parts of a thesis play, together with the different realizations of the CARS model, suggest that the LR and the introduction chapters in ILrMRD *[Introduction, Literature review, Methodology, Result, Discussion]* theses are not structurally entirely the same." (p.52).**

In this example, the researcher inserts explanatory texts in square brackets to explain the abbreviated term ILrMRD and make its meaning clear to the reader.

6.3. List of References

All sources cited in your work must be cited at the end of the dissertation. In some dissertations, a 'bibliography' may be used instead of a reference list. However, students should be aware of the distinction between these two terms.

A **reference list** includes only the sources that have been read and explicitly cited in the dissertation, whereas, a **bibliography** comprises all sources consulted during the research process including both cited and uncited works.

6.3.1. Books

6.3.1.1. A Reference by One Author:

Rule: Author's name (last name followed by initial) + Year of publication + Title of the book + Publisher.

Examples:

Markee, N. (2015). *The handbook of classroom discourse and interaction*. John Wiley & Sons.

6.3.1.2. A Reference by Two or More Authors:

Rule: Authors' names (last names followed by initials) + Year of publication + Title of the book + Publisher.

Examples:

Two authors:

- **Richards, J.C. & Rodgers, T.S. (1986). *Approaches and methods in language teaching.* Cambridge University Press**

Three authors:

- **Ary, D., Cheser, J. & Ashgar, R. (1972). *Introduction to research in education*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.**

6.3.1.3. Specific Edition of a Book:

Rule: Authors' names (last names followed by initials) + Year of publication + Title of the book + Number of the edition + Publisher.

Example:

Brockett, O. (1967). *History of the theatre* (2nd ed.). Allyn and Bacon.

If the book has an editor, the name of the editor must be written.

Rule: Editor(s)' names (last names followed by initials) + Year of publication + Title of the book + Number of the edition + Publisher.

Example:

Crookes, G. & Gass, S.M. (eds.) (1993). *Tasks in a pedagogical context: integrating theory and practice*. Multilingual Matters.

6.3.1.4. Chapters from Books:

Rule: Author(s)' name(s) (last name(s) followed by initials) + Year of publication + Title of the chapter + In + Author (book's author or editor) + Title of the book + Page number(s) + Publisher.

Example:

Stoller, F. (2002). Project work: a means to promote language and content. In Richards, J.C. & Renandya, W.A. (eds.). *Methodology in language teaching: an anthology of current practice*. pp.107-120. Cambridge University Press.

6.3.2. Journal Articles

Rule: Author's Name + Year of publication + Article title + Journal title + Volume number + Issue number + Page number(s)

Example:

Chandee, P. (1991). Three different approaches to syllabus design in language teaching: the advantages and disadvantages. *ABAC Journal*, 11(2), pp. 20-28.

6.3.3. Corporate Documents:

Rule: Name of corporation or institution + Year of publication + Title of the document + Publisher

Example:

Institution of Financial Education. (1982). *Managing personal funds*. Midwestern Publishing.

In case where the author and publisher are the same, the word 'author' should be placed as publisher

Example:

American Psychological Association. (2004). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*. Author.

6.3.4. Translated Works:

Rule: Author's name (last name + initial(s) + Year of translation + Title of the document in italics + The translator's initials + His/her last name + The abbreviation "Trans." + Publisher + Original publication year (preceded by the phrase "original work published").

Example:

Freud, S. (1970). *An outline of psychoanalysis*. (J. Strachey, Trans.). Norton. (Original work published 1940)

6.3.5. Second Work by Same Author:

When two or more works by the same author are included in the reference list, they should be arranged chronologically, with the earliest publication listed first.

Note that entries by a single author should precede works by multiple authors that begin with the same last name as shown in the following examples.

Examples:

a. **Brown, R. (1958). Words and things. Free Press, Macmillan.**
b. **Brown, R. (1965). Social psychology. Free Press, Macmillan.**
c. **Brown, R., & Jenks, B. (1960). Social dilemma. Free Press, Macmillan.**

In the first two entries, chronological order was followed because *Brown* is the sole author of both works. Although the third work was published earlier than the second, it was listed after them because it was co-authored. Single-authored works are listed before co-authored works.

When an author or group of authors publishes more than one work in the same year, the entries should be arranged alphabetically by the title of the works. In such cases, lowercase letters (e.g., ***a,b,c***) should be added after the year of publication.

Examples:

a. **Creese, A. & Blackledge, A. (2010a). Towards a sociolinguistics of superdiversity. *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, 13(4), pp. 549-572.**
b. **Creese, A. & Blackledge, A. (2010b). Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: pedagogy for learning and teaching. *The Modern Language Journal*, 94(1), pp. 103-115**

6.3.6. Thesis or Dissertation (Unpublished)

Rule: Author + Year + Title of dissertation/thesis (unpublished doctoral thesis or unpublished Master's dissertation). Academic institution. Country.

Example:

Sabbagh, S.A. (2009). *Investigating oral presentation skills and non-verbal communication techniques in EFL classrooms* (Unpublished Master's dissertation). American University of Cairo. Egypt.

6.3.7. Thesis or Dissertation from Institutional Database

Rule: Author + (Year) + Title of dissertation/thesis (doctoral thesis/master's dissertation). University, Country. Retrieved from http://url.com

Example:

Benbellal, A. (2022). *Exploring graduate students' challenges in dissertation writing* (Doctoral thesis). Algiers 2 University. Algeria. Retrieved from:http://ddeposit.univ-alger2.dz:8080/xmlui/handle/20.500.12387/2542

6.4. Common Issues in Citing and Referencing Sources

Based on my experience in supervising and supervising Master's dissertations, a number of recurring citation and referencing issues have been observed in literature reviews.

6.4.1. In-text Citation Issues

a. **Author name format:** While APA referencing conventions specify that in-text citations typically consist of the author's last name and year of publication, many students do not adhere to this guideline in their literature review. Instead, they tend to mention both the author's first and last names each time they cite an idea.
b. **Absence of page numbers in direct quotations:** According to APA style guidelines, the inclusion of page number is mandatory when quoting texts verbatim. However, this requirement is frequently overlooked by many students in their literature review chapters. In addition, failure to use quotation marks when producing an author's exact words constitutes a form of plagiarism.
c. **Absence of quotation marks:** According to APA style and other referencing conventions, verbatim text that consists of fewer than 30 words (i.e.; short quotations) must be enclosed in quotation marks. This rule, however, is not consistently observed by many students in their literature review chapters. The omission of quotation marks when copying short passages is considered a form of plagiarism even when the source is cited.
d. **Inconsistent use of referencing styles:** This is a common problem in many Master's dissertations. Many students alternate between two or more referencing systems which result in a hybrid approach of in-text citation. For example, while the MLA style - where only the author's name is mentioned for paraphrased material and a page number is added for direct quotations-, may be used in some sections, other parts of the dissertation may follow APA conventions which require the author's name, year of publication and page number when quoting. Such inconsistency is not acceptable in academic writing as students are required to adopt a **SINGLE** referencing style and apply its conventions consistently throughout the dissertation.
e. **Including the title of a document in in-text citations when the author's name is already provided:** Many students tend to include the title of the document together with the author's name and page number in in-text citations. By doing so, they fail to observe the convention that the title of a source should be mentioned in place of the author's name only when the work is anonymous.

6.4.2. Reference List-related Issues

a. **Absence of publication information in references:** In many dissertations, key publication details are sometimes omitted. For books, students frequently fail to include the year of publication and the publisher. Similarly, for electronic journal articles, essential information such as the year of publication, volume and issue numbers, and the DOI (Digital Object Identifier) or URL (Uniform Resource Locator) is often missing.
b. **Mismatch between in-text citations and the reference list:** Another common issue is the discrepancy between sources cited in text and those listed in the reference section. For example, 30 sources are mentioned in the literature review chapter, but do not appear in the

reference list. Such inconsistencies can raise serious concerns as it becomes unclear whether the students actually consulted the cited sources or whether the sources were accurately documented.

c. **Inconsistent formatting of author names and publication years:** For example, the year of publication cited in the text may not match the year listed in the reference section. Similarly, a work cited in the text as having a single author may appear in the reference list with two or three authors.

<u>Activity 01:</u> Choose the appropriate answer and circle the corresponding letter.

1. **According to the <u>APA</u> style, if the cited resource does not provide a publication or copyright date/year, which of the following options is correct**
   - **a.** (last name, n.d., p.4)
   - **b.** (last name, no date, p.4)
   - **c.** No citation is necessary.

2. In the <u>APA</u> style, if the cited resource does not have an identified author, what information should be provided in the in-text citation?

- **a.** No citation is necessary
- **b.** (Anonymous, year, p.4)
- **c.** (the first few words of the title of the resource, year, p.4)

3. When citing a direct quotation from an electronic document that does not have page numbers, which of the following is the correct way to indicate the location of the information within this e-document?

- **a.** A paragraph number
- **b.** A heading plus a paragraph number within the section
- **c.** An abbreviated heading in quotation marks if the original heading is long.
- **d.** Any of these options, depending on how the information is presented within the document.

4. According to the APA style, if the only way to cite a source is through a secondary source citation, which of the following is the correct format to cite a direct quotation from this source? (**N.B.** in the following examples, Harmer is the author of the text you read, whereas Richards is the secondary author quoted by Harmer)

a. (Richards, 2000, as cited in Harmer, 2004, p.5)
b. (Richards, as cited in Harmer, 2004, p.5)
c. (Richards, 2000, as cited in Harmer, 2004)
d. (Richards, 2000, p.4)

5. According to APA style, which of the following is the correct reference for the article titled "The biological, social and clinical bases of drug addiction: commentary and debate," by J. Altman, B. J. Everitt, T. W. Robbins, S. Glautier, A. Markou, D. Nutt., R. Oretti, C. Philbin, and G. D. Phillips. It was published in 1996 in Psychopharmacology, an online journal, and Volume 125, Issue Number 4, pages 285 – 345.

a) "The biological, social and clinical bases of drug addiction: commentary and debate."(1996). J. Altman, B. J. Everitt, T. W. Robbins, S. Glautier, A. Markou, D. Nutt, R. Oretti, C. Philbin and G. D. Phillips. Psychopharmacology, Volume 125, Issue Number 4 pages: 285 - 345.

b) Altman, J., Everitt, B. J., Robbins, T.W., Glautier, S., Markou, A., Nutt, D., … Phillips, G. D. (1996). The biological, social and clinical bases of drug addiction: commentary and debate. *Psychopharmacology,* 125 (4), 285 – 345.

c) Altman, J., Everitt, B. J., Robbins, T. W., Glautier, S., Markou, A., Nutt, D., Oretti, C. R., Philbin, C., & Phillips, G. D. The biological, social and clinical bases of drug addiction: commentary and debate. Psychopharmacology. Vol. 125, 4 (1996): pp. 285 – 345.

d) Altman, J., et al. "The biological, social and clinical bases of drug addiction: commentary and debate." Psychopharmacology 125.4 (1996): 285 – 345.

Activity 02: The following references are not in correct APA order. Reorder them according to APA 7th edition rules:

a. Brown, T. & Lee, J. (2021). *Academic writing skills*. Routledge.
b. Smith, A. (2019). *Research methods in linguistics*. Palgrave Macmillan.
c. Brown, T. (2018). *Writing the MA dissertation*. Springer.
d. APA. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Author.
e. Smith A. (2019). *Qualitative research approaches*. Oxford University Press.
f. Brown, T., Ahmed, S., & Chen, L. (2020). *Research supervision practices*. Elsevier.

<u>Activity 03:</u> The following are suggested sources. Apply APA style (7th edition) to format them correctly and present them as a References page.

A. Journal Article

Page Number: 45 - 58	**Year:** 2020
Article Title: Academic writing challenges among EFL postgraduate students	**Volume Number:** 6
Author(s): Andrew Smith and Thomas Brown	**Issue Number:** 3
Journal Title: Journal of language and education	
Reference:.....…….	

B. Book Chapter

Author: Ken Hyland	**Year:** 2016
Page number: 58 - 72	**Chapter Title:** academic publishing and the myth of linguistic injustice
Publisher: Routledge	**Book Title:** the politics of English
Editors: C. Lillis and Michael. Curry	
Reference:.....…….	

References

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association 2020: the official guide to APA style* (7th ed.). Author.

The Methodology Chapter

Learning Objectives: By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Identify the main parts that make up a successful methodology chapter
2. Analyze sample method chapters to identify strengths and weaknesses based on the criteria discussed in the lecture.
3. Write the methodology chapter for their Master's dissertation

Please note that, in the examples presented in this unit, only the dissertation titles are shown; all other details have been omitted to preserve the authors' anonymity.

6.1. Communicative Function of the Methodology Chapter

The methodology chapter in the dissertation may carry different titles such as: *Research Design and Procedures, Research Methodology and Tools, Research Approach and Methods,* or *Field Work*.

Regardless of the title chosen, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed account of the research paradigm, the research design, and the procedures used for data collection and analysis. In other words, the methodology chapter should address three key questions:**What, Why,** and **How.**

- **"What"** refers to the research paradigm adopted to examine the problem as well as the tools used to collect data and answer the research question(s).
- **"Why"** explains the rationale for choosing a particular paradigm, selecting specific research instruments, and involving a certain group of participants.
- **"How"** describes the procedures for collecting and analyzing the data, including how data were gathered, how participants were chosen, and how the data were interpreted.

6.2. Schematic Structure of the Methodology Chapter

According to genre-based writing scholars (e.g.; Felix & Smith, 2019; Hyatt & Roberts, 2024; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007), the methodology chapter should include the following key elements:

6.2.1. Introduction:

In the introduction, you should:

- Restate the focus of your study with particular attention to the research methods you intend to use.

- Demonstrate that the chosen methodology is consistent with your research objective(s) and question(s).
- Provide a brief outline of how the chapter is organized as this helps guide the reader and offers a clear roadmap of what will be covered.

6.2.2. Paradigm and Research Strategy:

In this section, you should:

- Describe the research paradigm (i.e., a worldview that explains how knowledge is acquired, such as positivism, interpretivism, or pragmatism) and explain the rationale for your choice.
- Describe the research approach (i.e., qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods) and justify its appropriateness for addressing the research objectives.
- Identify the specific strategy adopted to investigate the issue such as descriptive, exploratory or experimental.
- Justify the choice of the research strategy in relation to the research problem, objectives, research questions and context.

Did You Know?

According to **POSITIVISM:**

- ➢ Science is the primary means of establishing truth and understanding objective reality.
- ➢ Theories are considered valid only if they can be **verified** through observation and measurement.
- ➢ The world exists as an **objective entity** that is **independent** of the observer's mind.
- ➢ Knowledge is understood as statements of belief that can be **tested empirically, are stable**, and **can be generalized**.

According to **INTERPRETIVISM:**

- ➢ Knowledge is **subjective** as it is **socially constructed and dependent** on the **mind and context.**
- ➢ The researcher is inevitably **influenced by their values and past experiences**, which shape the choice of research paradigm, the topic under investigation, and the methods used for data collection.
- ➢ The interpretivist paradigm aims to **understand people's experiences**, and the study is conducted in natural settings where participants live and interact.

According to **PRAGMATISM:**

- ➢ The focus is on **practical solutions** and **real-world outcomes**.
- ➢ It is allowed to use **any** methods (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed) depending on what best addresses the research problem

Example:

Title of the Dissertation: ***The Effect of Peer Review on the Writing Skills of Undergraduate Students of English as a Foreign Language.***

Research Paradigm and Strategy

The choice to adopt **a pragmatic paradigm (*research paradigm*)** in this study is grounded in the need for practical problem-solving and real-world application within the context of University Blida 2, Algeria. **This paradigm aligns with the research goal of observing the effect of peer review on the students' writing skills through the integration of peer review in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum. By prioritising practical consequences and actionable solutions, pragmatism offers a framework that focuses on addressing practical challenges faced by educators and improving teaching practices in the classroom (*Appropriateness of the paradigm*).** Saunders et al. (2009) contended that pragmatism provided a basis for practical research by integrating different perspectives which help to elucidate the data interpretation process in research. This paradigm's emphasis on action-oriented approaches allows for the identification of effective strategies that can be implemented to bring about visible improvements in student learning outcomes.

The adoption of the pragmatic paradigm in this study is justified by its focus on practical problem-solving, real-world relevance, action-oriented approaches, methodological flexibility, contextual considerations, and the potential to generate impactful recommendations that contribute to enhancing students' writing skills and overall learning experiences at University Blida 2 (*Rationale for adopting pragmatism*)

As for the research approach and strategy, the research design of this study employs **an explanatory (*research strategy*) mixed-methods approach (*research approach*)**, **focusing on the impact of peer review on the writing skills (*justifying why quantitative*)** of undergraduate students of English at University of Blida 2. Additionally, it seeks to **investigate the attitudes of both teachers and students (*justifying why qualitative*)** regarding the implementation of this technique in the writing class. By utilising questionnaires administered to both teachers and students, the study aims to gather comprehensive qualitative as well as quantitative data and provide insights into the effect of peer review on writing skills at university level.

Quantitative methods are employed to systematically collect and analyse data, enabling

the derivation of conclusions. This study utilises qualitative analysis to explore the perspectives and attitudes of both teachers and students regarding the effects of peer review through the administration of questionnaires. By merging both approaches, the researchers aim to achieve a comprehensive understanding that is both extensive and insightful.

Recommended Readings on Research Approaches and Strategies

1. Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE
2. Salkind, N.J. (2018). *Exploring Research* (9th ed.). Pearson.

6.2.4. Population and Sample

In this section, you should:

- Provide a detailed description of the study population and explain the rationale for selecting it.
- Describe the sample by presenting the participants' demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, age, academic level) and outlining the sampling strategy and procedures used. This includes specifying whether the sample was obtained through probability or non-probability sampling. If a non-probability sampling method is used, make sure to clarify the criteria applied in selecting the participants.

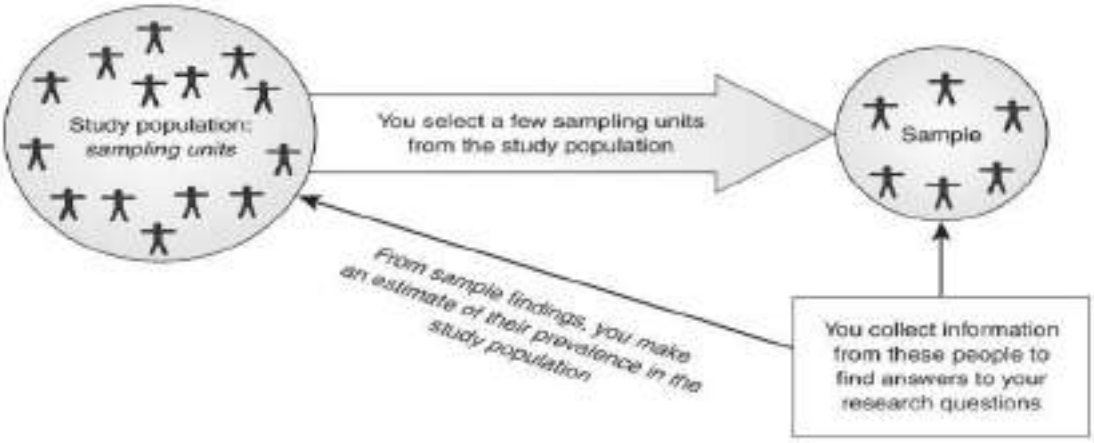
Clarification:

'POPULATION' refers to the entire group of individuals you intend your research findings to apply to.
'SAMPLE' is a smaller group selected from that population (i.e., the specific participants you actually study)

Example:

If you want to investigate the writing difficulties faced by **all first year EFL students** at the English Department, Blida 2 University, that entire group is your **population**.
If you only collect data from **80 students** from that group, those 80 students represent your **sample.**

Figure: Population, Sample, Sampling



Source: Kumar, 2011, p.193

Did You Know?

A. Probability Sampling (Random):

A sampling method in which every member of the population has the same probability of being selected for the sample. Selection is based on the principle of **RANDOMIZATION** and is not affected by personal preference or bias.

B. Non-probability Sampling (Non-random):

Participants are not chosen through a random selection process. Instead, they are selected based on their accessibility or the researcher's purposeful judgment. This means, the selection of participants depends on specific criteria predetermined by the researcher in advance.

Example:

Title of the Dissertation: ***An Investigation of First Year Students' and Teachers' Perspectives toward the Impact of English-French False Friends' Transfer on EFL Writing Skills***

Research Population and Sample

The total size of this research' population included 480 first year EFL students and 16 teachers of writing skills and Linguistics (8 writing skills teachers and 8 Linguistics teachers) in the English Department at Blida 2 University. Out of 480 first year students, **161 students *(sample size)*** (33.2% out of the whole population) have been selected to participate in this research, and 106 of which were selected to answer the questionnaire. However, since four students did not return the questionnaire back, they have been excluded from the study. Therefore, 102 students took part in this study, forming the final student sample. More precisely, 95 females and 7 males within the age group of 17 and 25 years old.

Moreover, out of 16 teachers, **10 Linguistics and writing skills teachers (63%) *(sample***

size), 5 Linguistics and 5 writing skills teachers (1 male and 9 females), participated and were interviewed, for the reason that the other 6 teachers were either unavailable or declined to take part in this research.

Criteria for Inclusion of the Population

The selection of the population in this research followed specific inclusion criteria, in order to ensure relevance to the study's purpose. The reason why the participants had to be first year students is that they represent a larger group at the department, and they are the target group affected by the issue under study since they are freshmen. Considering expertise essential to provide insights into the research's focus, the teachers taking part in the interview had to be specialized and actively teaching writing skills and Linguistics during the study period within the same department and university.

Sampling Techniques

The specific type of sampling used in this study to select the participants was a **probability sampling** (***type of sampling***) for first year EFL students. They were selected randomly according to their availability the three weeks the questionnaire was administered and their willingness to answer the questionnaire. This type of sampling ensures that all first-year students had an equal chance of selection and participation while it helps reduce the possibility of the researchers' bias.

As for teachers, **they have been selected according to what they teach for the reason that their expertise directly aligns with the focus of this study (*criteria for selection*)**; which means **a purposive sampling *(Type of sampling)*** was used. Thus, in order to have better insights into both streams' perspectives on the issue raised, both writing skills and Linguistics teachers have been selected. The teachers also participated according to their availability and willingness to take part of this research after the consent form (See Appendix D) was sent to them.

6.2.5. Data Collection Methods and Procedures

In this section, you should:

- Provide a detailed account of the tools used to collect data and address the research objective(s) and question(s) such as questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations, or experiments.
- Include the name of each tool, its characteristics, intended purpose, appropriateness for the study, and the rationale for selecting it.
- Explain the specific items included in questionnaires and interviews, as well as the procedures followed when administering these tools or conducting experiments to gather data from participants.

Example:

Title of the Dissertation: ***The Effect of Peer Review on the Writing Skills of Undergraduate Students of English as a Foreign Language.***

Note: The researcher used two instruments to examine the effect of peer review on writing skills. The first tool employed was an experiment that included a pre-test, a series of intervention sessions, and a post-test. The second tool was a questionnaire administered to the students in the experimental group as well as to the undergraduate writing instructors. Given the length of the original section detailing the data collection tools and procedures, the following extract presents only one instrument, the questionnaire, as an example of how data collection tools are described and how the procedures are explained.

Questionnaires

The present research employed a questionnaire to collect data about the attitudes of our study participants regarding the inclusion of peer review activities in the Reading and Writing course at the university of Blida 2. This tool was administered to the experimental group only after the last session of the experiment (post-test). The participants were invited to, voluntarily, answer the questionnaire before they left the room.

Description of the Students' Questionnaire

The Students questionnaire (see Appendix D) starts with a paragraph which states the aim of the study and demands their participation to answer the questions. The participants are informed of the anonymity of their identity. Since the data sought is the students' attitudes about the usage of peer review tasks in writing sessions, the researchers opted to divide the questionnaire into sections corresponding to the data needed to answer the research questions. These sections are believed to simplify how we collect the data and code it during the analysis.

Section 1. Demographic Information:

This section aims to gather demographic information from the participants, providing insights into their background characteristics that may influence their attitudes towards and experiences with peer review activities in writing classes. The items included in this section allow for the identification of key demographic variables such as gender, age group, English proficiency level, prior experience with peer review, and frequency of engagement in writing activities outside of academic requirements. Table 2.1 states the aims of each item.

Section 2: Peer Review Experience:

This section of the questionnaire delves into participants' experiences and perceptions regarding peer review sessions. Each item aims to uncover insights into various aspects of the peer review process, including its effectiveness, motivational impact, perceived benefits, comfort level with receiving and giving feedback, preparation, suggestions for improvement, and integration into the curriculum. Table 2.2 shows the aim of each item.

Description of the Teachers' Questionnaire

The teacher questionnaire (see Appendix E) aims to assess teachers' familiarity with and

perceptions of peer review in enhancing writing skills of undergraduate students of EFL. As part of the study investigating the impact of peer review on writing skills at the University of Blida 2, Algeria, it is essential to understand the backgrounds and perspectives of the teachers involved in teaching writing courses.

Data Collection Procedures

In the second semester of the academic year 2023-2024, the researchers conducted a pilot of the tools and instruments to-be-used in the study. During the initial week of the latter half of the academic year, the researchers sought permission from Reading and Writing teachers to conduct the tool-piloting sessions at the end of the session. A small number of each group was given copies of the instruments opted for in data collection, including peer review guidelines, feedback forms, and a questionnaire for students (to be administered post-study).

They were instructed to review the documents and provide feedback on content, language, and formatting. This process was replicated across multiple groups spanning all undergraduate levels to maximise feedback acquisition, which was overwhelmingly positive. Subsequently, the study was scheduled to commence the following week. …Subsequently, students from the experimental group were invited to complete a questionnaire, towards the end of the last session of the experiment mirroring the one utilised during the piloting session at the semester's onset, with an initial response rate of 50% within the first 10 minutes. The teachers were sent a Google Form questionnaire to gather insights into their perspectives and attitudes on the usage of peer review in writing classes at the university level.

6.2.6. Data Analysis Tools and Procedures

In this section, you should:

- Describe the development of the analysis framework.
- Explain the procedures for analyzing and interpreting the data.
- Specify the statistical methods used to analyze quantitative data and the reasons for choosing them.
- Describe how qualitative data are organized, coded, and classified into themes of categories for further analysis.

Example:

Title of the Dissertation: ***The Effect of Peer Review on the Writing Skills of Undergraduate Students of English as a Foreign Language.***

Data Analysis Techniques and Procedures

This section outlines the methodologies and techniques employed for analysing the data collected during the research study. The analysis process encompasses both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research outcomes.

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative analysis involves the use of statistical tools to quantify and interpret numerical data. In the present study, descriptive statistics was employed to summarise the characteristics of the writing scores obtained from the treatment and control groups. This includes measures such as means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, providing a clear overview of the data. Furthermore, inferential statistical analyses, specifically t-tests, were utilised to compare changes in writing scores between the treatment and control groups over time. The t-test allowed the researchers to determine statistical significance differences in the mean scores of the two groups.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis focuses on understanding the underlying reasons, motivations, and meanings behind observed phenomena. In this study, qualitative analysis was conducted to explore the rich insights derived from interview transcripts and survey responses.

Thematic coding, a widely used technique in qualitative research, was employed to identify recurring patterns, themes, and concepts within the qualitative data. This process involves systematically categorising and organising data into meaningful themes, allowing for a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives. Additionally, constant comparison techniques were also utilised to compare and contrast different segments of the data (scores of the students before peer review and after peer review) facilitating the identification of similarities, differences, and relationships among various themes and subthemes such as: constructive feedback, confidence giving feedback, the effectiveness of the peer review, encouragement, developing of writing, collaboration. Combining the quantitative and qualitative analyses, the researchers aim to provide a comprehensive and thorough understanding of the research findings, enabling them to draw valid conclusions and implications for practice and future research on this topic.

<u>Activity 01:</u> The following is a questionnaire used to collect data for an EFL research study. Based on this questionnaire:

a. Write a detailed description of the instrument.

b. A clear and well-organized data collection procedures' section.

Your writing should follow academic conventions and be suitable for inclusion in the methodology chapter of a Master's dissertation.

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teacher,

This questionnaire is addressed to teachers of reading and writing courses at the English department University of Ali Lounici Blida 2. It aimed at understanding the views and practices of teachers in using pre-reading activities as part of their instructional methods. Understanding attitudes can provide insights into the effectiveness of these activities, Informing educators and researchers on potential improvements in teaching strategies.

The information gathered will be analyzed and processed in our research practical part,we politely urge you to complete this questionnaire as accurately as possible.

Please,answer the questions by putting a tick (✓)or a cross (x) in front of the Chosen answer.

Thank you in advance

General information:

1. How many years have you been teaching reading in the English Department?

.....

2. Have you done any study/research on reading?

Yes ☐ No ☐

3. What qualification do you have?

Master ☐

PHD ☐

Section One: Pre-reading Activities .

4. How often do you use pre-reading activities when teaching reading ?

Always ☐ Often ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

5. What pre-reading activities do you prefer to use ?

Asking questions ☐

Making prediction ☐

Previewing ☐

Summarizing ☐

If you chose another ,please specify .....

6. Pre-reading activities facilitate the reading process.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree. ☐

7. Do you think using pre-reading activities in teaching reading is important?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Please justify your answer.....

8. Pre-reading activities can boost student motivation in reading .

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

9. What pre-reading activity do you think is preferable for your students?

.....

Section Two: Reading Comprehension

10. According to your teaching experience, how would you describe the reading level of your students?

Most are above average ☐

Most are average ☐

Most are below average ☐

Reading level varies greatly ☐

11. What is your primary focus in teaching reading? (you can tick more than one)

Reading fluency ☐

Reading comprehension ☐

Grammar ☐

Spelling ☐

12. Do your students experience difficulties in understanding texts or any written materials?

Yes ☐

No ☐

13. Can you give a brief definition of reading comprehension?

....

....

14. How do you guide your students to overcome their reading difficulties?

Ask them to read the text aloud ☐

Try to find out the cause of the problem ☐

Try to explain the general idea of the text ☐

Others, please specify.....

15. During the reading session, how often do you have reading instructions and activities with your students?

Always ☐

Usually ☐

Sometimes ☐

Never ☐

16. What do you usually do if a student falls behind in reading? (you can tick more than one)

Wait and give him time to improve his performance ☐
Spend more time working on reading individually with that student ☐
Assign home works to help the student catches up ☐
Urge him to use reading strategies to enhance his comprehension.☐
Others please specify…….....

Section Three : Relationship between Pre-reading activities and Student's reading comprehension

17 . Pre-reading activities better prepare students for understanding the main ideas and details in the reading material

Strongly agree ☐
Agree ☐
Neutral ☐
Disagree ☐

18. From your experience, how do pre-reading activities impact students' engagement with the text?

Increases engagement ☐
No impact ☐
Decreases engagement ☐

19. How do you believe pre-reading activities influence students' comprehension of the reading material?

Enhances comprehension ☐
No impact on comprehension ☐
Decreases comprehension ☐

20. Have you noticed any improvement in a student's reading comprehension after using pre-reading activities ?

.....

21. How do you assess the effectiveness of pre-reading activities in enhancing a student's reading comprehension?

a. By asking students questions about the text ☐
b. By observing students' engagement during the pre-reading activity ☐
c. By looking at students' reading comprehension scores ☐
d. By using a combination of these methods☐
e. Others (please specify).....

22. What are the challenges of using pre-reading activities for a student's reading

comprehension ?

.....

<u>Activity 02:</u> Based on what you have learnt in this unit, design a detailed assessment rubric to evaluate a Master's level methodology chapter.

Note that your rubric should include the main components of the methodology chapter and clearly describe **different performance levels** (e.g., *excellent, good, fair, weak*) for each criterion. Use appropriate academic and objective language.

<u>Activity 03:</u> ANALYZE the following Methodology section by identifying how it follows the schematic structure discussed earlier in this unit

Title of the Dissertation: ***An Investigation of the Positive Impact of Technology Use on Learners' Speaking Skills: Perspectives of Teachers and Students of the English Department of Blida 02 University, Algeria***

Chapter Two - Empirical Study - Methods & Procedures

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we have presented the literature review related to our research. We reported what other scholars and researchers discussed about the impact of technology use on EFL learners' speaking skill. This first section of Chapter Two deals with the practical study where methods and procedures used to conduct this study are explained. As mentioned before, the present study is designed to investigate the positive impact of technology use on EFL learners' speaking skills according to teachers and students of the English Department of Blida 2 University in Algeria. Thus, in order to carry out this study, a quantitative and qualitative research design is selected. This section consists of the research objectives, the research tools, the population, the sample, and the procedure of data collection.

2.1.1 Research Objectives and Questions

This research is carried out to investigate the positive impact of technology use on EFL learners' speaking skills. It aims at describing how teachers and students perceive this impact. A second goal is to explore students' use of some technological tools to develop their speaking skills. The research design was constructed to collect data about the question that is the following: What is the positive impact of technology use on EFL learners' speaking skills according to teachers and students of the English Department of Blida 2 University, Algeria?

2.1.2 Population and Sampling

The target population of the present study is students (total: four hundred and twenty (420)) and teachers (total: seven (07)) of the English Department at Blida 2 University. One-hundred (100) informants will participate in our study. Questionnaires will be given to sixty-four (65) female

and thirty (30) male students aged between eighteen (18) and twenty-four (24) years old. These students will be randomly from all levels (1st , 2nd, 3rd year LMD students, Master 1, Master 2 students). Additionally, five (5) teachers will be interviewed. The teachers will be selected randomly from the same department. The interview participants will be invited also to complete the teacher questionnaire to have a full picture of their perspectives that will enhance our results. In addition, engaging the same teachers in both processes may make them more engaged and this will lead to detailed responses. We will choose both novice and experienced teachers to have more reliable results.

2.1.3 Research Design (Tools of Data Collection)

In order to collect data about the positive impact of technology on EFL learners' speaking skills in the English Department of Blida 2 University, we can use questionnaires, interviews, observation, and experiments. We wanted to use observation. However, we could not due to the absence of using the types of tools mentioned in our topic (Digital storytelling, social media, computer assisted language learning.) in EFL classrooms, as confirmed by the teachers when we asked whether they use them or not. Consequently, we decided to use a questionnaire with the students and teachers due to their large number and interviews with the teachers only for more details. We wanted to add the speaking syllabus to the tools to find out whether and how technology is represented in the program. However, when we asked speaking teachers to provide us with it, they reported that they do not work with it. They said that the department management told them that they do not need to work with one and they are free to choose what and how to teach the module based on the learner's needs.

2.1.3.1 Student and Teacher's Questionnaire

The teacher and student questionnaires were designed by the researchers. The purpose of the questionnaires is to gain insights into the positive impact of technology use on EFL learners' speaking skills. The teacher and student questionnaires consist of seventeen (17) Closed-ended items about the participants general information (Item 1 and 2), their attitudes about teaching and learning EFL speaking skills and its current practices (From Item 3 to Item 7), the use of technology in teaching and learning EFL speaking skills (From Item 8 to Item 10), and the impact of technology on developing EFL speaking skills (From Item 11 to Item 17) (See Appendix A and B).

2.1.3.2 Teacher Interview

The researchers designed the teacher interview. This interview consists of fifteen (15) open-ended items about their opinions about the impact of technology use on EFL learners' speaking skills. The teacher questionnaire and interview have the same purpose. However, the teacher interview gives more details and an open discussion between the interviewer and the interviewee to add richer information to the questionnaire results.

2.1.4 Piloting of the Research Tools

A pilot study is important to judge the strengths and weaknesses of research tools. For this study,

the researchers piloted the teacher questionnaire with two (2) teachers and the student questionnaire with four (4) students from the English Department of Blida 02 University in person. The pilot participants were asked to complete the questionnaires as well as to give feedback on the questionnaires items especially if there is any issue. We made a small change in the last question because the majority of the students said that since we mentioned different types of social media there is no need of adding social media as a tool at the end of table and they said it is better to remove it.

2.1.5 Procedure of Data Collection

After piloting has been carried out, the questionnaires have been distributed to the students and teachers through Google forms and interviews have been conducted with the same teachers in the English Department of Blida 2 University during the second semester of the academic year 2024-2025. The interview has also been conducted with teachers through face-to-face interaction in the same Department to ensure deeper engagement with participants. Besides, the students and teachers were asked to fill the questionnaires after being informed about the purpose of the study and that their participation in the study will be anonymous. The teachers and student participants took approximately ten (10) minutes to complete the questionnaires.

Conclusion

Throughout this section, we have presented the research tools used and the steps followed in conducting the study. In order to investigate the positive impact of technology use on EFL learners' speaking skills according to teachers and students of the English Department of Blida 2 University, the researchers used two research tools; student and teacher questionnaire and teacher interview. The student questionnaire was completed by ninety-five (95) students from all levels of the English Department; while, the teacher questionnaire was completed by five (5) EFL teachers. The same teachers participated in our interview. Data treatment and presentation will be discussed in the next section.

References

1. Felix, M.S. Smith, I. (2019). *A practical guide to dissertation and thesis writing*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
2. Hyatt, L. & Roberts, C. (2024). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation* (4th ed.). Corwin.
3. Paltridge, B. & Starfield, S. (2007). *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language: A handbook for supervisors*. Routledge.

7 *Questionnaire Design*

Learning Objectives: By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Identify the types of questionnaire items that contribute to an effective questionnaire, as well as items that should be avoided.
2. Analyze selected questionnaires from Master's dissertations and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses based on the criteria discussed in the lecture.
3. Design the first draft of their own questionnaires.

Please note that, in the examples presented in this unit, only the dissertation titles are shown; all other details have been omitted to preserve the authors' anonymity.

7.1. Components of the Questionnaire

7.1.1. Title: It is placed at the top of the questionnaire. It identifies the domain of the investigation, informs respondents about the institution where the study is conducted, and activates the respondents' content schema related to the topic.

7.1.2. General Instructions: They appear at the beginning of the questionnaire in the form of a short paragraph. In this paragraph, the researcher should:

- State what the study is about, why it is important, and which institution is responsible for carrying it out.
- Emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers and that any information provided by the respondent is valuable for the investigation.
- Assure the respondents of confidentiality and anonymity.

7.1.3. Specific Instructions: They accompany the sections and items of the questionnaire. These instructions explain and demonstrate how respondents should answer the questions. They should be graphically highlighted to ensure clarity and visibility.

7.1.4. Questionnaire Items: They are categorized into closed-ended and open-ended items. Further details about these two types are provided in the following sections.

7.2. Types of Questionnaire Items:

7.2.1. Closed-ended Items: Quantitative questions that provide respondents with a fixed set of answer options from which they can choose. In this way, respondents cannot create their own answers; they should only select from the predetermined list of choices. Closed-ended items can be classified into the following four main types:

7.2.1.1. Dichotomous Items: Respondents are offered with only two possible answer options.

Examples:

a. Gender (Please Tick)**:**	*Male	*Female
b. Do you use AI when writing academic papers? (Please Tick)	*Yes	*No
c. Algiers is the capital of Algeria (Please Tick)**:**	*True	*False

7.2.1.2. Multiple Choice Items (MCQs): It is the case where respondents select the answer that best represents their opinions or attitudes from a set of predefined options.

Examples:

a. Do you think that the Academic Writing course in the Master is:

- A waste of time
- An extra burden for the students
- Not very appropriate to the Master
- A useful component
- Practicable and can serve in the other areas of academic research

b. Which online platform(s) do you use most for your academic work:

- Google Meet
- Zoom
- Moodle
- Microsoft Teams
- Other (Please specify).....

IMPORTANT NOTES

➢ It is important to provide a complete set of response categories. To achieve this, add an '**Other**' option, followed by an open-ended prompt such as '***Please specify***'

➢ Guidance should be provided on how to complete the multiple-choice item by specifying whether respondents are expected to select only one option or whether they may choose more than one option from the list

Examples:

a. What is your main source of academic support? (*Tick only ONE option***)**

- My supervisors
- My colleagues
- Online resources
- Workshops and seminars.

b. Which of the following tools do you use when writing your dissertation? (*You can tick more than one option*)

- Grammar Checkers (e.g., Grammarly)
- AI-based writing assistants
- Online dictionaries
- Academic databases
- Paraphrasing tools
- Other (please specify) ……

7.2.1.3. Rank Ordering Items:

Rank order items are similar to multiple-choice items in that they offer respondents with a set of options. However, they go further by requiring them to arrange these options according to their priorities. This format allows the researcher to determine the relative level of preference, importance, or intensity assigned to each option.

Examples:

a. What are the main difficulties you faced during your dissertation writing process? (*Please rank the following challenges from **1** (most challenging) to **5** (least challenging). Use each number only once.*)

- __ Access academic resources
- __ Time management
- __ Lack of supervisor feedback
- __ Low motivation
- __ Language-related difficulties.

b. Why do you use AI-based writing applications?

(*Order the following reasons from **1** (most important) to **4** (least important)*

- __ To improve grammar and vocabulary
- __ To save time
- __ To generate ideas
- __ To check coherence and organization

7.2.1.4. Scalar Items:

They are items used to measure respondents' opinions, attitudes, perceptions, knowledge or level of agreement. Respondents are required to rate their position on a graded scale as shown in the following examples:

Agreement:

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree

Knowledge:

1.Very familiar 2. Somewhat familiar 3. Not familiar 4. Not at all familiar

Frequency:

1. Always 2. Frequently 3. Sometimes 4. Never

1.Regularly 2. Fairly often 3. Seldom 4. Never

1.Very often 2. Fairly often 3. Seldom 4. Hardly ever 5. Never

More examples:

a. **My supervisor is available when I need academic guidance**
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Neutral
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

b. **How often do you use AI applications to support your academic writing?**
   - Always
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Rarely
   - Never

c. **How familiar are you with quantitative data analysis techniques?**
   - Very familiar
   - Familiar
   - Somewhat familiar
   - Slightly familiar
   - Not at all familiar.

7.2.2. Open-ended Items: Qualitative questions that allow respondents to answer using their own words without being restricted to predefined response options. They can be classified into the following types:

7.2.2.1. Specific Open Items: They ask for specific information such as details about the respondents, their past actions, or their personal preferences.

Examples:

a. **What languages have you studied in the past?**

……

b. **Please comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the academic writing course.**

……

c. **How do you usually prepare for your research skills exam?**

7.2.2.2. Clarification Items: Questions that typically follow closed-ended questions and take the form of prompts such as 'Please explain' or 'Whatever your answer, please say why'. These items require respondents to justify their previous answers by providing additional details or explanations.

Examples:

a. **Do you find organizing your ideas for your dissertation challenging?**
   - Yes
   - No

If yes, <u>please describe</u> the specific difficulties you face

……..……

b. **How motivated are you to complete your dissertation on time?**
   - Very motivated
   - Somehow motivated
   - Neutral
   - Not motivated.

……

<u>Please explain</u> the main factors that affect your motivation……..……..

c. **The academic writing course effectively prepared me to write the results and discussions chapters of my dissertation.**
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

If you ticked 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree', <u>please explain</u> why?

……

7.2.2.3. Sentence Completion Items: They are phrased to direct the respondents' attention on a specific, well-defined issue or area, guiding them to provide a targeted response.

Examples:

a. **The part of the academic writing course that helped me the most was**……..
   ……

b. **The most helpful thing my supervisor does for me is**……
   ……..

7.3. Types of Questionnaire Items That Should Be Avoided

7.3.1. Leading Questions: They are worded in a way that encourages respondents to give the answer the researcher expects. These questions imply that there is only one acceptable answer. This can bias the data and reduce the validity and reliability of the questionnaire.

Examples:

a. **Do you agree that students should have more practice in writing classes?**
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

b. **Most medical professionals agree that smoking causes lung disease. Do you:**
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

7.3.2. Double-barreled Questions: They ask about two or more issues at the same time, but allow only one answer.

Examples:

a. **Do you think that the research skills course improves your research skills and prepares you for dissertation writing?**

Comment: In this case, the respondent (student) may feel that the course improves their research skills but does not prepare them for dissertation writing.

b. **What are the major issues you face in writing the literature review chapter and what do you do to alleviate them?**

Comment: In this case, the respondent will find it hard to answer both parts clearly in one response . This may lead to incomplete or confusing data.

7.3.3. Double Negative Questions: They contain two negative elements which can make them confusing or difficult for respondents to interpret. These questions negatively affect the meaning of the question and lead to inaccurate answers.

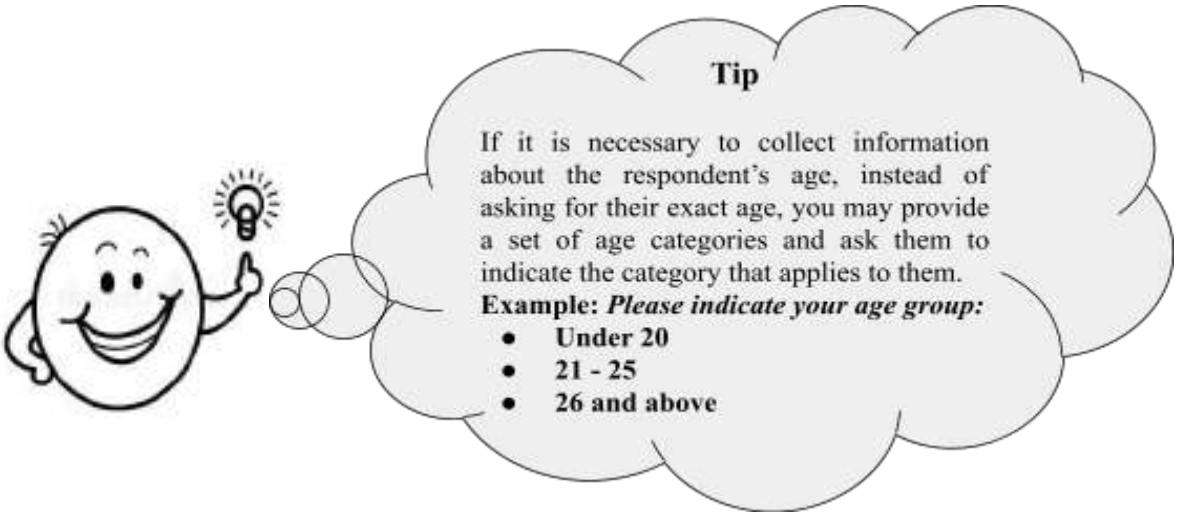
Examples:

a. **Do you disagree that the majority of students never receive enough feedback?**
b. **Do you not disagree that academic writing classes never provide enough opportunities for practice?**
c. **Do you not feel unmotivated to complete your dissertation on time?**

7.3.4. Offensive Questions: They ask respondents about sensitive or personal issues and intrude on their privacy. They can make the respondents feel uncomfortable or unwilling to answer.

Examples:

a. **How much money do you earn each month?**
b. **Do you have problems with your family or friends?**
c. **Why are you not married yet?**
d. **How old are you?**



7.3.5. Ambiguous Questions: These are questions that can be interpreted in different ways by different respondents. Such ambiguity affects the validity and credibility of the responses. In this case, the researcher should explain the concepts/terms that might be unfamiliar to respondents.

Examples:

a. **Do you <u>regularly</u> use online resources (e.g.; AI tools, Youtube lessons, Google scholar) to complete your academic assignments?**

Comment: What does '*regularly*' mean? It might mean: once a day, once a week, once a month, once a term. In parentheses, the research should explain what regularly particularly means to ensure that all respondents understand it in the same way.

b. **How often do you meet with your supervisor to discuss your research progress?**
   - **Always**
   - **<u>Often</u>**
   - **<u>Sometimes</u>**
   - **<u>Rarely</u>**
   - **Never**

Comment: In this case, the researcher should provide explanations (in parentheses) for what '*Often*', '*Sometimes'*, and '*Rarely*' mean within the context of the question to ensure that all respondents interpret these frequency adverbs consistently.

c. **Do you use <u>LMS</u> regularly?**

Comment: In this case, *LMS* could mean Learning Management System (e.g., Moodle or Google Classroom) or something else such as a company name. Thus, instead of using only the acronym, the researcher should write the full term first, followed by the acronym in parentheses.

7.4. Piloting the Questionnaire

After completing the first draft of your questionnaire, it is essential to pretest it before using it to collect data for the main study. Pretesting involves administering the questionnaire to a small group of participants from the target sample and asking them to review the items and identify any unclear or ambiguous items.

Participants can also be invited to propose suggestions for improving the clarity of the items.

The Role of Questionnaire Piloting

- ➢ To check the clarity of the questionnaire items, instructions and layout.
- ➢ To gain feedback on the validity of the questionnaire items, the
- ➢ operationalization of the constructs and the purposes of the research.
- ➢ To eliminate ambiguities or difficulties in wording.
- ➢ To check readability levels for the target audience
- ➢ To gain feedback on the type of question and its format (e.g. rating scale, multiple choice, open, closed etc.)
- ➢ To gain feedback on leading questions
- ➢ To gain feedback on the attractiveness and appearance of the questionnaire
- ➢ To gain feedback on the layout, sectionalizing, numbering and itemization of the questionnaire.
- ➢ To identify how motivating/non-motivating, sensitive/threatening, intrusive, offensive items might be.
- ➢ To try out the coding/classification system for data analysis.

Source: Cohen et al., 2007, p.341

<u>Activity 01:</u> Match the question with its corresponding type:

Item	Type
1. Select one response from each of the paired statements below. Even if neither statement is exactly right, choose the response that comes closest to your views. **Statement One:** The best way to ensure peace is through military strength. OR **Statement Two:** Good diplomacy is the best way to ensure peace.	**A. Open-Ended Question**
2. Which of the following aspects of being a college student do you find most satisfying? Please circle one of the following: a. The opportunity to challenge myself intellectually b. The opportunity to be exposed to new ideas c. The opportunity to make progress toward a career d. The opportunity to meet new people e. The opportunity to participate in campus social life	**B. Closed-Ended Question: Multiple-Choice , One Response Allowed**
3. How did you learn about our product? Check as many sources as apply. ❑ TV ❑ Internet ❑ Newspaper ad ❑ Family member ❑ Radio ❑ Magazine ❑ Friend ❑Other source	**C. Closed-Ended Question: Multiple-Choice , Multiple Responses Allowed**
4. Please describe the one aspect of being a college student that you find most satisfying. The world faces many problems today. Nine problems are listed below. Please place the number 1 next to the problem that you believe is the most important. Then place a 2 next to the problem you believe is second most important, and so on, until you have ranked all 9 items. *AIDS crisis *Overpopulation *Armed conflict * Pollution *Poverty * Global warming * Hunger *Prejudice *Natural resource	**D. Closed-Ended Question: Ranking Scale**
5. Please describe the one aspect of being a college student that you find most satisfying? ……..…...… In the past week, how many days did you engage in online social networking? …….....	**E. Closed-Ended Question: Forced-Choice**

<u>Activity 02:</u> Read the following questionnaire items. For each item, identify and explain any problems, and provide suggestions for improvement.

Item	Problem	Suggestion
a. Do you find the university's library resources and online learning platforms useful? *Yes *No	…… …… …… ……	…… …… …… ……
b. How often do you use the LMS to complete your assignments? ● Always ● Often ● Sometimes	…… …… …… …… ……	…… …… …… …… ……
c. When did you stop wasting your time on pointless hobbies?	…… …… …… ……	…… …… …… ……
d. Isn't it uncommon for students not to submit their assignments on time?	…… …… …… ……	…… …… …… ……
e. What problems do you face in methodology, literature review, data analysis, and language?	…… …… …… ……	…… …… …… ……
f. How much money do you waste every month?	…… …… …… ……	…… …… …… ……
g. Why don't you take care of your health properly?	…… …… …… ……	…… …… …… ……

<u>Activity 03:</u> Analyze the following questionnaires in light of what you learnt earlier in this unit.

a. Questionnaire 01

Students Questionnaire

Dear Student,

This questionnaire is a data collection tool selected for research that aims at finding out how collaborative learning can be used to improve first year LMD student's speaking skill in the Department of English at Blida 2 University, we would be grateful if you could answer this questionnaire, the information you provide will be used only for study reasons. Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Please, read the following questions and then circle the suitable answer.

Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐

Section A: Student's Perceptions toward Collaborative Learning

1. In learning, do you prefer working

A. Individually ☐ B. In pairs ☐ C. In group ☐

2. Is it the teacher who asks you to work collaboratively?

A. Yes ☐ B. No ☐

3. In which modules teachers ask you to work in groups?

A. Listening and speaking ☐ B. Reading and writing ☐ C. Grammar ☐ D. Others ☐

4. How often do your teachers ask you to work in groups?

A. Never ☐ B. Always ☐ C. Sometimes ☐ D. Rarely ☐

5. For which purpose do teachers ask you to work in a group?

A. For homeworks ☐

B. To complete a specific task ☐

C. To explain and clarify the obstacles of the lesson to each other ☐

6. Do you think working in a group is helpful for you?

A. Yes ☐ B. No ☐

7. Do you think that collaborative learning helps you to practice grammar, pronunciation and also to achieve better in speaking?

A. Yes ☐ B. No ☐

Explain .....

.....

8. What are the most techniques that teachers use in collaborative learning?

A. Scaffolding: guided practice. ☐

B. Think-Pair-Share or TPS: students start to think and work in pairs then they share their ideas with others. ☐

C. Round table: It can be used as brainstorming the ideas in which students sit around a table and each one of them has an opportunity to answer. ☐

9. Do you think that group work is an opportunity for students to help each other and to

enhance their speaking skill?

A. Yes ☐ B. No ☐

Why? .....

Section B: Student's Perception toward Speaking Skill

10. Do you find speaking in English?

A. Very easy ☐ B. Easy ☐ C. Average ☐ D. Difficult ☐ E. Very difficult ☐

11. Which skill you need to develop most?

A. Listening ☐ B. Speaking ☐ C. Reading ☐ D. Writing ☐

12. How often do you participate in oral tasks in the classroom?

A. Always ☐ B. Often ☐ C. Sometimes ☐ D. Rarely ☐

13. Did you try to develop your speaking skill?

A. Yes ☐ B. No ☐

If yes, how?..........

.....

14. Do you think that developing speaking skill is essential in the process of learning?

A. Yes ☐ B. No ☐

b. Questionnaire 02:

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teacher,

This questionnaire is addressed to teachers of reading and writing courses at the English department University of Ali Lounici Blida 2. It aimed at understanding the views and practices of teachers in using pre-reading activities as part of their instructional methods. Understanding attitudes can provide insights into the effectiveness of these activities, Informing educators and researchers on potential improvements in teaching strategies.

The information gathered will be analyzed and processed in our research practical part,we politely urge you to complete this questionnaire as accurately as possible.

Please,answer the questions by putting a tick (✓)or a cross (x) in front of the Chosen answer.

Thank you in advance

General information:

1. How many years have you been teaching reading in the English Department?

.....

2. Have you done any study/research on reading?

Yes ☐ No ☐

3. What qualification do you have?

Master ☐

PHD ☐

Section One: Pre-reading Activities .

4. How often do you use pre-reading activities when teaching reading ?

Always ☐ Often ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

5. What pre-reading activities do you prefer to use ?

Asking questions ☐

Making prediction ☐

Previewing ☐

Summarizing ☐

If you chose another ,please specify .....

6. Pre-reading activities facilitate the reading process.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree. ☐

7. Do you think using pre-reading activities in teaching reading is important?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Please justify your answer.....

8. Pre-reading activities can boost student motivation in reading .

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

9. What pre-reading activity do you think is preferable for your students?

.....

Section Two: Reading Comprehension

10. According to your teaching experience, how would you describe the reading level of your students?

Most are above average ☐

Most are average ☐

Most are below average ☐

Reading level varies greatly ☐

11. What is your primary focus in teaching reading? (you can tick more than one)

Reading fluency ☐

Reading comprehension ☐

Grammar ☐

Spelling ☐

12. Do your students experience difficulties in understanding texts or any written materials?

Yes ☐

No ☐

13. Can you give a brief definition of reading comprehension?

....
....

14. How do you guide your students to overcome their reading difficulties?

Ask them to read the text aloud ☐
Try to find out the cause of the problem ☐
Try to explain the general idea of the text ☐
Others, please specify.....

15. During the reading session, how often do you have reading instructions and activities with your students?

Always ☐
Usually ☐
Sometimes ☐
Never ☐

16. What do you usually do if a student falls behind in reading? (you can tick more than one)

Wait and give him time to improve his performance ☐
Spend more time working on reading individually with that student ☐
Assign home works to help the student catches up ☐
Urge him to use reading strategies to enhance his comprehension.☐
Others please specify…….....

Section Three : Relationship between Pre-reading activities and Student's reading comprehension

17 . Pre-reading activities better prepare students for understanding the main ideas and details in the reading material

Strongly agree ☐
Agree ☐
Neutral ☐
Disagree ☐

18. From your experience, how do pre-reading activities impact students' engagement with the text?

Increases engagement ☐
No impact ☐

Decreases engagement ☐

19. How do you believe pre-reading activities influence students' comprehension of the reading material?

Enhances comprehension ☐

No impact on comprehension ☐

Decreases comprehension ☐

20. Have you noticed any improvement in a student's reading comprehension after using pre-reading activities ?

.....

21. How do you assess the effectiveness of pre-reading activities in enhancing a student's reading comprehension?

a. By asking students questions about the text ☐

b. By observing students' engagement during the pre-reading activity ☐

c. By looking at students' reading comprehension scores ☐

d. By using a combination of these methods☐

e. Others (please specify).....

22. What are the challenges of using pre-reading activities for a student's reading comprehension ?

.....

References

1. Cohen L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education* (6th ed.). Routledge
2. Dornyei, Z. (2003). *Questionnaires in Second Language Research: Construction, Administration, and Processing. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates*

8 *Interview Design*

Learning Objectives: By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Identify and distinguish between different types of research interviews.
2. Design an interview protocol aligned with the research objectives and questions.
3. Conduct interviews using appropriate interviewing techniques.

Please note that, in the examples presented in this unit, only the dissertation titles are shown; all other details have been omitted to preserve the authors' anonymity.

8.1. Purposes of Interviews

An interview is a qualitative data collection tool through which the interviewer (researcher) asks a set of questions to the respondent (interviewee). This tool serves the following purposes:

- It might be used as a principal data collection instrument, particularly in qualitative studies.
- It can be also employed as an explanatory tool to help identify variables and explore relationships among them.
- Interviews may be used in conjunction with other data collection instruments within a study to achieve triangulation.

8.2. Types of Interview

Interviews are generally classified into the following types:

8.2.1. Structured Interviews

It is an interview in which both the questions and procedures are predetermined. In this case the researcher (interviewer) has limited flexibility to make modifications. This type generally adopts a questionnaire format in which most questions are closed-ended. It resembles a questionnaire administered face to face to the respondents.

8.2.2. Semi-structured Interviews

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher prepares a list of questions in advance. However, during the interview, a certain degree of flexibility is allowed. The interviewer may modify questions or add new ones to explore important points that emerge during the interview. Moreover, the interviewee is given greater opportunity to develop ideas and express views freely without being strictly constrained to a predetermined list of questions.

8.2.3. Unstructured Interviews

In unstructured interviews, there is no predetermined list of questions. Instead, the content and sequence of the questions are determined by the interviewer. In this case, the researcher introduces the topic and allows the interviewee to freely elaborate on their ideas and express their views.

8.2.4. Group Interviews

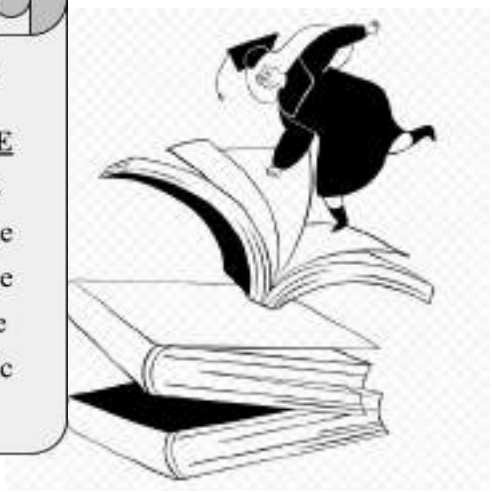
It is the case where more than one participant is involved (four to ten people). Group interviews are advantageous because they allow the researcher to obtain a wider range of responses and perspectives than individual interviews. This often results in a more comprehensive and reliable record.

8.2.5. Focus-group Interviews

They share the same characteristics as group interviews. They center the discussion on a particular issue. They may be structured with a predetermined set of questions or unstructured in that they allow group members to guide the discussion and the researcher's intervention is minimal.

Difference between Group Interviews and Focus-group Interviews

The main distinction between the two types concerns the **THE INTERVIEWER' ROLE**. In ***focus-groups***, participants discuss a particular issue with limited guidance from the researcher who remains mostly in the background to keep the discussion focused. In contrast, in ***group interviews***, the researcher actively directs the conversation, asks specific questions and takes a more central position in the interaction.



8.3. Question Wording

The process of designing interview questions is generally less rigid than that of designing questionnaires. This is because interviews involve face-to-face interaction between the researcher and the participants, which allows the researcher to clarify questions, explain unfamiliar terms, and provide examples when necessary. The selection of interview questions depends on several factors including the objectives of the interview, the nature of the research topic, and the interviewee's cognitive and educational level. The types of questions that can make up an interview include:

8.3.1. Open-ended Questions: They are qualitative in nature and give participants the freedom to express their ideas without being restricted to a set of predetermined responses. That is, such

questions are flexible and the answers provided by respondents may reveal new and important ideas that the researcher had not previously considered.

Examples:

a. **How would you describe your relationship with your supervisor?**
b. **In your opinion, what factors influence students' research progress?**

8.3.2. Scalar Questions: They are closed-ended questions in which respondents choose a response from an ordered set of options that typically represent varying levels of agreement, frequency, importance of intensity.

Examples:

a. **How difficult do you find writing the literature review chapter?**
   *Very easy *Easy *Difficult *Very difficult
b. **How often do you use AI tools when completing academic assignments?**
   *Alway *Often *Sometimes *Rarely *Never

8.3.3. Direct or Indirect Questions: Direct questions explicitly ask respondents about a specific issue or opinion, whereas indirect questions address the issue implicitly.

Examples:

a. **Direct Question:** Are you satisfied with your supervisor's availability and feedback?
b. **Indirect Question:** In your opinion, how do graduate students in your context generally perceive their supervisors' availability?

8.3.4. General or Specific Questions: General questions aim to explore an issue or aspect broadly, while specific questions are narrower and more focused as they seek detailed information about particular aspects of the research topic.

Examples:

a. **General Question:** What do you think about the use of technology in education?
b. **Specific Question:** Which digital tools do you use most frequently for learning?

8.4. Conducting the Interview

To ensure the effective conduct of your interview, the following guidelines should be considered:

- Prepare your questions in advance and determine the order and sequence in which they will be asked.
- Send a consent form (See the provided example) to the target participants in which you clearly explain the research objectives, the significance of the study, and the conditions that

both the researcher and the participant must agree upon before the interview. This includes the structure and organization of the interview, and how responses will be recorded.

- Ensure that the participant has sufficient knowledge or cognitive understanding of the topic to provide meaningful responses.
- Avoid being judgmental and do not attempt to influence or change the respondents' opinions or beliefs.
- Avoid giving ritualistic or leading responses that may bias the participants' answers.
- Maintain control over the topic, direction and pace of the interview to prevent the discussion from going off track.
- Ensure that you fully understand the respondents' answers and seek clarification when necessary.
- Create a positive and comfortable environment that values the participant's contributions and makes the interview a pleasant and engaging experience.
- Allow respondents to ask questions and avoid showing signs of annoyance, criticism or impatience.

Example of an Interview Consent Form

Students' Interview Consent Form
Algiers 2 University– Abou el Kacem Saadallah
Department of English

Description and Purpose of the Consent Form:

The aim of this consent form is to invite Master 2 students of didactics, from Blida 2 University, Department of English, to participate in this research that aims to explore the challenges encountered by Master 2 students of didactics in writing their dissertations.

This study is important as it will raise students' and supervisors' awareness of the possible challenges that might be encountered by Master students in writing the different chapters and sections of their dissertations as well as the main factors that contribute to students' failure in writing a successful dissertation. Through this exploratory research, we can, hopefully, suggest solutions and techniques that would alleviate students' challenges and facilitate the dissertation writing process in the future.

This consent form is important for the researcher to make sure that the participants fully understand the aim behind involving them in this research and agree on the conditions of their participation. I would be very grateful if you accept to voluntarily take part in this research as the information you provide will be of great help to me.

Dear teacher, please note that:

- You can ask the researcher any question you might have about this study either face to face or contact me via email or phone (email: ……..).

- The interview transcripts will be analyzed by the researcher only.
- Your answers will be kept confidential and your identity will remain anonymous as I will use a pseudonym instead.
- The interview recordings will be destroyed after presenting the results of my research and submitting the final version of my thesis.

Thank you for your cooperation

Let's Practice

<u>Activity 01:</u> Read the following interview questions and indicate the category each question investigates by writing its number in the appropriate column in the table below.

1. Which of the following best describes your current employment status:

a. Full-time employed, b. Part-time employed, c. Unemployed, d. Student

2. How do you feel about the supervision process during your postgraduate studies?
3. What do you believe makes supervision effective in supporting students' research progress?
4. In your opinion, how important is supervisee-supervisor relationship for the successful completion of a dissertation?
5. Who should you contact if you encounter academic or administrative difficulties?
6. How often do you participate in academic workshops or seminars related to your research?
7. What types of tasks or activities do you usually engage in as part of your studies/work?
8. What do you expect your next stage of study or research to involve?
9. When is feedback on submitted work typically provided?
10. What are your expectations regarding your academic or professional development in the coming years?
11. What research methods are required for your current research project?
12. Can you share any skills or strengths that you think helped you in your academic or professional work?
13. How do you plan to approach your future research or academic work based on your current experience?
14. How long have you been involved in this field of study or work?

Category	Question number
Behaviour	
Attitudes/beliefs/opinions	
Characteristics	
Expectation	
Self-classification	
Knowledge	

<u>Activity 02:</u> Designing a mini semi-structured interview guide

Research Topic: Postgraduate students' perceptions of the supervisor-supervisee relationship and its impact of research progress.

Instruction: Design a short semi-structured interview guide for this topic. Include a brief introduction, a small number of clear and neutral open-ended questions aligned with the research aim(s), and suitable probing questions. Ensure logical sequencing and ethical wording throughout.

References

1. Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education* (6th ed.). Routledge.
2. Salkind, N.J. (2018). *Exploring Research* (9th ed.). Pearson.
3. Taherdoost, H. (2022). How to Conduct an Effective Interview; A Guide to Interview Design in Research Study Authors. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management (IJARM)*. 11 (1), pp.39-51

9 The Results and Discussions Chapter

Learning Objectives: By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Identify the main parts that make up a successful results and discussions chapter.
2. Analyze sample results and discussion chapters to identify strengths and weaknesses based on the criteria discussed in the lecture.
3. Write the results and discussion chapter for their Master's dissertation.

Please note that, in the examples presented in this unit, only the dissertation titles are shown; all other details have been omitted to preserve the authors' anonymity.

There are two main approaches to structuring the findings section of the dissertation. In the first approach, research findings are presented in one chapter and discussed and interpreted in a separate chapter. In the second approach, the presentation and discussion of the findings are combined into a single chapter. In both cases, either structure is methodologically acceptable. The choice of a particular approach largely depends on the amount of data collected, the complexity of the analysis, and the nature of the research design.

9.1. Structure of the Results Chapter

The results chapter consists of the following parts:

9.1.1. Chapter Introduction

It involves a brief restatement of the research problem and an explanation of the chapter's organization.

9.1.2. Presentation of the Research Findings

The manner in which the research findings are presented depends largely on the nature of the research. According to Hyatt and Roberts (2024), various organizational strategies may be adopted such as arranging the data chronologically, by variable, hypothesis, research question, theme pattern, or any other structure that best suits the study.

Organizing findings according to research questions or data collection instruments is particularly effective as it facilitates clear discussion and ensures coherence across chapters. In this case, your research questions inform the section headings. Under each heading, the researcher presents the relevant findings including both narrative explanations and appropriate statistical analyses if any.

9.1.3. Data Presentation Methods

The primary purpose of using data presentation techniques is to present the findings in a clear and accessible manner that provides comprehensive and detailed information effectively.

There are various ways to present research findings. The choice of a particular method is guided primarily by the researcher's understanding of the audience -including their familiarity with the topic-, research methodology and statistical procedures.

9.1.3.1. Qualitative Data Display Methods

Texts: Text is widely used as a method of data presentation in both quantitative and qualitative studies. It serves as the primary mode for presenting and interpreting findings.

Example:

Title of the Dissertation: ***Graduate Students' Challenges in Dissertation Writing***

This section is extracted from the results chapter of the dissertation in which the researcher presents the findings of the qualitative interview conducted with Master's students to explore the factors underlying their challenges in dissertation writing. As shown in this section, responses to the open-ended questions are presented in the form of textual descriptions, and the findings are supported by verbatim excerpts from the participants' interview responses.

Lack of Training in Writing the Literature Review Chapter

Like the aforementioned parts (i.e., the abstract and the introduction), the majority of students (ST 03, ST 04, ST 05, ST 06, ST 07, ST 09, ST 13, ST 15, ST 17 & ST 24) pointed out that lack of training offered in academic writing and research skills classes was the first factor known to be responsible for the challenges they experienced in writing the literature review chapter. The students said that their supervisors and teachers of academic writing and research skills focused on teaching and explaining theoretical concepts related to the literature review (such as, definitions, characteristics, types and purposes), yet they did not show them (i.e., students) how to transfer what they learnt from theory to real world practice. Commenting on this point, ST 03 said:

> ***"Practice is not like theory….Although theory can be memorized, when it comes to practice, you will find like it is something new and barely know from where to start…..even when we say that we know about the theory of how to write a dissertation, we would be lying because in practice, we fail to bring that theory and put it into practice."***

Furthermore, ST 09 said that the lectures they had on the literature review chapter were not very informative and did not provide them with a thorough knowledge of the literature review structure and content. He further added that those lessons were so superficial that they did not allow them to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to conduct and write the literature review. In this regard, ST 09 pointed out:

> ***"Imagine!, concerning the literature review, we had only a table how to collect the***

opposing views of agreement…We have been told that in the literature review, we have to make a balance between opposing theories and theories of agreement….But the literature review was much bigger than that expression….it is about researching, digging deeper in the researchers' theories…comparing and contrasting….understanding views from different perspectives and drawing our own conclusions of others' work."

9.1.3.2. Quantitative Data Display Methods

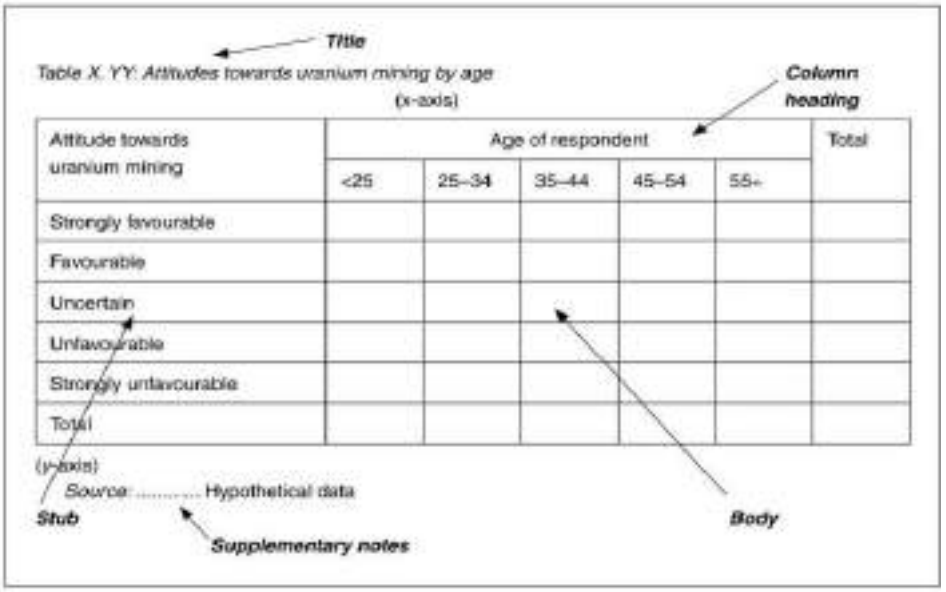
In quantitative studies, textual descriptions are often combined with other data display methods such as tables and graphs.

a. Tables

In addition to textual presentation, tables are frequently used to present analyzed data as they provide an efficient way to display large amounts of detailed information clearly and concisely. Regarding the structure of a table, it consists of the following elements **(Kumar, 2011)**:

- **Title:** This indicates the table number and describes the type of data presented in the table.
- **Stub:** This refers to the sub-categories of a variable listed along the Y-axis (the left-hand column of the table). It consists of the categories or items about which information is provided in the table columns.
- **Column headings:** These refer to the sub-categories of a variable listed along the X-axis (the top row of the table).
- **Body:** This refers to the cells that contain the analyzed data.

Example:



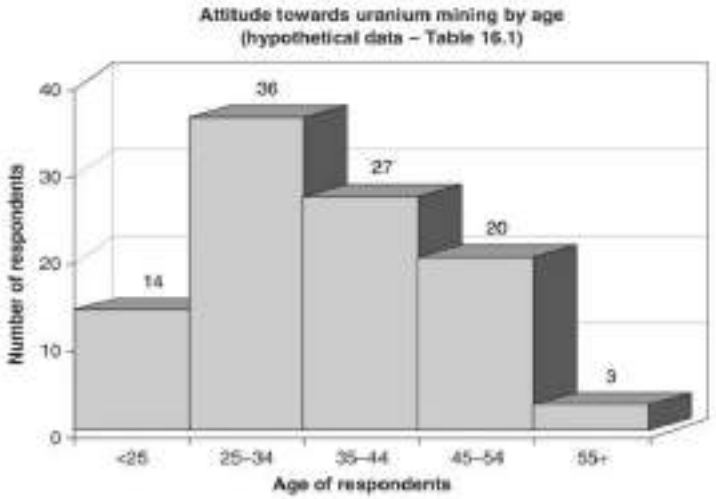
Source: (Kumar, 2011, p.294)

b. Graphs

Graphic presentation is another way of communicating analyzed data. There are various types of graphs including pie charts, bar charts, and histograms.

b.1. Histograms: A histogram consists of a series of rectangles drawn next to each other without any space between them, each representing the frequency of a category or subcategory.

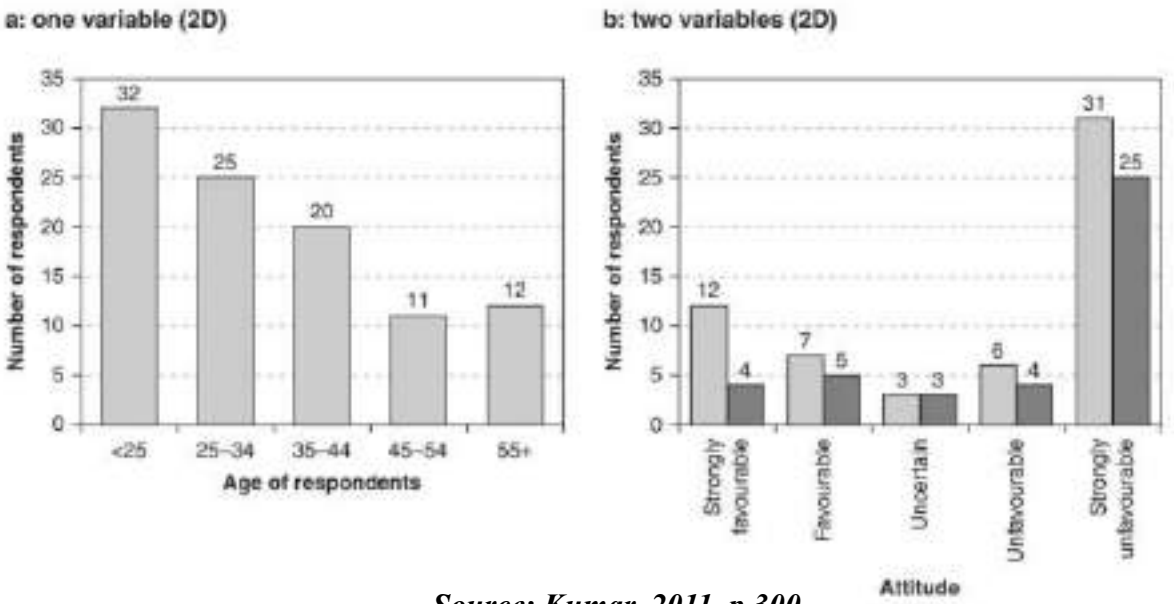
Example:



Source: Kumar, 2011, p. 298

b.2. Bar charts: Bar charts or bar diagrams are used to represent categorical data. Unlike a histogram, the bars in a bar chart are separated by SPACES. The categories are typically displayed along the horizontal (x) axis, while the frequencies or percentages of respondents are shown on the vertical (y) axis.

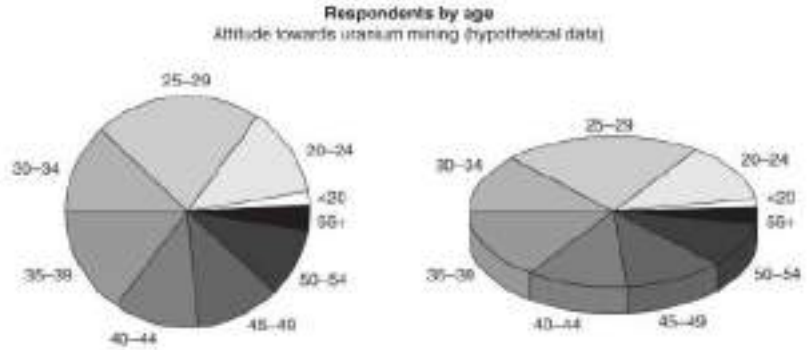
Example:



Source: Kumar, 2011, p.300

b.3. Pie charts: Since a circle consists of 360 degrees, the full circle represents 100% of the total population. The circle or 'pie' is divided into segments according to the relative magnitude of each sub-category. Each slice is proportional to the size of the corresponding subcategory in the frequency distribution.

Example:



Source: Kumar, 2011, p. 305

Guidelines for Designing Tables and Figures

- Tables and figures titles should accurately and precisely reflect the content presented.
- Each title should include the table or figure number and describe the type of data displayed.
- Every table and figure should be assigned a unique number as these numbers are later used for reference when interpreting and discussing the data.
- Tables and figures should be numbered consecutively in the order in which they appear in the text.
- When data are taken from another source, this source must be properly acknowledged at the bottom of the table or figure and clearly labeled with the word '***Source***'

9.2. Structure of the Discussion Chapter

The overall purpose of the discussion part is to provide an interpretation of the results, relate them to findings from previous research, and arrive at well-supported conclusions. The discussion section/chapter consists of the following parts:

9.2.1. Chapter Introduction: The aim of this part is:

- To remind the reader of the research objective(s), the adopted research design, and the research question(s).
- To provide an overview of how the discussion is organized.

Example

Title of the Dissertation: ***Investigating Students' and Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Impacts of Reflective Journals on Writing Performance***

The study aimed at investigating the attitudes of both students and teachers towards the impacts of reflective journals on first-year EFL students' writing performance through investigating the attitudes of both groups. **A mixed methods research design was opted for this study**. The data were collected through administering **questionnaires and conducting semi-structured interviews**. The discussion section addresses the following two research questions:

RQ1: What are the attitudes of first-year EFL students towards the impacts of reflective journals on their writing performance at Blida 2 University?

RQ2: What are the attitudes of teachers towards the impacts of reflective journals on the writing performance of first-year EFL students at Blida 2 University? ***(Restatement of the research objective, research design, instruments, and questions)***

First, we report the main results obtained from the data triangulation (most important themes in the questionnaire and interview). Next, we identify similarities and differences between the results obtained from each research instrument. Finally, we try to explain and discuss these findings in relation to our research questions and compare them to previous studies discussed in the theoretical chapter. ***(Overview of the chapter's structure/organization)***

9.2.2. Reporting the Main Findings

In this part, you should summarize the major findings of the study. Do not repeat all the results presented in the results chapter. Instead, focus on highlighting the findings that answer the research question(s) and address the research objective(s).

9.2.3. Commenting on Results

This part is addressed through the following steps:

Step 1: Establish relationships between the findings of the study and those reported in the existing literature.

Example:

The following excerpts are extracted from the discussion chapters of two dissertations. As illustrated in the examples (see the underlined part), the researchers relate their findings to those of previous studies discussed in the theoretical chapters by pointing out areas of similarity and difference.

a. "....Conversely, most teachers see this impact as a double-edged sword on students' writing skills. However, some lean more toward the negative impact, highlighting how much French interfere with their students' writing skills. **This was consistent with the study of Chen (2020)** explaining that learners tend to make mistakes in various areas, which included writing compositions, for the reason that the students get exposure on their L2 more than their L3 leading to negative transfer."

b. "In addition, the test provides a basis for evaluating the impact of future pedagogical interventions aimed at reducing L2 interference and improving writing competence in English. **This aligns with the study of Gonzalez Alonso, Puig-Mayernco, Fabregas, Chaouch-Oronzo, and Rothman (2021)** which suggested that surface knowledge in L3's grammar and structure could result in transfer from L2 or L1."

c. "Additionally, some participants expressed that reflective journals did not influence their motivation or inspire them to write more. They were either unsure about the effect of reflective journals on their motivation or did not notice any increase in motivation from using them…. **This does not align with the findings of Farrah (2012) and Wahyungsih (2019)** which demonstrated that reflective journals heighten and enhance students" motivation, leading to improvements in learning in general and writing skills in particular."

Step 2: Interpret the results, explain their meaning within the specific context of the study, and identify the main factors that may account for the observed findings.

Example:

The following excerpts are extracted from the discussion chapters of two dissertations. As shown in the examples (see the underlined parts), the researchers attempt to interpret and explain their research findings.

a. While most confirmed its influence, their opinions differed on whether it is primarily a beneficial or a detrimental transfer. Furthermore, some teachers view French as both a catalyst and a hindrance. On one hand, linguistic similarities make the students progress rapidly. On the other hand, students tend to rely enormously on French, leading to errors- that become fossilized- and issues of interference. **This cross-linguistic negative transfer implied** the existence of gaps in students' English proficiency and writing skills. Nevertheless, **this indicates that** the interviewees clearly view this negative and positive transfer as a natural and manageable part of their students' language learning.

b. Teachers who observed frequent occurrences note that these errors are often repeated despite corrections and are sometimes overlooked in favor of more pressing language issues. **This variation suggests that** while false friends are not commonly prevalent across classrooms the interviewees teach, they remain a significant and under-addressed challenge for certain groups of students, particularly where French influence is widespread.

c. These students reported that they have observed no significant change in their critical

thinking. The neutral impact claimed by these students could possibly be due to implementation issues. **It is possible that** these students did not fully engage in a reflective journaling process or failed to find this process sufficiently structured to support their critical thinking. Also, **some students may have** different learning styles. Reflective journals work best with those who are open to written expression. It is extremely helpful to reading/writing learners. **This suggests that** students who favor other learning styles may struggle to fully participate in reflective journaling.

Step 3: Critically evaluate the results by commenting on the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other contexts.

9.2.4. Evaluating the Study

The aim of this part is to critically reflect on the quality and contribution by:

Step 1: Indicating the limitations of the study.

Example:

Title of the Dissertation: ***Investigating Students' and Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Impacts of Reflective Journals on Writing Performance.***

The following section addresses the challenges faced during the research process and provides recommendations for future researchers to help them overcome or avoid similar difficulties in their own studies.

Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for further Research

Although we did our best to conduct thorough research, it is important to recognize that our study inevitably has certain limitations and shortcomings.

The primary limitation of this study is the small sample size of writing teachers selected for participation. Although all writing instructors were invited to participate, only five were available for an interview to share their attitudes on the topic. The majority were preoccupied with busy schedules. **Thus, we believe that replicating this study** and including a broader range of teachers will allow the researchers to capture more diverse attitudes.

Additionally, **the study's limited context poses another shortcoming**. This research is conducted exclusively at Blida 2 University. The participants may not reflect the broader population of Algerian students and teachers. **Hence, we suggest that** to achieve generalizability and validate the findings on attitudes towards reflective journals' impacts on first-year EFL students' writing performance, future studies should encompass participants from various Algerian universities.

Furthermore, **the lack of students' responses and issues with their language proficiency presented significant challenges** during the data collection and analysis. As noted in the methodology chapter, the first online administration of the questionnaire did not reach the desired number of participants, which compelled us to extend the questionnaire through face-to-face administration. In this phase, students often left half of the open-ended questions

unanswered, necessitating further data collection through interviews with some students. **Another difficulty we faced was in analyzing the students' questionnaire results**, where their responses to open-ended questions were limited, with some providing only one or two words. Additionally, **language proficiency was another challenge**, as many students had serious problems with their language skills. **Therefore, it is advisable for future research** to consider this shortcoming and include students at different academic levels such as third-year students, for a study on the presented topic.

Step 2: Explaining how the research findings add to existing knowledge and address the research gap(s).

Example:

Title of the Dissertation: ***An Investigation of First Year Students' and Teachers' Perspectives toward the Impact of English-French False Friends' Transfer on EFL Writing Skills.***

The research findings hopefully contributed to advancing the understanding of how EFL teachers and students perceive the influence of English and French false friends on the writing skills of first year EFL students at Blida 2 University. To begin with, this study focused on a specific aspect of language transfer that is often overlooked, lexical interference caused by false friends, it also highlighted their impact on students' writing skills.

Additionally, this study focused on the specific challenges that false friends pose on EFL learners, aimed to enhance students' awareness of this linguistic phenomenon and improve their ability to identify and avoid lexical impediments in their writings. In doing so, it also contributed to a deeper understanding of language transfer, which in its turn encouraged more self-awareness and self-monitoring strategies that could lead to better effective learning practices.

Moreover, this study being conducted within a new academic context, that is Blida 2 University, Algeria, contributed to context-specific studies in both the Linguistic and the Didactic field. Thus, it could help develop new understanding on the possible challenges that might face EFL students across different contexts. In addition, this research followed a triangulation method, which involved the usage of three instruments (i.e., questionnaire, interview, and test), and teachers and students both as participants. It can be said that the gap was filled since this method was used only in two studies related to this research.

Furthermore, this research offered practical implications for EFL teachers and curriculum designers that may guide teachers in developing pedagogical techniques that directly address the interference of false friends. Lastly, this study may support the creation of learning materials that are adjusted to this linguistic phenomenon in order to improve the writing skills of EFL learners.

Step 3: Commenting on appropriateness and effectiveness of the methodology adopted in the study.

Example:

Title of the Dissertation: ***An Investigation of First Year Students' and Teachers' Perspectives toward the Impact of English-French False Friends' Transfer on EFL Writing Skills.***

Evaluation of the Methodology

The outcomes of this research highlight the impact of English-French false friends' transfer on EFL writing skills among first-year LMD students in the English Department at Blida 2 University, Algeria. The methodological approach, which applied triangulation combining a questionnaire, an interview, and a test, was appropriate to this study and played a crucial role in ensuring a thorough examination of the topic under investigation. The quantitative inputs from the questionnaire provided broad insights into students' perceptions, while the qualitative finding from the interview presented a detailed answer of teachers' perspectives. Moreover, the qualitative data from the test offered measurable evidence of the existence of false friend interference. This methodological combination ensured cross- validation of results strengthening the study's reliability. However, some constraints should be recognized when interpreting these results. For instance, questionnaire responses may have been influenced by the respondents' biases, where students either underestimate or exaggerate their answers. Similarly, the interview findings may have been affected by teachers' personal experiences instead of their actual knowledge about the topic, which may reduce the richness of the data. It can be said that the test results were objective, since the students were required to write a paragraph about a certain topic and not free writing. Nonetheless, it could be impacted by external factors such as participants' unfamiliarity with the topic. Overall, despite these obstacles, the triangulation method improved the credibility of the study, allowing for a comprehensive view by utilizing multiple data sources.

9.2.5. Drawing Pedagogic Implications

In this section, the researcher draws pedagogical implications for teaching and learning from the research findings. That is, the researcher proposes suggestions or solutions to address the issues identified and improve the existing educational situation. Depending on the focus of the study, the implications may concern teaching methods, learning strategies, curriculum design, and assessment practices.

Example:

Title of the Dissertation: ***Investigating Students' and Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Impacts of Reflective Journals on Writing Performance.***

The following are some of the pedagogical implications proposed by the researchers based on the findings of the study.

Pedagogical Implications

Reflective journals hold significant pedagogical implications for both students and

teachers, particularly in enhancing writing performance in an EFL context. First-year students, who often face considerable writing challenges, require more practice opportunities to develop their writing performance. Free writing serves as an initial and crucial stage, offering a rule-free environment that encourages the free expression of thoughts. This practice paves the way for students to gradually attain academic writing performance.

Based on the findings of this study, several implications are suggested to hopefully enhance the understanding and adoption of reflective journals in educational settings more specifically in writing classes. These implications are aimed at raising awareness among students, teachers, and educational policymakers about the benefits of this practice.

4.2.1. Incorporating Reflective Journals into Writing Curricula: It is recommended that curriculum designers integrate reflective journals into the educational framework, allocating time, such as one hour weekly for this practice. Furthermore, in order to foster students' engagement in reflective practices in an educational setting, it is recommended to make this reflective hour compulsory. This will ensure that all students actively participate with their journals, exchange ideas, increase peer review, and self- correction, all under the guidance of the teacher, thus enhancing interactive learning.

4.2.2. Using Writing Resources for Students: Students should use a variety of writing resources to support their writing development and this includes using grammar handbooks that offer an-in depth explanation of the grammar rules and help students avoid common grammatical errors. Students should use online writing tools because they provide instant feedback on grammar, spelling, punctuation, and style issues, helping students to boost their pieces of writing.

4.2.3. Providing Enough Practice: It is essential to offer sufficient opportunities for students to practice writing. Teachers should give feedback to help students recognize their mistakes. Therefore, the administration must address the issue of large class sizes to enable teachers to provide feedback to all students effectively.

4.2.4. Creating an Online Platform or Application for Journaling: For instance, those interested in reflective journals could establish a website tailored specifically for this activity. Students who prefer digital devices over traditional writing methods could use this platform to document their experiences. The website should be private, ensuring that individual journals remain confidential. Additionally, it could offer an optional feedback feature. Students who wish to receive feedback on their entries can enable this function, allowing the website to provide constructive feedback on their writing, including suggestions for correcting any errors. This approach integrates technology into the practice of journaling,

helping in engaging more students in this practice to enhance the learning experience.

<u>Activity 01:</u> From Results to Discussion

➢ **Stage 01: Study the following table carefully. Do not interpret/comment on the data at this stage.**

Q 29: Can you list the main parts that make up the Results Section?

Table 3.29. *Main Parts of the Results Section*

Themes	Number of occurrences	Percentage (%)
Data presentation	06	25
a) Data presentation, b) Data analysis	04	16.67
a) Data presentation, b) Data discussion	03	12.5
a) Data analysis, b) Data interpretation	01	4.16
a) Data analysis, b) Data interpretation, c) Discussion	01	4.16
a) Data presentation, b) Data analysis, c) Data interpretation	01	4.16
a) Data presentation, b) Data analysis, c) Data interpretation, d) Data discussion	01	4.16
a) Data presentation, b) Data interpretation	01	4.16
Discussion of the results	01	4.16
a) Data analysis, b) Data discussion, c) Implications, d) Limitations, e) Pedagogical recommendations.	01	4.16

➢ **Stage 02: Write a Results paragraph based on the table above. Follow the guidelines below:**

- Describe the data presented in the table objectively.
- Do not explain, interpret or give opinions.

➢ **Stage 03: Now write the discussion paragraph where you interpret the results presented in the table. Use the following guiding questions:**

- What do these results suggest?

- Why do the participants provide different answers regarding the schematic structure of the results chapter?
- What are the implications for teaching the schematic structure of the results chapter?

➢ **Stage 04: Reflection:**

- What was most difficult when writing the results paragraph?
- What was most difficult when writing the discussion paragraph?

<u>Activity 02:</u> In this activity, you will try to design an analytic assessment rubric to evaluate the Discussion chapter of a Master's dissertation. Follow these instructions:

➢ Write from seven to ten assessment criteria relevant to the discussion chapter.
➢ For each criterion, create four performance levels (excellent, good, satisfactory, weak)
➢ For each of the four levels: a) describe what the student does, b) use clear and specific language, c) avoid vague terms (such as clear or weak) without explanation.
➢ Present your rubric in a table.
➢ Use your rubric to assess a discussion section proposed by the teacher.

<u>Activity 03:</u> ANALYZE the following discussion of the results' section by identifying how it follows the schematic structure discussed earlier in this unit.

Title of the dissertation: *Enhancing Students' Oral Proficiency through Cooperative Group Work*

Aim of the study: to investigate how cooperative group work presented via cooperative language learning can be utilized in improving third - year LMD learners' speaking skills in the department of English.

Hypothesis: If teachers use cooperative learning and design appropriate classroom technique. Then, learners will use English spontaneously and flexibly to negotiate and express their intended meaning

Discussion of the Results

Analyzing the teachers' questionnaire has revealed many facts on teachers' attitudes towards teaching speaking, their behavior in the classroom, and their perception of the principles underlying cooperative and their practices as far as cooperative group work is concerned.

1. In fact, approximately all teachers consider the aural / oral skills as their major concern while teaching. This implies that teachers are aware of students' needs in terms of developing oral proficiency.

2. For teaching speaking, most teachers opted for group work. As such, teachers would provide students with language use and help them in increasing their oral proficiency.

3. Teachers need to better understand meaningful ways of assessing students' oral production. It is suggested that negative evaluation might inhibit students' future participation.

4. When teachers were asked about the use of cooperative learning, some teachers confirmed the use of cooperative group work in their practices.

5. As far as their implementation of cooperative group work as part of their instructions, some teachers admit that their teaching does not consist in making students aware of the skills they adopt for effective learning. However, other teachers show the importance of these skills for an optimal and more productive learning to take place.

6. Finally, teachers' evaluation of cooperative group work as a technique for improving students' oral proficiency reveals their recognition of the effectiveness of such a technique.

References

1. Felix, M.S. Smith, I. (2019). *A practical guide to dissertation and thesis writing*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
2. Hyatt, L. & Roberts, C. (2024). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation* (4th ed.). Crowin.
3. Kumar, R. (2011). *Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners* (3rd ed.). SAGE
4. Lunenburg, F.C. & Irby, B.J. (2008). *Writing a successful thesis or dissertation: Tips and strategies for students in the social and behavioral sciences*. Corwin Press.
5. Paltridge, B. & Starfield, S. (2007). *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language: A handbook for supervisors*. Routledge..

10 The General Conclusion

Learning Objectives: By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Identify the purpose and function of the general conclusion in the dissertation.
2. Draw logical conclusions based on the research findings.
3. Write a clear, coherent, and academically appropriate general conclusion without introducing new information.

Please note that, in the examples presented in this unit, only the dissertation titles are shown; all other details have been omitted to preserve the authors' anonymity.

10.1. Purpose of the General Conclusion in the Dissertation

Although it is the last section that readers often consult, the general conclusion plays a significant role in the dissertation by providing a concise summary of the entire study and shaping readers' overall perception of the work. In this regard, Lunenburg and Irby (2008) point out that the conclusions of a study allow readers to see how effectively the research questions have been answered and whether the hypotheses have been confirmed or rejected. In this way, the conclusions highlight the aspects of the findings that either support or challenge the underlying theoretical framework.

A group of genre-writing scholars (e.g., Furseth & Everett, 2013; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007) identified the following as the main purposes served by the general conclusion:

- Briefly restating the research objectives along with the research question(s) that guided the investigation.
- Synthesizing the main findings, particularly those that address the research question(s) and confirm or reject the proposed hypotheses.
- Offering a critical evaluation of the whole study by emphasizing the significance of the findings, explaining how they contribute to addressing the research gap(s), and acknowledging the limitations that may have affected the results.
- Offering new perspectives and highlighting the need for future research. That is, the conclusion identifies areas that require further exploration, concepts that need refinement, and unresolved gaps that should be filled.

10.2. Structure of the General Conclusion

According to the literature (e.g., Hyatt & Roberts, 2024; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007), the general conclusion typically consists of three major moves that synthesize and evaluate the study and draw implications from its findings. These moves are:

10.2.1. Summarizing the Study: This involves briefly restating the main elements of the dissertation. It includes a concise overview of the research problem investigated, the research objectives and questions, the research design adopted, the study sample, the data collection instruments, and the key findings.

10.2.2. Evaluating the Study: This focuses on highlighting the originality of the study and explaining how the findings contribute positively to the field of interest. In addition, evaluating the study requires acknowledging the limitations of the study by identifying methodological constraints, challenges encountered during data collection or analysis and factors that may have affected the results.

10.2.3. Drawing Deductions from the Study: This involves directions for future research by recommending areas that require further investigation. It may also include expressing the potential usefulness of the findings for other researchers, practitioners and academic contexts.

References

1. Furseth, I. & Everett, E.L. (2013). *Doing your Master's dissertation: From start to finish*. SAGE
2. Hyatt, L. & Roberts, C. (2024). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation* (4th ed.). Corwin.
3. Lunenburg, F.C. & Irby, B.J. (2008). *Writing a successful thesis or dissertation: Tips and strategies for students in the social and behavioral sciences*. Corwin Press.
4. Paltridge, B. & Starfield, S. (2007). *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language: A handbook for supervisors*. Routledge.

11 Academic Writing Style: Guidelines

Learning Objectives: By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Define and apply the key characteristics of academic writing including clarity, coherence, cohesion, and formality.
2. Recognize the role of parallelism, punctuation and capitalization in producing clear and professional academic texts.
3. Apply correct punctuation, capitalization and parallel structures to enhance readability and stylistic accuracy.

Please note that, in the examples presented in this unit, only the dissertation titles are shown; all other details have been omitted to preserve the authors' anonymity.

11.1. Clarity

Achieving clarity in academic writing requires a continuous awareness of the target audience and a critical, reflective approach to your own text. You should regularly evaluate your work from the reader's perspective and assess whether your ideas are communicated objectively and transparently. This involves questioning whether:

- ➢ Your message is clear and understandable.
- ➢ Implicit connections are sufficiently explicit.
- ➢ Readers' without direct access to your reasoning or background knowledge can accurately interpret the intended meaning.

To minimize vagueness and ensure clarity, it is essential to revise the text carefully by:

- ➢ Defining key terms precisely,
- ➢ Using language accurately
- ➢ Making relationships between ideas explicit
- ➢ Elaborating on explanations where necessary
- ➢ Supporting ideas with relevant examples

11.2. Coherence

Coherence refers to the overall organization and connectedness of a text that gives it a sense of **flow** and **unity**. It is achieved when ideas are arranged logically and move smoothly from one point to another.

In a coherent text, the reader can easily follow the writer's line of reasoning and may even predict the direction the discussion is likely to take. Coherence in writing is achieved by:

- ➢ Determining a clear purpose. That is, you should first determine what you intend to communicate, why you are writing, and what outcomes you aim to achieve.
- ➢ Selecting the ideas and organizational patterns that most effectively support your purpose.
- ➢ Ensuring that your ideas are well-developed and clearly understood because unclear or incomplete ideas cannot be communicated effectively to readers.

11.3. Cohesion:

Cohesion in academic writing refers to the way ideas, sentences, and paragraphs are grammatically and lexically connected so that a text reads smoothly and logically. Cohesion is achieved through specific cohesive devices including:

11.3.1. Repetition: Readers are not expected to retain large amounts of information for extended periods while reading as this makes comprehension more difficult. For this reason, repetition in writing is not necessarily undesirable. When it is used strategically it can play an important role in achieving cohesion and ensuring smooth connections between ideas. As a consequence, writers should repeat key topics and central points in the text to support reader comprehension. According to Singh and Lukkarila (2017), repetition in writing can take two main forms:

11.3.1.1. Exact repetition: This involves repeating keywords or terms **VERBATIM** across a text. This technique helps maintain focus and supports comprehension by ensuring that readers can easily identify and understand the central concepts underlying the writer's argument.

11.3.1.2. Repetition through substitution: This is achieved by employing lexical choices that are closely related to central terms. These words function as substitutes for a keyword or term while they maintain a clear connection to it in a way that helps readers recognize continuity rather than the introduction of a new idea. That is to say, these substitutions are sufficiently similar to the original term to preserve meaning and coherence. Common forms of substitutions include:

a. **Word variations:** To avoid monotony (*i.e., repeating the same words or structure too often*) while maintaining emphasis, writers use different forms of the same word to repeat key terms effectively. For example, if a word has a noun form, a verb form, and adjective form, the writer can use all of these.
b. **Synonyms:** They are words that more or less have the same meaning.
c. **Pronouns:** They are words such as ***it, him, her, them, this*** and **these.** While their use may seem convenient in academic writing, excessive reliance on pronouns should generally be avoided rather than eliminated. Academic texts are expected to be easy to

follow without requiring readers to retain or retrieve information for very long. This is because each time a pronoun is used, readers must mentally trace it back to its corresponding noun in the text, which can disrupt the flow of understanding and reduce clarity.

d. Elaboration: This involves refining a general term or idea by replacing it with more precise or detailed language. This might be achieved by choosing a more specific or concrete lexical item or by expanding the original expression through the use of a more detailed noun phrase.

Examples:

- **(General):** This research focuses on **challenges.**
  (Elaborated): This research focuses on ***methodological and linguistic challenges encountered by Master's students during dissertation writing***.
- **(General):** This approach has **limitations.**
  (Elaborated): This approach has ***methodological limitations related to sample size and data collection procedures***.

Activity 01: Revise the following paragraphs by replacing repeated nouns with appropriate pronouns. Ensure that each pronoun clearly refers to its noun and maintains the correct number and gender. Check that the text flows smoothly and reads naturally without unnecessary repetition to make the writing style more cohesive and clear.

Paragraph 1

The students started the literature review chapter. The student found many sources on the topic. The student read the sources carefully. The student summarized the sources in the literature review. The supervisor read the literature review and gave feedback to the student.

Paragraph 2

The supervisor met with the student every week. The supervisor explained the research methodology to the student. The student asked questions about the methodology. The supervisor answered the questions. The student felt more confident after the supervisor's guidance.

Paragraph 3

The researcher conducted interviews with the participants. The researcher recorded the interviews. The researcher transcribed the recordings. The researcher analyzed the transcripts carefully. The research findings were shared with the supervisor for approval.

11.3.2. Conjunctions: Conjunctions play a crucial role in linking ideas and guiding readers toward an accurate interpretation of how those ideas relate to one another. Through the use of conjunctions, writers signal logical connections such as: addition, cause, concession, condition, time, comparison and contrast.

Conjunctions can be classified into three main categories: **coordinating, subordinating,** and **correlative.** By employing these conjunctions, writers enhance cohesion within sentences and allow many ideas to be combined effectively.

Examples:

Function	Coordinating	Subordinating	Correlative
Addition	and		
Choice	or, nor		
Reason/Result	for, so	because, so that	
Comparison		than, rather than	
Contrast	yet, but	whereas, while, despite	
Concession		Although, even though, while	
Condition		if, unless, even if, provided that	
Time		before, after, since, until, when, once	
Equality			both…..and neither….nor either…..or not only …..but also whether…..or

11.3.3. Linking words: Transition words and phrases are used to connect ideas across sentences. While they convey relationships similar to those expressed by conjunctions, their role is to signal these relationships **BETWEEN** sentences rather than within a single sentence. Moreover, transitions serve a wider range of discourse functions that are not as common for

conjunctions including summarizing information, making generalizations, emphasizing points, drawing conclusions and providing examples.

Examples:

Functions	**Transitions**
Addition	moreover, furthermore, in addition
Choice	instead, on the other hand
Reason/ Result	therefore, as a result, consequently, for this reason
Comparison	similarly, likewise, like
Contrast	however, in contrast, unlike, rather
Concession	nevertheless, nonetheless, given that, considering that
Equality	equally important
Emphasis	in fact, indeed, in particular, namely, notably
Generalization/Summary/Conclusion	in general, generally, usually, in sum, to summarize, in conclusion, to conclude, finally.
Exemplification	for example, for instance, to illustrate

<u>Activity 02:</u> Add the appropriate transition words or phrases to show the relationship between sentences. Also, add the appropriate pronouns.

University professors have many duties. In the classroom, professors must lecture to the students clearly and effectively. ……. should encourage the students to participate actively in the learning process by guiding …… to think, to participate in open discussions, and to ask questions. ……, a science professor lectures in the classroom and in the laboratory while he or she conducts experiments. …….., …… supervises students as they carry out …….. experiments. Another professor may conduct research in …… field. ……, Professor Smith did a study of freshmen male college students and depression. ……. presented the scholarly paper at a conference, and …….. was published in a professional journal." ……., Professor Ascher Is writing a textbook for a course …….. is teaching …… the present textbook is Inadequate. ……., the faculty is required to maintain office hours for student advisement. During this time, students can get help on difficult material or problems. ……., Professors can use this time for university-related activities. ……., professors

are always very busy. ……, they usually enjoy the work ……. it brings many challenges and personal satisfaction.

11.4. Level of Formality

The level of formality in academic writing refers to how language choices reflect an objective and scholarly tone appropriate for an academic audience.

11.4.1. Avoid using unconventional spellings: Non-standard or informal spellings commonly found in text messages, emails or personal letter writing should be avoided. This includes abbreviations, contractions, and altered word forms such as: Wanna (want to), Thinkin' (thinking), Bcz (because), and Plz (please).

11.4.2. Minimize the use of colors: Excessive use of colors should be avoided in academic work because it may undermine the scholarly tone of the text and give it a non-academic appearance.

11.4.3. Avoid shortened forms: Contracted forms such as *it's, there's, can't, doesn't,* and *hasn't* are generally discouraged in academic writing. Instead, their full forms should be used: *It is, there is, cannot, does not*, and *has not*.

11.4.4. Avoid emotive language: The use of emotive language undermines the objectivity that is essential to academic inquiry. As a consequence, your writing may appear less scholarly, which can negatively affect credibility and the academic value of your work.

Examples:

a. **(Emotive)** The study reveals **shocking** results about students' poor writing skills.
   (Academic): The study reveals ***significant*** weaknesses in students' writing skills.
b. **(Emotive):** Students' writing is **terrible** and **shows** serious problems.
   (Academic): Students' writing exhibits ***recurring difficulties*** in organization and language use.
c. **(Emotive):** Teachers **should be blamed** for students' weak writing performance.
   (Academic): Teaching practices ***may contribute*** to students' writing performance.

11.4.5. Minimize the use of abbreviations: Abbreviations such as '***e.g.'*** and '***i.e.'*** frequently appear in students' writing. However, in academic writing, it is generally preferable to use their full forms.

The abbreviation '***etc.***' in particular is often considered vague as it may suggest incomplete information or an avoidance of specifying additional details. Writers are therefore encouraged to provide the additional information in full or to use expressions like "***Such as***…" to indicate clearly that further relevant information exists beyond those that are explicitly mentioned.

Examples:

a. (Vague): The questionnaire included items on motivation, anxiety, attitudes, etc.

(Information provided in full): The questionnaire included items on motivation, anxiety, attitudes, and learning strategies.

(Using 'such as'): The questionnaire included items on effective variables such as motivation, anxiety, and attitudes.

b. (Vague): Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, etc.

(Information provided in full): Data were collected using interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observations.

(Using 'such as'): Data were collected using research tools such as questionnaires and interviews.

11.4.6. Avoid using slang and other informal language: Words and expressions such as ***totally, really, dead*** (i.e. very), ***pretty*** (i.e., quite), and ***okay*** are generally considered inappropriate in academic writing.

Examples of more academic words and phrases:

Consider using:	**Instead of:**
Highly, considerably, exceptionally..	Very
Frequently	Often
Particularly	Especially
Observed	Saw, noticed,
Illustrate, indicate, demonstrate,	Show
Eliminate	Get rid of
Conduct, carry out	Did
Therefore, consequently,	So
However, nevertheless, though	But
Significant	Important
Appears	Seems

11.5. Parallel Structure

Parallelism refers to the consistent use of similar grammatical structures when expressing related ideas within a sentence. Revising writing to ensure parallel structure enhances clarity and strengthens emphasis.

By applying the same linguistic pattern to words, phrases, or clauses of equal importance, writers create balance and coherence in their sentences. In the absence of parallel construction, writing may appear awkward or poorly organized. This forces readers to reread passages or misinterpret the relationships between ideas.

Parallel structure may be realized through a variety of grammatical forms involving different parts of speech such as nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjective phrases, and prepositional phrases.

Examples:

a. **Nouns:** Effective supervision requires ***guidance, feedback,*** and ***support.***
b. **Verbs:** The researcher ***collected, coded*** and ***analyzed*** the interview data.
c. **Adverbs:** The data were ***systematically, carefully,*** and ***rigorously*** analyzed.
d. **Adjective phrases:** The findings are ***relevant to academic writing, useful for supervisors,*** and ***important for curriculum design.***
e. **Prepositional phrases:** The study was conducted ***in Algerian universities, among Master's students, within an EFL context.***

The following are examples non-parallel sentences followed by their corrected parallel versions:

a. **(Not parallel):** The study focuses on students' motivation, their attitudes, and how they write academically.
   (Parallel): The study focuses on ***students' motivation, attitudes***, and ***academic writing skills.*** **(all nouns)**
b. **(Not parallel):** The researcher collected the data, coding the interviews, and was analyzing the results.
   (Parallel): The researcher ***collected, coded,*** and ***analyzed*** the data. **(all verbs)**
c. **(Not parallel):** The data were analyzed carefully, with accuracy, and in a systematic way.
   (Parallel): The data were analyzed ***carefully, accurately***, and ***systematically***. **(all adverbs)**
d. **(Not parallel):** The literature review should be theoretically sound, use clear methods, and critical in nature.
   (Parallel): The literature review should be ***theoretically sound, methodologically clear***, and ***critically informed***. **(all adjective phrases)**
e. **(Not parallel):** The questionnaire was administered to Master's students, in Algerian universities, and the online platform.
   (Parallel): The questionnaire was administered ***to Master's students, in Algerian universities*** and ***through an online platform***. **(all prepositional phrases)**

Activity 03: Some of the following sentences are correct, while other sentences contain errors in parallel structure. Tick if the sentence is correct and Rewrite the incorrect sentences so that they are grammatically correct and stylistically appropriate for academic writing.

a. The purpose of this study is to investigate students' writing difficulties, identifying the main causes, and an evaluation of possible solutions.

b. Effective academic writing requires clarity, being concise, and the use of appropriate terminology.

c. Effective supervision requires setting clear objectives, providing timely feedback, and monitoring progress.

d. The researcher collected the data by conducting interviews, distributing questionnaires and the analysis of documents.

e. Master's students are expected to read extensively, to write critically, and analysis of previous studies.

f. This program emphasizes teamwork, independent study, and the ability to present research orally.

g. A successful research project depends on careful planning, collecting reliable data, and how the results are interpreted.

11.6. Capitalization

Rules (What should be capitalized?)	Examples
The first word of a sentence	**L**inguistics is a difficult course.
Acronyms: Words formed from the first letters of the words in the names of organizations**)**	**UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, APA, MLA**
Abbreviations: Shortened forms of words or a group of words created to save space and time while maintaining the original meaning.	**D**r., **E**tc, **M**r., **M**rs,
Greetings and Closings in letters	**D**ear, **Y**ours, **S**incerely, **H**i,
Names of people and their titles, **BUT not a title without a name**	**D**iana, **P**rincess of **W**ales **A**bdelmadjid **T**ebboune, **T**he **P**resident the minister, the prime minister, the prince
Names of specific places you could find on a map.	**A**lgeria, **I**ndia, **M**editerranean **S**ea, **L**ake **V**ictoria.
Names of months, days and special days	**M**onday, **D**ecember, **I**ndependence **D**ay.
Nationalities, religions, and languages	**A**lgerian, **R**ussian, **I**slam/**M**uslim, **C**hristianity/**C**hristian, **A**rabic, **E**nglish**.**
Names of geographic areas	**T**he **M**iddle **E**ast, the **N**orth

Names of specific organizations (e.g., business, clubs, schools, universities)	**B**lida 2 **U**niversity, **I**nternational **S**tudents' **C**lub.
Titles of compositions, stories, books, magazines, newspapers, plays, poems. **Note: *Italicize* or <u>underline</u> the titles of books, movies, plays and magazines.**	'***H**ow to **T**each **W**riting*', '***H**amlet*', '**A**lice in **W**onderland', '**S**tar **W**ars'

<u>Activity 04:</u> Read each sentence carefully, then rewrite it with the correct capitalization.

a. next monday, dr. smith will present his research on artificial intelligence (ai) at cambridge university.

b. i recently read an article in the journal of applied linguistics about teaching writing in efl contexts.

c. the united nations (un) has announced new programs for education in africa.

d. the meeting is scheduled for january 30th at blida 2 university, algeria.

e. my colleague will attend the conference organized by the european association for language testing and assessment (ealta).

f. my supervisor speaks four languages: arabic, english, french and spanish.

g. the ceo of techworld, mr. johnson, will give a keynote speech.

h. during my short-term scholarship, i visited the great wall in china.

11.7. Punctuation

11.7.1. Apostrophe Rules:

Use an **<u>apostrophe</u>** in the following situations:

a. In contractions: Use an apostrophe to replace letters that are omitted in contractions.

Examples:

Can't, Couldn't, Doesn't, Don't, Didn't, Isn't, Wasn't, Haven't, Shouldn't, Mustn't

b. For possessives: Use an apostrophe to indicate the possessive case of a noun.

To form the possessive of singular nouns ending in 's', an apostrophe followed by 's' is usually added.

Example:

People's rights, The student's dissertation, The teacher's feedback.

To form the possessive of singular nouns ending in 's', an apostrophe followed by 's' is usually added.

When adding an 's' results in an awkward or difficult pronunciation, only the apostrophe may be used.

Examples:

Rogers' learner centered approach, Hymes' concept of communicative competence, Students' attitudes.

11.7.2. Comma Rules:

Use a comma in the following situations:

a. In a series: Use commas to separate the items in a series of three or more words, phrases, or clauses.

Examples:

a. The researcher collected data through questionnaires**,** interviews**,** and observations. **(series of words)**

b. The course focuses on developing academic vocabulary**,** improving coherence**,** and avoiding plagiarism. **(series of phrases)**

c. The researcher found that students lacked motivation**,** that they had limited vocabulary**,** and that they struggled with organization**. (series of clauses)**

b. To separate independent clauses in a sentence: Use a comma to separate independent clauses that are joined by the coordinating conjunctions (**FANBOYS**): ***For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet,*** and ***So***.

Examples:

a. The sample size was limited**, but** the findings remain significant.

b. The researcher collected the data**, and** the results were carefully analyzed.

c. The participants completed the questionnaire**, so** the analysis could begin.

c. To separate a subordinate clause from the main clause when the subordinate clause appears at the beginning of the sentence.

Examples:

a. When the study was completed**,** the results were analyzed.

b. Because the data were incomplete**,** the researcher excluded several questionnaires.

c. If students receive proper guidance**,** they are more likely to complete their dissertations

on time.

d. After a dependent adverbial clause or prepositional phrase that starts a sentence:

Examples:

a. In the classroom**,** the teacher observed students' interactions during group work.
b. While observing classroom interactions**,** the researcher noted several recurring errors.
c. On the first day of class**,** the teacher introduced the course objectives.

e. In dates:

Example:

She was hired on January 1st**,** 2025, and left six months later.

f. After transitional expressions and discourse markers when they appear at the beginning of a sentence:

Examples:

a. For example, students often struggle with academic writing.
b. However, the results of the study suggest a different trend.
c. In addition, teachers should provide regular feedback on students' drafts.

g. With appositives: An appositive is a noun or a noun phrase that renames or provides additional information about another noun. Commas are used to set off non-restrictive appositives (i.e., extra information that is not essential to the meaning of the sentence.

Examples:

a. The study**, a longitudinal investigation on student writing,** revealed interesting patterns.
b. The workshop**, an intensive session on academic writing,** lasted three hours.

If the appositive is essential to the meaning of the noun (i.e. restrictive appositive), do not use commas.

Examples:

a. The student **who submitted the assignment late** received a warning.
b. The methodology **adopted in the study** ensured reliable data collection.
c. The professor **teaching academic writing** will evaluate the assignments.

<u>Activity 05:</u> The following sentences lack punctuation (full stops, commas, semicolons, and apostrophes). Rewrite each sentence, adding the correct punctuation mark.

a. Academic writing requires clarity coherence and accuracy especially in the literature review

b. Many students struggle with time management however this issue can be reduced through effective supervision

c. The supervisors role is to guide support and monitor the students research progress

d. Students perceptions of feedback vary some find it motivating others find it discouraging

e. Research findings must be discussed interpreted and linked to previous studies

f. a well written dissertation reflects the students understanding of research methodology

g. Effective communication between supervisor and supervisee is essential it enhances trust and academic development

h. Doctoral students challenges often include stress isolation and lack of guidance

References

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2. Singh, A.A. & Lukkarila, L. (2017). *Successful academic writing: A complete guide for social and behavioral scientists*. The Guilford Press.

Conclusion

This textbook has sought to guide Master's students through the key stages of dissertation writing by raising their awareness of the structure, purpose and rhetorical conventions of academic texts.

Throughout the course, students have been introduced to the different components of the dissertation and the communicative function served by each section. Additionally, the focus of this course was on developing essential skills such as organizing ideas coherently, adopting an appropriate academic style, integrating sources, designing questionnaires and interviews, and presenting and discussing research findings effectively.

It is important to recognize that becoming a proficient academic writer is a gradual and continuous process that requires practice, reflection and revision. By applying the principles and strategies presented in this textbook, students will be better prepared to produce high-quality dissertations that successfully meet universal academic writing conventions.