



Faculty of Languages and Translation

Guidelines for Writing a PhD Dissertation Proposal

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The Purpose of Writing a Research Proposal

Writing a research proposal for the doctoral program in the Faculty of Languages and Translation demands meticulous deliberation from the students. Before they embark on their doctoral research, they are obligated to present and defend a research proposal to their faculty.

To fulfill the requirements of the Faculty of Languages and Translation, doctoral students must draft a research proposal of approximately (8000-12000) words before commencing their actual study. The research proposal must provide a clear and thorough description of the research plan, considering the scope, aims, objectives, methods, resources, and timeline. This includes a thorough description of the research questions, a detailed outline of the literature review, a description of the planned statistical analysis, and a statement of the expected results.

In addition to the research proposal, the student must also provide a detailed bibliography that includes all sources of information relevant to the research area. This should include both published and unpublished materials.

By following the guidelines outlined in this document, students should be able to present an effective research proposal that will receive approval from the faculty and enable them to embark on a successful doctoral research program.

Structure/ Content of the Proposal

General Format

Font Type and Size

- The font should be Times New Roman with font size 12-point.
- The title of a chapter should be in capital letters, bold print and centered, and not underlined.

Spacing

- Text must be typed with a double line spacing.
- The paragraphs should be indented 1.27cm (0.5 inch) from the left margin.
- A new paragraph should not begin on the last line of a page.

Page Layout

- Each new chapter must start on a new page.
- Near the bottom of a page, a section or sub-section heading should be accompanied by at least one complete line of text, or the heading should be moved to the next page.
- The main text should be presented in the portrait layout. while landscape layout can be used for figures and tables.

Pagination and Paper Size

- Page numbers should be printed on the top right-hand corner.
- A4 size paper (210 mm x 297 mm) should be used for printing the proposal.
- For questions about other formatting styles, please consult the APA 7th edition.

1. Title Page

- The proposal's title should be displayed in uppercase letters, with bold font and centered alignment, without any underlining.
- The title must be concise, precise, and clear, with a maximum of twenty words. It should demonstrate the main theme/focus of the proposed project and should contain keywords that describe your study.
- The title may use a colon (:) to separate the topic from the focus (i.e. The Effect of Expansion of Vision Span on Reading Speed: A Case Study of EFL Major Students at King Khalid University).
- It should include the student's full name, along with his/her University ID number.
- This is followed by a statement as follows "A research proposal submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics, King Khalid University".
- Finally, the month and the year of submission are at the bottom and centered.

2. Table of Contents

- A table of contents includes a list of the chapters, headings, and sub-headings of your research proposal.
- The wording and presentation (i.e., capitalization, use of special fonts and characters) for all entries in the table of contents must match exactly with the text.

3. Abstract

- The abstract serves as a concise overview of your research proposal, with a maximum word limit of 250 words.
- The abstract of a research proposal is usually organized in the following manner:
 1. **Introduction:** This section provides a brief overview of the subject or topic being addressed in the study.
 2. **Theoretical Framework:** The conceptual or theoretical framework that guides the study is explained, along with the central research problem or question being investigated.
 3. **Methodology:** The methods and approaches used in the study are described, including the data collection and analysis techniques employed.
 4. **Expected Findings:** The expected findings or results of the study are summarized, highlighting the most significant outcomes or discoveries.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The background of the study section should provide an overview of current knowledge, theories, and research relevant to the topic of investigation. It should include any relevant historical background that may help to contextualize the research project and should also provide a contextualisation of the research objectives.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The statement of the problem is a critical component of a research proposal. It defines and articulates the specific issue, challenge, or gap in knowledge that your research aims to address. It should be clearly focused without unnecessary preambles and ambiguity. It's essential to note that these are just broad areas, and within each, there are myriad specific gaps that a Ph.D. candidate might identify based on a thorough review of the literature, societal needs, and their own interests. The goal of a Ph.D. dissertation in applied linguistics, as in other fields, is to make a unique and significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge.

There are different types of research gaps that can be identified, and each type is associated with a specific situation or problem as follows:

1. Theoretical gap: this type of research gap pertains to an absence of theoretical comprehension or insight within a specific domain. It may arise when there exists a disparity between current theories and empirical findings, or when no theory exists to elucidate a specific phenomenon. Recognizing theoretical gaps can serve as a motivation for creating new theories or improving existing ones.
2. Empirical gap: an empirical gap arises when there is an absence of empirical proof or data within a specific research area. It can occur when there is insufficient research on a particular subject or

when the existing research is insufficient or inconclusive. The recognition of empirical gaps can prompt the initiation of new research endeavors to gather data or the enhancement of existing research methodologies to enhance the quality of collected data.

3. Methodological gap: this type of research gap denotes an insufficiency of suitable research methods or techniques to address a research inquiry. It may arise when existing methods prove inadequate, outdated, or unsuitable for the specific research question at hand. Recognizing methodological gaps can instigate the creation of novel research methodologies or the adaptation of existing ones to tackle the research query more effectively.

4. Practical gap: a practical gap emerges when there is a deficiency in the practical utilization or execution of research outcomes. This situation can occur when research findings remain unimplemented due to financial, political, or social limitations. Identifying practical gaps can motivate the creation of strategies geared towards the efficient implementation of research findings in real-world practice.

5. Knowledge gap: this type of research gap occurs when there is a lack of knowledge or information on a specific research area. Such gaps can arise when a new research area is emerging or when research is conducted within a distinct context or population. The identification of knowledge gaps can inspire the initiation of new research endeavors or the expansion of existing research efforts to bridge the gap.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions component should provide an extensive list of questions that will be addressed in the study. They are specific, focused inquiries that guide your research and provide a framework for your investigation. They are essential for defining the scope of your study and helping you gather and analyze relevant data.

1.4 Research Objectives

Research objectives are specific, measurable goals or outcomes that you aim to achieve through your research study. They provide a clear direction and purpose for your research, helping you stay focused on what you intend to accomplish. Research objectives should align closely with your research questions and contribute to addressing the problem statement.

1.5 Research Hypothesis/Hypotheses (if applicable)

The research hypotheses component explains the assumed relationships between research variables. They are statements or educated guesses about the relationships between variables (independent variable/s and dependent variable/s), or the outcomes of a study.

They are formulated based on existing theory, prior research, or logical reasoning and are used to guide empirical research. They should provide details of the research design that will be used to test these hypotheses.

1.6 Significance of the Study

In a proposal, the research contribution is the original and novel aspect of the research that adds new knowledge to the field. It can be a new theory, a new methodology, a new empirical finding, or a new application of existing knowledge. The significance of a study refers to the importance, relevance, and potential impact of the research within a specific context or field. It provides an in-depth explanation of why you are undertaking the research project. It also addresses the question of what contributions it can make to existing knowledge, practice, or theory. A PhD dissertation is a significant piece of research that is expected to make an original contribution to knowledge in the field. This means that the dissertation should fill a research gap, or address a question that has not been adequately answered by previous research. To identify research gaps that a PhD dissertation can fill, it is important to conduct a thorough review of the existing literature

on the topic of interest. This review will help the researcher to identify areas where our knowledge is lacking or where there is a need for further research.

The significance of a study refers to the importance, relevance, and potential impact of the research within a specific context or field. It provides an in-depth explanation of why you are undertaking the research project. It also addresses the question of what contributions it can make to existing knowledge, practice, or theory.

To accomplish this section successfully, you may include the following:

a. Theoretical Contributions:

Discuss how your research advances existing theories, models, or frameworks. Does it provide new insights or modify current understanding in your field?

b. Practical Implications:

Highlight any practical applications or implications of your research findings. How might your study's results be applied in the field of applied linguistics? How may the results benefit students, teachers, and policy decisions?

1.6 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Students should write the limitations and delimitations of the research project. Limitations are factors that are beyond the control of the researcher and may influence the findings and generalizability of the study. They may include time constraints, budgetary limitations, sample size, or availability of data. On the other hand, delimitation refers to the choices and decisions made by the researcher to define the boundaries of the study. Delimitations help narrow down the scope of the research and determine what will be included and excluded. These choices may involve specifying the research population, geographical location, time period, variables, or specific research methods.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is an essential part of any research study as it provides a comprehensive overview of the existing knowledge and research on the specific topic. It involves analyzing and summarizing previous studies, theories, and key concepts that are relevant to the research topic. It's crucial for students to establish a coherent and logical organization for the literature review section. The arrangement of the literature review paragraphs should be tailored to align with the specific focus of their own research proposal.

The literature review chapter typically contains the following elements:

2.1 Introduction

This section provides an introduction to the current project, an overview of the literature review process, and a brief summary of the research question.

2.2 Background

This section describes the background information associated with the research, such as the context and history of the topic, relevant theories, current research, and methods used.

2.3 Literature Review

This section should provide a critical evaluation of the existing literature relevant to the research question. It should include an analysis of the studies used in the review, compare various interpretations of the research, and analyze the gaps in the research.

Students are expected to summarize the main findings, key concepts, and relevant theories from the selected sources. The cited works should be summarized thematically or chronologically, depending on your approach. Additionally, the literature review chapter provides an opportunity to explain how the research study is grounded in a specific theoretical or conceptual framework.

Students can discuss how this framework informs their study and contributes to the understanding of the research topic.

This chapter also helps in generating hypotheses related to the research question and framing the questions and hypotheses for future research. The purpose of the literature review is to identify any gaps in the current knowledge and explain why these gaps make it necessary to conduct the research study. It also helps to provide context for the research problem being investigated.

2.4 Findings

This section should present the researcher's findings and summarize the evidence collected during the literature review process. This section should also provide an analysis of the implications of the research for theory and practice.

2.5 Conclusions

This section should provide concluding remarks about the literature review chapter. It should reflect the researcher's opinion and insights regarding the research study. It is important for students to write their literature review in a clear and logical way. The structure of the literature review paragraphs should be tailored to the specific research proposal.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology chapter should provide an explanation of the research methods that will be used in order to complete the research project. It should explain why the chosen research methodology is the most appropriate for the research objectives. Furthermore, it should provide details of how the data will be collected and the techniques that will be used to analyse the data.

3.1 Research Design

Research design refers to the overall strategy or plan that outlines how a research study will be conducted. It serves as a blueprint for collecting and analyzing data, guiding researchers through the entire research process. Students should clearly specify the type of research they are going to conduct, quantitative, qualitative, or mixed design.

3.2 Population and Sample

Understanding the distinction between population and sample is essential when conducting a research study. A population consists of the entire group of individuals, objects, or elements that meet the criteria of the research. These are the groups of people or items that the researcher intends to study, observe, and analyze. A sample is a smaller and more manageable group that the researcher selects from the population. This process ensures that the research can be conducted with greater accuracy and precision.

When researchers select a sample from the population, they should also pay attention to the representativeness of the sample. The representativeness of a sample is the extent to which the characteristics of the samples accurately reflect the characteristics of the population. For example, if the population consists of people from different genders, ages, races, and socio-economic

backgrounds, the sample needs to be representative of this heterogeneity in order to give an accurate representation of the population.

Selecting an appropriate sample is critical for obtaining meaningful results from the research. It is important to choose a sample that is truly representative of the population, as well as a sampling method that minimizes bias and sampling error.

3.3 Research Instruments

Research instruments are critical tools for conducting research. They enable the researcher to collect and analyze data in order to answer research questions or test hypotheses. Students should choose research instruments depending on their research objectives and the type of data they need.

Research instruments are broadly divided into two categories: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research instruments generally measure something that can be assigned a numerical value. These include surveys, questionnaires, and tests. Qualitative research instruments are used to gather data related to people's opinions, experiences, and perspectives. These include interviews, focus groups, and observations.

When selecting the appropriate research instruments, students should consider the type of data needed for their research, the research objectives, and issues related to validity and reliability (for quantitative studies) and trustworthiness (for qualitative studies).

3.4 Data Collection

Students should outline the techniques that will be used to gather data, as well as the proposed data sources. They should also provide an explanation of how the data collection will be conducted. Students are highly encouraged to provide brief information about the process of collecting data needed for their studies.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis component should explain how the collected data will be analyzed and interpreted. It is the process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and interpreting data to discover meaningful insights, patterns, and trends. Students should explain the methods of analyzing the collected data, which may include statistical functions (quantitative studies), or thematic analysis (qualitative studies).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles play a critical role in safeguarding the rights, dignity, and well-being of individuals involved in research studies, while also upholding the integrity and trustworthiness of the research itself. When writing about ethical considerations, it is important for students to address key aspects such as obtaining informed consent from study participants and ensuring their privacy and confidentiality.

References

Reference section plays an important role in research and academic writing as they provide a list of sources used to back up claims, arguments, theories, and research. Following the rules of referencing is essential in order to correctly cite sources used in the text. For students, the American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition is the recommended referencing style in many disciplines.

<https://www.isu.edu/media/libraries/student-success/tutoring/handouts-writing/using-sources/APA7-Style.pdf>

To help with the reference process, the use of reference management tools can be highly beneficial. Mendeley, EndNote, Citation Machine and Zotero are useful tools for organizing in-text and end references. They allow users to easily import references, documents and PDFs into their library and create bibliographies in a variety of styles, including APA.

It is also essential for students to be aware of predatory journals and publishers, and take steps to avoid citing information obtained from these sources. Beall's List is a useful tool in identifying predatory journals and publishers, and should be referred to when assessing a source's legitimacy. Please click on the following link to get more information concerning this issue.

<https://beallslist.net/>

Students should use top applied linguistics journals, which are typically indexed in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) by Clarivate. The Saudi Digital Library provides access to these indexed journals.

Research Timeline

Students are expected to create a research timeline, often referred to as a project timeline or research schedule. Research timeline helps students to stay organized, set realistic goals, and meet deadlines. It's like a map that guides you through the research process. It's important to be as clear and detailed as possible when creating a timeline, as this will help you plan your work well and avoid any last-minute rushes.

The first step in creating a research timeline is to identify all the parts of the project. Think of each of the chapters in the research paper and create a timeline for each of them. For each stage of the project, determine a rough time frame that will allow you to complete it in a timely manner. Once the stages are listed and the approximate duration each will take is determined, you can put together your timeline, like this:

Phase	Procedure/Research Part	Approximate Duration (in Weeks)
1.	Writing Abstract	
2.	Writing Introduction (Chapter 1)	
3.	Writing up Literature Review (Chapter 2)	
4.	Writing Research Methodology (Chapter 3)	
5.	Data Collection (Chapter 3)	
6.	Data Analysis (Chapter 4)	
7.	Reporting Findings (Chapter 4)	
8.	Discussion of Research Results (Chapter 5)	
9.	Concluding Research Results (Chapter 5)	
10.	Completing and Submitting the Thesis	
Total Planned Time		

Plagiarism Policy

It is important for students to be aware of the rules and procedures established by King Khalid University in regard to plagiarism.

Rewritten Article: Plagiarism policy refers to a set of regulations and principles implemented by educational institutions and other organizations to ensure that students or employees abide by copyright laws and face appropriate consequences if they engage in plagiarism. Plagiarism is when someone utilizes another person's words, ideas, or work without giving proper credit or obtaining permission, and presents it as their own. This act is widely regarded as unethical and can lead to severe academic and professional repercussions.

Students should take the necessary steps to ensure any work they submit is entirely their own. They can use tools such as IThenticate provided by the university <https://forms.kku.edu.sa/ar/2748> to check their work for similarity to previously published material and ensure their work is original. The similarity index report of your research proposal and your entire dissertation should be less than 25%. See the following link for more details: <https://sites.reading.ac.uk/tel-support/2018/08/17/turnitin-a-staff-guide-to-interpreting-the-similarity-report/>