

# Thesis Research Plan

All students who want to choose a thesis as part of their graduation requirements must follow the guidelines in this document for writing their thesis research plan.

Students must prepare for their thesis research plan during the second semester and submit it at the end of the second semester (14<sup>th</sup> week). All submitted research plans are evaluated as pass or fail by the committee.

The thesis research plan must include the following two components up to a maximum of ten pages, double spaced, exclusive of references: (1) motivation for the thesis writing; and (2) the actual research plan (title, introduction, methods, and references).

## 1. Motivation for the thesis writing

Before writing the actual research plan, students must briefly write their rationale for the selection of their thesis track (approximately 200 words).

## 2. Research Plan

- Title  
The title may change as needed while writing the thesis. For the plan, however, students should provide a title that is a concise description of the research focus.
- Introduction  
The introduction of the thesis research plan must include some background information about the thesis topic, as well as ample references to other studies and existing literature. To establish the need for the study, students must either demonstrate a gap in the existing research, or refer to some practical problem in their own workplace. Students must also specify the purpose of their study and formulate some research questions. In the introduction of the thesis research plan, students must be able to explain the motivation for the study, which can act as their starting point for undertaking the research.
- Methodology  
The methodology section of the thesis research plan must define the research design of their study, including information about who the participants will be, what type of data will be collected, and where and how the data will be collected.
- References  
If the thesis research plan directly quotes articles and other literature that students have read, they must use quotation marks and cite the sources of the quotes correctly according to APA referencing guidelines. (See the FAQ of this section for more details on referencing.) Further, they must observe the five-word rule, which means that they must quote directly if they take more than five consecutive or content words from any source in a sentence that they write. Negligence in referencing (e.g., plagiarism) is a common reason for failure in the GS TESOL program.

## FAQ

### About the Introduction

#### **1. What is a literature review?**

In the review of literature, the researcher attempts to determine what others have learned about similar research problems and to gather information relevant to the research problem at hand. This is a systematic process that requires careful and perceptive reading and attention to detail. This process centers on three questions:

1) Where is the information found?

This question deals with the specific sources, both electronic and hard copy. For most students, these sources can be found in or obtained through the library and the Internet. Finding the information often involves using reference works such as indexes of periodical literature. Computer searches of databases are very helpful in focusing the search and speeding up the process of sorting through the literature identifying the potentially most useful sources. The sheer volume of available information on most topics makes a computer search almost imperative for any extensive review.

2) What should be done with information after it has been found?

This question deals with how information is assembled and summarized. Assuming that the content of a report is relevant to the research problem under study, the information must be retained in a usable manner.

3) What is made of the information?

This is somewhat more abstract. To answer the first two questions, the researcher finds information and sets up a procedure for retaining it. Answering the third question requires making a judgment about the information in a research report. What parts of the reported results are relevant to the research problem? How well was the research conducted? Thus, answering the third question requires a critical analysis of the reports reviewed. (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, pp. 52-53)

#### **2. What is the value of a literature review?**

Besides providing a context for the research study, the review may be useful in any or all of the following ways:

1) More specifically limiting and identifying the research problem and possible hypotheses.

2) Informing the researcher of what has already been done in the area.

3) Providing possible research design and methodological procedures that may be used in the research study.

4) Providing suggestions for possible modifications in the research to avoid unanticipated difficulties.

5) Identifying possible gaps in the research.

6) Providing a backdrop for interpreting the results of the research study. (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p. 53)

#### **3. How many articles/chapters/books should I read and include in the literature review?**

There is no exact number of articles or books that you must cite. However, given that you need to write up to ten pages, you should read a minimum of ten articles and provide a background about your research.

#### **4. How many research questions do I need to generate?**

Again, there is no exact given number of research questions that you should have in your research plan. However, most GS TESOL students have two or three research questions.

#### About the Methodology

##### **1. How detailed should the methodology be? What information should be included in it?**

The methodology section should include information related to the participants and data. Specifically, information about the participants, research site, and types of data must be included. The data collection procedure and data analysis are not part of the committee focus in the initial plan stage.

##### **2. How much of a proportion does the methodology part take?**

In case you write ten pages in total, you may write one page for the motivation, five/six pages for the introduction, and three/four pages for the methodology section. In other words, the introduction section is a more important focus in the planning stage.

#### About References

##### **1. What should I read?**

Textbooks that are used in courses and articles from major journals in our fields are the best sources that you can start from. Another good source includes master's theses and doctoral dissertations about the topic of your study.

(Examples of journals include *Applied Linguistics*, *ELT Journal*, *CALL*, *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *Language Learning*, *Language Learning and Technology*, *Language Testing*, *Modern Language Journal*, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *TESOL Quarterly*, and so on.)

##### **2. How can I write in APA style correctly?**

In-text citations and references should conform to the requirements of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.).

Refer to the following link for APA style in general:

<http://www.apastyle.org/>

Specifically, refer to *The basics of APA style (view the tutorial)* in the following link.

Samples of in-text citations and references are provided.

<http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>

## Sample APA styles

### **1. Journal article such as *TESOL Quarterly***

Butler, Y. G. (2004). What level of English proficiency do elementary school teachers need to attain to teach EFL? Case studies from Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(2), 245-278.

Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1, 1-47.

Bachman, L. F., Lynch, B. K., & Mason, M. (1995). Investigating variability in tasks and rater judgments in a performance test of foreign language speaking. *Language Testing*, 12, 238-257.

### **2. Dissertation or thesis**

Grabowski, K. C. (2009). *Investigating the construct validity of a test designed to measure grammatical and pragmatic knowledge in the context of speaking*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York.

### **3. Books (if you used the whole book)**

Dörnyei, Z. (2012). *Motivation in language learning*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (1996). *Language testing in practice: Designing and developing useful language tests*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dörnyei, Z., Henry, A., & Muir, C. (2016). *Motivational currents in language learning: Frameworks for focused interventions*. New York: Routledge.

### **4. Books (if you use only a chapter or one author in an edited book)**

Braine, G. (2006). A history of research on non-native speaker English teachers. In E. Llurda (Ed.), *Non-native language teachers' perceptions, challenges and contributions to the profession* (pp. 13-23). New York: Springer.

Almarza, G. G. (1996). Student foreign language teacher's knowledge growth. In D. Freeman & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *Teacher learning in language teaching* (pp. 50-78). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### **5. Website**

Kim, S. H. (2004). When and how to resolve language issues of nonnative- English-speaking teachers-in-preparation in TESOL programs. Retrieved from [http://www.tesol.org/news-landing-page/2011/10/27/nnest-newsvolume-6-2-\(november-2004\)](http://www.tesol.org/news-landing-page/2011/10/27/nnest-newsvolume-6-2-(november-2004))