**General M.A. Thesis Overview**

**1. Introduction (5-10 pages)**

* Background of the study (previous studies relevant to the topic of the research)
* Research gap / Need for the study

**1.1 Purpose of the study**

* What are the aims of your study?
* Why?
* What are your research questions?

**1.2 Significance of the study**

* What will your study contribute to the field?
* Who will benefit from this research?
* In what ways will they benefit?

**2.** **Literature Review** **(15 – 25 pages)**

* A detailed review and critique of previous studies on the topic
* Make sure to include mostly recent literature
* Shoot for no less than 10 recent articles to get you started and build from that

**3. Methodology (7-10 pages)**

**3.1 Context of the study**

* Where did the study take place?
* The context of a research gives the audience the picture of "where", "who", "what" and possibly "when" of the research. It then becomes easy for the reader to have a better understanding of the background of the research.

**3.2 Participants**

* Detailed information about who your participants were
* What kind of sampling procedure was use?
* Why were they selected?
* Explain all ethical considerations (gatekeeper access, informed consent, etc.)

**3.3 Materials**

* What was used to collect the data and why?
* How was it designed?
* Why?
* \*Be sure to include academic reference to support your design

**3.3 Instruments (For quantitative studies)**

**3.4 Data collection procedure**

* a detailed description of the exact steps taken from start to finish of data collection

**3.5 Data analysis**

* a detailed description of how you analyzed the data
* must include references/ support from research methodology books

**4. Results (or Findings) (7-12 pages)**

* What was found in the data in regard to your research questions?
* Answer your research questions with the data obtained (**DO NOT however add your own opinion here unless you are combining this section with the discussion**)
* \*Note: some studies combine Results and Discussion (quantitative) or Findings and Discussion (qualitative)

**5. Discussion (10-15 pages)**

**5.1 Implications of the study**

* What implications does this study have and for whom? Why?
* (e.g., theoretical, methodological, pedagogical, or practical)

**6. Conclusion (5-10 pages)**

* Summary of the study and its key findings
* What are the implications for the field at large (not just your research context but around the globe)

**6.1 Limitations**

* What limitations exist in your study? Methods, design, findings etc.?

**6.2 Suggestions for future research**

* What do you suggest future researchers study to further the work on your topic in the field?

**7.References**

**NOTES:**

***\*****Please note the number of pages is simply* ***a suggestion not a rule.***

***\*****This guide is simply to* ***assist you in understanding*** *how to organize your thesis.*

***\*****This* ***is not an official department document*** *and* ***should*** *not be used as the official guideline for your thesis. It can be used alongside the official guidelines on the GSTESOL homepage.*

# Introduction

An *Introduction* of a Master’s thesis is designed to do three things:

1. to provide an accessible and stimulating way into the topic for non-specialist readers;
2. to problematize the issue (e.g., L1 use in the FL classroom) or domain (e.g., L2 reading strategies) you are writing about and convince readers of the need to think, research, and write about it;
3. to state the purpose of your thesis by highlighting a gap in research that the present study proposes to fill.

A strong introduction should:

* be no more than 5 – 10% of the total thesis length.
* avoid being overly anecdotal or personal.
* avoid detailed reviews of theory or empirical research, keep it general.

# Literature Review

The purpose of the *Literature Review* in a Master’s thesis is:

1. to situate your study within existing (i.e., past and present) empirical research;
2. to demonstrate that you have a solid knowledge of the research area(s) your study fits into;
3. to position yourself critically in relation to existing research findings;
4. to be able to lead the reader to your rationale for the specific research questions that you propose to explore or answer.

A strong literature review should:

* be no more than 30% of the total thesis length.
* include a sub-section for every major component of your title.
* rely on literature that is generally quite recent (within the past 10 years).
* show links from one subsection to the next within the literature review.

# Method

The purpose of the *Method* section in a Master’s thesis is:

1. to transparently describe the techniques, instruments, and procedures used for sampling participants, data collection, and data analysis;
2. to convince readers of your trustworthiness as a researcher, and of the validity and reliability of your findings (which come immediately after in the results);
3. to provide adequate information for other scholars to verify the quality of your research design.

A strong method section should:

* be approximately 10 – 15% of the total thesis length.
* avoid theory and rely on transparent description.
* provide a rationale for why particular methodological decisions were made.
* include citations only if absolutely essential. (to explain where the method or steps came from, to justify your choices)

# Results (or Findings)

The purpose of the *Results* section in a Master’s thesis is:

1. to objectively describe the findings (whether QUAL or QUAN) from the data analysis; (this section **should not include** your interpretation of the data. Only state directly what is there in the collected data)
2. to use these data findings to answer the research questions posed earlier on.

A strong results section should:

* be approximately 15 – 20% of the total thesis length.
* avoid citations and rely on straightforward description and reporting.
* include adequate examples or illustration from your data.
* may be helpful to organize the sections under your research questions

# Discussion

The purpose of the *Discussion* section in a Master’s thesis is:

1. to go beyond the data by theorizing about and discussing what the data findings actually mean;
2. to offer a more thematic interpretation of the objective data findings;
3. to link the data findings explicitly to previous research and relate the data to existing theory (but only from your literature review);
4. to highlight the implications of the data findings for stakeholders (researchers, L2 teachers, L2 learners, policy makers, etc.).

A strong discussion section should:

* be approximately 15 – 20% of the total thesis length.
* be organized thematically.
* not include actual examples or illustration from your data.
* link back to the literature review as appropriate.

# Conclusion

The purpose of the *Conclusion* section in a Master’s thesis is:

1. to summarize the findings and answers your data provided in response to your research questions;
2. to list a few caveats and limitations to the scope of your findings, and to suggest how this research could be built on in the future;
3. to highlight what positive contribution to knowledge your thesis has made.

A strong conclusion section should:

* be no more than 5 – 10% of the total thesis length.
* not be overly repetitive in wording from previous sections.
* offer no new information.
* end on a positive note.