

Moves and functions of theses¹

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¹ Based on Bitchner, John. 2010. *Writing an applied linguistics thesis or dissertation: A guide to presenting empirical research*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN: 978-0-230-22454-4 (pbk)

Abstract section

Functions of a thesis abstract

1. The aims of the study
2. The background and context of the study
3. The methodology and methods used in the study
4. The key finding of the study
5. The contribution of the study to the field of knowledge

Abstract move and sub-move options

Moves	Sub-moves
1. Introduction	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Provide context, background of the researchb. Identify the motivation for the researchc. Explain the significance/centrality of the research focusd. Identify the research gap or continuation of research tradition
2. Purpose	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Identify aims or intentions, questions or hypothesesb. Develop aims or intentions, questions or hypotheses
3. Method	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Identify/justify overall approach and methodsb. Identify key design aspectsc. Identify data source(s) and parametersd. Identify data analysis processes
4. Product	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Present main findings/results of key aims, questionsb. Present main findings/results of subsidiary/additional aims, questions
5. Conclusion	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Suggest significance/importance of findings beyond the research, considering contributions to theory, research and practiceb. Suggest application(for practice) and implications (for further research)

Further reading

Evans, David, Gruba, Paul, & Zobel, Justin. 2014. *How to write a better thesis*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Glasman-Deal, H. 2010. *Science research writing for non-native speakers of English*. London: Imperial College Press.

Kaplan, R.B., Cantor, S., Hagstrom, C., Kamhi-stein, L., Shiotani, Y. and Zimmerman, C.B. 1994. On abstract writing. *Text*, 14.3:401-426.

Paltridge, Brian & Starfield, Sue. 2007. *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language: A handbook for supervisors*. London: Routledge.

Rudestam, K. & Newton, R. 2001. *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Swales, J.M. and Feake, C.B. 1994. *Academic writing for graduate students*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press

Introduction chapter

Functions of a thesis introduction

1. A description of the problem, issue or question that interests you
2. A review of the background and context of the study, including a review of what is known from the available literature about the area you are interested in
3. An identification of gaps in this body of knowledge
4. An explanation of what you plan to do to address one or more of these gaps
5. An outline of how you plan to carry out your investigation, together with an indication of the scope and delimitations of your study.
6. An explanation of what you believe your contribution will be to this area of knowledge.
7. An outline of the content and structure of your thesis.

Introduction move and sub-move options

Moves	Sub-moves
1. Establish a research territory	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Explain the extent to which it is important, central, interesting, problematic or relevantb. Provide background information about the areac. Introduce (and review) aspects of previous research in the aread. Define terms and constructs
2. Establish a niche	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Indicate a gap in previous literatureb. Raise a question about previous researchc. Identify a problem or needd. Extend previous knowledge
3. Occupy the niche	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Outline purpose, aim and objectives of present researchb. Specify the research questions/hypotheses that were investigatedc. Outline the theoretical perspectives/positionsd. Describe the methodology and design of the researche. Indicate the scope/delimitations of the researchf. Explain the contribution and value of the research to the field of knowledgeg. Outline the chapter organization of the thesis

Further reading

- Dudley-Evans, T. 1986. Genre analysis: An investigation of the Introduction and Discussion sections of MSc dissertations. In M. Coulthard, ed., *Talking about text*. (English Language Research, University of Birmingham), Discourse Analysis Monographs No 13.
- Evans, David, Gruba, Paul, & Zobel, Justin. 2014. *How to write a better thesis*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Paltridge, Brian & Starfield, Sue. 2007. *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language: A handbook for supervisors*. London: Routledge.
- Rudestam, K. & Newton, R. 2001. *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Literature Review chapter

Functions of a literature review

1. A review of the **non-research literature** that summarises and synthesizes background and contextual information
2. A review of **theoretical perspectives** that underpin or inform your research project
3. A review of the **research literature** relevant to your study
4. A **critique** that
 - a. Identifies arguments for and against issues and controversies related to functions 1-3 above and
 - b. Assesses or weighs up the value of theories, ideas, claims, research designs, methods and conclusions, including an identification of strengths and weaknesses
5. An identification of **gaps or shortcomings** in this knowledge and research
6. A **rationale** justifying why the gap was important and significant to be filled
7. An explanation of **how the design and execution of your research project was informed** by steps 1-6 above. This is likely to explain how the literature provided
 - a. A focus for the research questions or hypotheses that were investigated and
 - b. Guidelines for an appropriate methodology and design

Organizational options for a literature review

1. The themes and topics of the review
2. The research questions or hypotheses being addressed
3. The variables investigated in the study
4. A chronological presentation of non-research and research literature
5. A combination of these options

Literature Review move and sub-move options

Moves	Sub-moves
1. Establish some aspect of the knowledge territory relevant to your research	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. A presentation of knowledge claims and statements about theories, beliefs, constructs and definitions.b. A statement about the centrality, importance or significance of the theme/topic.c. A presentation of research evidence (e.g. findings, methodology).
2. Create a research niche/gap in knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. A critique of knowledge claims, issues and problems associated with Move 1 claims/statements.b. A presentation of research evidence in relation to Move 2a.c. An identification of gap(s) in knowledge and/or research.d. A continuation or development of a tradition that has been established but not fully investigatede. A presentation of arguments for introducing a new perspective or theoretical framework (as a result of Move 1 claims/statements).
3. Announce how you will occupy the research niche/gap	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. An announcement of the aim of the research study.b. An announcement of the theoretical position(s) or framework(s).c. An announcement of the research design and processes.d. An announcement of how you define concepts and terms in your research.

Conclusion of the literature review characteristics

Characteristics	Move options
Summary and conclusion of claims (evaluating/weighing up importance and significance of claims in light of theory and research literature)	Moves 1a,b,c and 2a,b
Identification of gap(s) in knowledge and rationale for research project	Moves 2c,d,e
Announcements about key elements of research project (aims/research questions; theoretical perspectives; methodology, design, processes; and definitions)	Move 3a,b,c,d

Further reading

Evans, David, Gruba, Paul, & Zobel, Justin. 2014. *How to write a better thesis*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Hart, Chris. 1998. *Doing a literature review*. London: Sage.

Kwan, Becky. 2006. The schematic structure of literature reviews in doctoral theses of applied linguistics. *English for Specific Purposes* 25:30-55.

Paltridge, Brian & Starfield, Sue. 2007. *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language: A handbook for supervisors*. London: Routledge.

Rudestam, K. & Newton, R. 2001. *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Methodology chapter

Functions of a methodology chapter

1. A description and justification of the **methodological approach** best suited to your research questions/hypotheses
2. A description and justification of the **research design** best suited to examine your research questions/hypotheses
3. A description and justification of the **specific methods** employed for data collection
4. A discussion of ways in which the **validity and reliability** of your data were achieved
5. A description and justification of the **data collection** procedures
6. A description and justification of the **data analysis** procedures

Methodology move and sub-move options

Moves	Sub-moves
1. Present the procedures for measuring the variables of your research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. An overview of the methodological approach underpinning the research project b. An explanation of the methods of measuring the variables <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Defining ii. Describing c. A justification of the approach and methods <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Explaining acceptability ii. Citing previous research
2. Describe the data collection procedures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Describe the sample <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Describe the location of the sample ii. Describe the size of the sample iii. Describe the characteristics of the sample iv. Describe the context of the sample v. Describe the ethical issues b. Describe the instruments used for data collection <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Describe the tools/materials used ii. Describe the validity and reliability measures c. Describe the steps in the data collection process d. Justify the data collection procedures <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Highlight advantage and disadvantages ii. Justify choice in relation to research aims, questions and hypotheses
3. Elucidate the data and analysis procedures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Outline data analysis procedures b. Justify the data analysis procedures c. Preview results

Further reading

Evans, David, Gruba, Paul, & Zobel, Justin. 2014. *How to write a better thesis*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Paltridge, Brian & Starfield, Sue. 2007. *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language: A handbook for supervisors*. London: Routledge.

Rudestam, K. & Newton, R. 2001. *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Results chapter

Functions of a results chapter

1. A presentation of the results/findings of your study that are relevant to your research questions/hypotheses
2. An explanation of what the findings mean (without interpretation)
3. A presentation of evidence in support of your findings
4. References back to details of methodology and background/context
5. References forward to discussion of results issues

Results move and sub-move options

Moves	Sub-moves
1. Present meta-textual information	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Provide background informationb. Provide references to methodology detailc. Provide references forward to discussion detaild. Provide links between sections
2. Present results	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Restate research questions/hypothesesb. Present procedures for generating resultsc. Present results<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Present a resultii. Provide evidence (statistics; examples; tables; or figures)iii. Explain what each result means

Further reading

Evans, David, Gruba, Paul, & Zobel, Justin. 2014. *How to write a better thesis*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Paltridge, Brian & Starfield, Sue. 2007. *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language: A handbook for supervisors*. London: Routledge.

Rudestam, K. & Newton, R. 2001. *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Yang Ruiying & Allison, Desmond. 2003. Research articles in applied linguistics: Moving from results to conclusions. *English for Specific Purposes* 22: 365-385

Discussion chapter

Functions of a thesis discussion of results

1. An overview of the aims of the research to the research questions/hypotheses
2. A summary of the theoretical and research contexts of the study
3. A summary of the methodological approach for investigating the research questions or hypotheses
4. A discussion of the contribution you believe your results or findings have made to the research questions or hypotheses and therefore to existing theory, research and practice (i.e. their importance and significance).
5. This discussion will often include an interpretation of your results, a comparison with other research, an explanation of why the results occurred as they did and an evaluation of their contribution to the field of knowledge.

Discussion of results move and sub-move options

Moves	Sub-moves
1. Provide background information	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Restatement of aims, research questions and hypothesesb. Restatement of key published researchc. Restatement of research/methodological approach
2. Present a statement of results (SoR)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Restatement of a key resultb. Expanded statement about key result
3. Evaluate/comment on results or findings	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Explanation of result – suggest reasons for resultb. (Un)expected result – comment on whether it was an expected or unexpected resultc. Reference to previous research – compare result with previously published researchd. Exemplification – provide examples of resultse. Deduction or claim – make a more general claim arising from the result, for example, drawing a conclusion or stating a hypothesisf. Support from previous research – quote previous research to support the claim being madeg. Recommendation – make suggestion for future researchh. Justification for further research – explain why further research is recommended

Further reading

Evans, David, Gruba, Paul, & Zobel, Justin. 2014. *How to write a better thesis*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Hopkins, Andy & Dudley-Evans, Tony. 1988. A genre-based investigation of the discussion sections in articles and dissertations. *English for Specific Purposes* 7: 113-121

Paltridge, Brian & Starfield, Sue. 2007. *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language: A handbook for supervisors*. London: Routledge.

Rudestam, K. & Newton, R. 2001. *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Conclusion chapter

Functions of a conclusion chapter

1. A reminder of the aims (e.g. research questions/hypotheses) and key methodological features of your study
2. A summary of the findings of the study
3. An evaluation of the importance or significance of your study with commentary on (a) its contribution to the development of theory and (b) any limitations
4. Practical applications
5. Recommendations for further research

Discussion of results move and sub-move options

Moves	Sub-moves
1. Restatement of aims and methodological approach of study	a. Restatement of aims of study (research questions/hypotheses). b. Restatement of key features of research methodology and methods
2. Summary of findings	a. Summary of key findings
3. Evaluation of study's contribution	a. Significance of findings (for theory and research development) b. Significance of findings for practical application c. Justification for 3a & 3b d. Identification of any limitations
4. Recommendations for further research	a. Recommendations for further research b. Justification for 4a

Further reading

Bunton, David. 2005. The structure of PhD conclusion chapters. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 4:207-224

Evans, David, Gruba, Paul, & Zobel, Justin. 2014. *How to write a better thesis*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Paltridge, Brian & Starfield, Sue. 2007. *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language: A handbook for supervisors*. London: Routledge.

Rudestam, K. & Newton, R. 2001. *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.