



## Science and Arts University

### Department of English Language

#### Suggested Chapter Outline for MA Thesis

#### Preliminary Notes:

- Use 'Times New Roman' as the standard font across your thesis.
- Use font size 12 for the main text throughout your thesis.
- For Table contents, use Times New Roman 11.
- Line spacing should be 1.5 across your thesis, but use line spacing 1.15 in Tables.
- Margins should be 1 inch (2.54 cm) on all page-sides throughout your thesis.
- All paragraphs, including the first paragraph below headings, should be indented by 0.5 inch. The paragraphs should all be in 'Justify Mode'.
- Do **NOT** add extra space between paragraphs (Word: Paragraph: Indents and Spacing)
- Chapter numbers and chapter titles should have font size 18, bold.
- First-level headings should have font size 14, bold.
- Second-level headings should have font size 12, bold.
- Third-level headings should have font size 12, bold, italic.
- Fourth-level headings should have font size 12, italic, non-bold.
- The opening pages of your thesis report (except for the title-page, which does not need any page number) should be numbered by Roman Numbers up to, not including, the first page of chapter one. From chapter one till the end of thesis, use System Numerals.
- Open your thesis with the following sections before presenting chapter one (put the headings in the top-center of page. Title with font size 18, the others with font size 14):
  - **Title Page** [including the logo & name of your university, faculty, department, the title of your thesis, supervisor, advisor, student, date (month & year)]
  - **Acknowledgements** [to thank those who helped you complete your thesis]



- **Dedication** [to dedicate your thesis to one or more people who are very important for you, such as your close family members.]
- **Abstract** [including a squeezed summary of your research topic, aims, design, participants, instruments, analyses, results, and some implications, followed by a number of, usually, 3 to 5 keywords. Abstract is not more than one page.]
- **Table of Contents** [notice that this section encompasses the aftercoming contents not the before-coming ones. It contains the five chapters and their subsections, references and appendices, and their corresponding page number.]
- **List of Tables** [order them as they appeared in the thesis, with page number]
- **List of Figures** [order them as they appeared in the thesis, with page number]
- **List of Abbreviations** [order them alphabetically]

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

**1.1. Overview** [throughout your thesis report, you should open each chapter with an overview which encompasses a short description of what subsections are going to be presented in that chapter. The overview may be opened with a topic sentence introducing the general objective of the chapter, followed by a description of its successive subsections. Mention the number of each subsection and use **present simple tense** (e.g., subsection 1.2 introduces ...)]

**1.2. Introduction** [see the suggested proposal outline, but **DON'T COPY** as it is]

**1.3. Statement of the Problem** [see the suggested proposal outline]

**1.4. Objectives of the Study** [see the suggested proposal outline]

**1.5. Research Questions and Hypotheses** [see the suggested proposal outline]

**1.6. Significance of the Study** [see the suggested proposal outline]



[**Note:** Subsections 1.2 to 1.6 are actually the same as what you had earlier in your proposal. However, you are supposed **NOT** to merely **COPY** and paste the spotlighted parts into your thesis report. In fact, a proposal is a research plan for future, whereas a thesis is the report of what you have already conducted. *Thus, be careful about the tenses. For general facts, rules, models, theories, etc. use present simple, but for what you considered or did in your study, you should mostly use past simple.*]

**1.7. Definition of the Key Terms** [list a number of (at least, 5) terms and phrases that best represent the central theme of your study. Each key-term should be written as a separate paragraph, in simple present tense, with a sufficient but to-the-point definition. You need to give reference to at least one big author so as to validate your definition.]

**1.8. Structure of this Thesis** [preferably, in five separate paragraphs, corresponding to the five chapters, describe what each chapter entails. It is not needed to mention all subsections of each chapter here in this section, but give the principal contents of that chapter, **without** mentioning the subsection numbers. **Be careful**, the first paragraph of section 1.8 should be **past simple** because it summarizes what you already reported in chapter one. Yet, for the second to fifth paragraph, you need to use **present simple tense** while summarizing what the remaining chapters contain.]

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

**2.1. Overview** [see chapter one]

**2.2. Theoretical Framework** [in this section, you should introduce and elaborate on the main theoretical field underpinning your area and topic of research. Theoretical framework denotes the realm of your investigation, which gives orientation to your own way of research and the readers of your thesis. Examples of such frameworks are *universal grammar* (UG) in linguistics, *computer/mobile* (or technology) *assisted language learning* (CALL & MALL) in



language skills development, *discrete point* (DP), *integrative*, and *functional* approaches in language testing, *task-based language teaching* (TBLT) in teaching methodology, *critical discourse analysis* (CDA) in discourse analysis and sociolinguistics, and so on. In addition to these quite general frameworks, you can base your study on any of the famous theories/hypotheses or models in the field of SLA, including *Markedness Hypothesis* in linguistics, *Multi-Trait Multi-Method* model in testing, *Levelt's Speech Production* model in psycholinguistics, *Schema Theory* and *Lexical Approach* in teaching methodology, *Speech Act Theory* in discourse analysis and pragmatics, etc.

**2.3. Elaborating on the Variables of the Study** [shortly introduce the main variables of your study, which you focused on in your thesis title as well as the introduction section of chapter one.]

**2.3.1. Independent Variable(s)** [focus more specifically on the independent variable or variables of your study by defining them and reviewing their different aspects. Refer to some famous authors to clearly portray the variables and how you considered them in your study.]

**2.3.2. Dependent Variable(s)** [similar to the previous part, go through the same steps for the dependent variable or variables of your study.]

**2.4. Previous Studies Conducted on ...** [first complete this heading according to your title and what your study concentrated on. Then, in one or more subsections, following your supervisor's guidance, review the most relevant studies (published papers mostly) to give some historical background to your own research. Ideal is to list at least 15 recent works, no older than 2000, preferably. Order them either chronologically or in some reasonable way in line with your variables. **DON'T COPY** anything from other published works unless you give a "direct quotation" by citing its original author, year of publication, & page number.]

**2.5. Gaps Detected in the Existing Literature** [this part is an important paragraph that is meant to summarize what has already been done and what has **NOT** in the field of your intended research. It is recommended that you highlight at least one, or preferably more, aspects



of the topic not yet addressed by the previous studies to justify the need for new research. The gap detected in the literature can simply be a lack of such a work in your (Iranian) context.]

**2.6. Summary** [shortly and duly summarize the major pieces of information you presented in the chapter. There is no need to mention all details, nor is it required to name the subsection numbers. You can even mix this subsection with the previous section into one combined part.]

[**Note:** Throughout your thesis report, wherever you give two or more parenthetical citations, the authors should be sequenced **alphabetically**.]



## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### **3.1. Overview** [see chapter one]

**3.2. Design of the Study** [this is the most important section of your third chapter, where you are expected to clearly present a detailed portrayal of your selected research design, and why you chose it on the basis of your aims, variables, participants, etc. It is required to validate your research design (e.g., correlational, experimental, mixed methods, causal comparative, ...) by giving reference to two or more famous authors in SLA research such as Mackey and Gass, 2022; Ary et al., 2019; Salkind (Ed.), 2010; Dornyei, 2007, among others.]

**3.3. Participants and Sampling** [this is another very important part of your methodology. You need to clarify how many participants and under what sampling method (probability or non-probability, and the relevant subcategory) were selected, from whom the data were collected. Similar to the previous section, validate your sampling method by referring to at least two salient authors. It is a good idea to include in this section some pieces of information (biodata) of the participants such as their age range, gender, proficiency level (and how you found it), nationality/L1, and possibly, summarize these data in a biographical table.]

**3.4. Instrumentation** [one by one, describe and justify the different data-collection instruments you applied to collect or elicit data. The instruments may have been used for proficiency check, pretest, posttest, opinion investigation, observation, interview, etc. Further, you should clarify whether you used an existing test (e.g., Oxford Placement) or developed one originally for your own study. In the latter case, you are supposed to obviate uncertainties as to the validity and reliability of the instruments. It is very common to give reference to your Appendices, in parentheses, where the readers can access a sample of the specific instruments you used in your study. **Note:** No need to include a sample of OQPT in your appendices.]



**3.5. Procedure** [with enough but not boring details, go through the different steps and stages you passed from the selection of the participants to grouping them, pretesting, presenting the intervention or treatment, collecting the data, etc. **till the end of the empirical part of your study**. Explicitly, you need to illuminate the amount (e.g., number of sessions, duration of each session) and quality of the treatment (in the case of experimental studies) and how the control group (if you had any) was taught while you were giving the experimental group your main treatment.]

**3.6. Data Analysis** [shortly, explain what data analysis techniques/approaches you deployed so as to analyze your collected data to answer your research questions. You are also expected to justify why a specific technique was used by referring to your variables and design as well as the nature of your RQs. Refer to one or two authors (e.g., Bachman, 2004; Pallant, 2020; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013, among others) to justify your selected techniques.]

**3.7. Summary** [see chapter two]

[**Note:** Except for the overview, and general definition of your selected design or sampling method, you should mostly use **simple past tense** in chapter 3.]



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Data Analysis and Results

**4.1. Overview** [see chapter one]

**4.2. Restatement of the Research Questions** [you should bear in mind that chapter 4 goes round the research questions; hence, it's reasonable to restate your designated RQs (mentioned in chapter 1) once more here in chapter 4. It is because examiners or readers can access your RQs more easily to see how you addressed them. Before listing your RQs, it's suggested that you shortly explain what your objectives were, i.e., what you set to reach in your study, which led to the formulated research questions.]

**4.3. Preliminary Analyses** [prior to addressing your RQs, it makes sense to summarize the information concerning whether your exploited instruments were reliable, and if the data you collected were normally distributed. Needless to say, these preliminary steps should be followed in quantitative and mixed methods designs. In the case of merely qualitative studies, you should consult your supervisor to decide whether to include this subsection for a presentation of the coding system or pattern-detection protocol you used before dealing with your RQs. In addition to normality and reliability check, you may want to present here any other preliminary analysis that is worth noting.]

**4.3.1. Normality of the Data** [you should know that for parametric analytical techniques such as T-Test, ANOVA, etc. normality of data is a requirement. For this purpose, researchers usually compute either the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic (K-S Test) or the Skewness/Kurtosis values from descriptive statistics. For more understating of these technical issues, you had better study the SPSS manual by Pallant, 2020.]

**4.3.2. Reliability of the Instruments** [earlier in chapter 3, you were to mention the computed (internal) consistency of the data-collection instruments of your study, but here in chapter 4, you have to give more evidence supporting your claims. It means, you are supposed to give the





tables showing the internal consistency (or other reliability estimation techniques) of your deployed tools such as questionnaires or tests.]

#### 4.4. Addressing the Research Questions [give a short opening to the following subsections first]

**4.4.1. RQ1:** [**Don't** repeat the exact question in interrogative form; instead, write a shortened phrase showing what is going to be measured. Having converted your first RQ into some declarative sentence showing what is going to be analyzed, you should present your analyses (tables, graphs, reports) in line with the demand of your first RQ. Usually, a table that shows the descriptive statistics of the groups, their mean, SD, number of participants in each, etc. is required, followed by a table that displays the main analytical results (e.g.: sig., eta squared, magnitude of correlation, ...). Two points are vital: a) About the format of tables and figures, you should follow the APA manual 7th edition, and b) In chapter 4, you must normally report the results you obtained, **DON'T** interpret/discuss the results in this chapter.]

**4.4.2. RQ2:** [same guidelines as for the previous part should be kept in mind. If you have more RQs, again the same points need to be followed for 4.4.3, etc.]

#### 4.5. Summary [see chapter two]

[a sample APA 7th table]

**Table 4.1** [font size 12, bold, non-italic]

*Internal Consistency of the Listening Pretest* [font size 12, italic, non-bold]

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
0.808	0.697	24

[If you have any notes, write them here below the table, font 11, as: Note: ..... ]

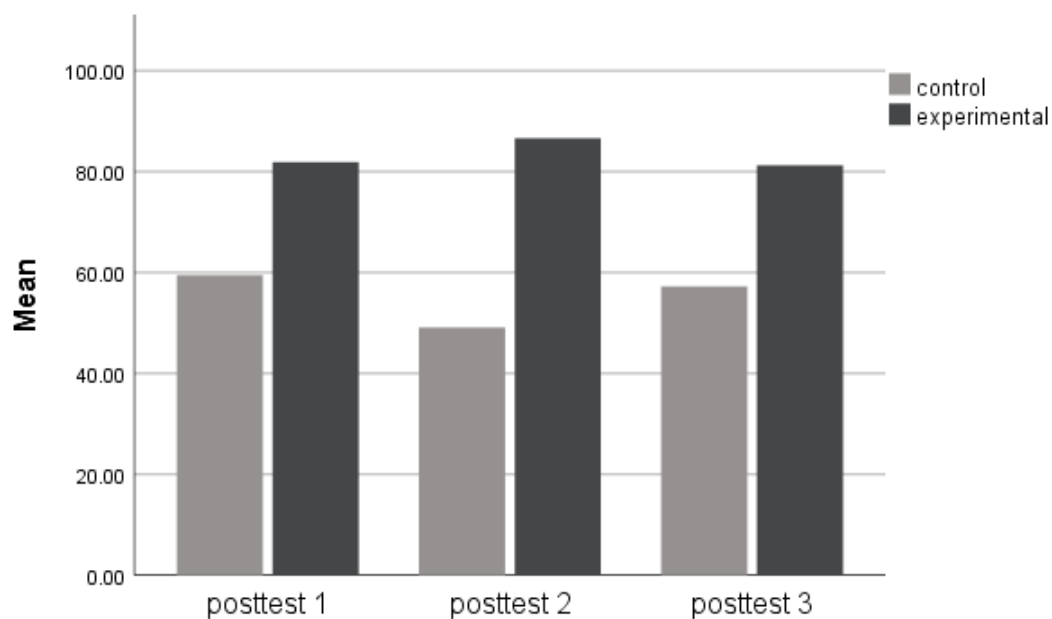


[Table metrics: Font size 11, neither bold nor italic, no vertical border, mostly 3 horizontal borders are required: One below the table title, one below the column titles, one at the bottom]

[a sample APA 7th figure]

**Figure 4.1** [the metrics are exactly like those for tables]

*Comparison bet. the Two Groups' Vocabulary Achievement in Three Posttests*



[If there is any note, you can write it here in font 11, as: Note: ..... ]



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Discussion and Conclusion

**5.1. Overview** [see chapter one]

**5.2. Summary of the Obtained Results** [before setting to discuss the answers to your research questions or hypotheses with respect to the results of your analyses, it's recommended that you present a summary of the major results you obtained through chapter 4. It is certainly not needed to mention all details you went through in the previous chapter, nor is it required to bring any table or graph here. Simply, summarize the most relevant results to set the ground for your following discussions.]

**5.3. Discussion** [briefly review your main objectives behind this study, what you aimed to investigate, and then pave the way for the following subsections.]

**5.3.1.** [Convert your first RQ or Hypothesis into a conceptual phrase, and then, try to discuss, argue, justify, reason, validate, etc. the results you obtained in light of the theme of each RQ and the previous similar studies in the literature. If your results were similar to those reported by previous outstanding works, then, you can stress the fact that your study corroborates them; otherwise, try to reason/justify why your results were different from theirs.]

**5.3.2.** [Convert your second RQ or Hypothesis into a conceptual phrase, and then follow the guidelines given in the previous part. If you have more RQs, go for next subsections as 5.3.3, and so forth.]

**5.4. Pedagogical Implications of the Study** [first review what you wrote in chapter one as Significance of the Study, keeping it in mind, you should state and defend at least two or more uses and benefits of your study based on what you found at length. The pedagogical implications are those contributions that your ultimate findings can make to the promotion of the SLA process, including teaching, learning, testing, researching, materials writing, etc.]



**5.5. Limitations and Delimitations of the Study** [there is a subtle and sometimes confusing difference between the two: Limitations are those shortcomings over which the researcher has very little or no control; they are mostly limitations posed by the social, educational, political, ethnic, etc. context of research (e.g., L1 background of the participants, lack of out-of-class exposure to L2, not accessing both genders in your educational context). Delimitations, however, pertain to those constraints imposed by researcher him/herself so as to make the research process manageable and practically possible. Delimitations can be a small sample, limited sessions of experiment, lack of pretest or control group, lack of delayed posttest, and the like. Note that both groups of constraints can limit the generalizability of your results to other contexts as well as the whole population. It is better **NOT** to list such limitations and delimitations in a rigid format; instead, explain and discuss them together.]

**5.6. Suggestions for Further Research** [in accordance with the highlighted limitations/delimitations in the previous section, try to suggest some new lines of research in your field for other researchers. In other words, this subpart is to open a number of new windows towards how your area of research can be even more delved into by addressing other aspects of the issue you couldn't or didn't address.]

**5.7. Conclusion** [this section is more than just giving a chapter summary. You can have one or more paragraphs, giving a rather detailed summary of your whole study. It seems fully tenable if you open this concluding part with a review of the problem you tapped into, your aims, how you addressed and answered them, followed by your ultimate findings. You can even close your whole thesis-report by some final remarks about how this study can inspire new horizons for more and more investigation into your main research area.]



## References

[Examples of APA 7th end-text citations]

❖ **Book:** [Title of book italic; followed by the Publisher; DOI is optional] **Examples:**

Brown, L. S. (2018). *Feminist therapy* (2nd ed.). American Psychological Association.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0000092-000>

Burgess, R. (2019). *Rethinking global health: Frameworks of power*. Routledge.

Schmid, H. J. (Ed.). (2017). *Entrenchment and the psychology of language learning: How we reorganize and adapt linguistic knowledge*. American Psychological Association.

[In the last example above, the part (Ed.) represents the editor of the book, not the author. Please don't confuse this clipped form with (ed.), which stands for edition.]

❖ **Article:** [Title of the article non-italic; name of the journal italic; volume italic(issue non-italic); page-range non-italic; DOI should be given if available] **Example:**

McCauley, S. M., & Christiansen, M. H. (2019). Language learning as language use: A crosslinguistic model of child language development. *Psychological Review*, 126(1), 1-51. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rev0000126>

❖ **A Chapter in an Edited Book:** [sometimes you want to give citation to a chapter of a book edited by one or more experts, but the author(s) of that chapter is different from the editors. See the following example and attend to the data and mechanics.] **Example:**

Weinstock, R., Leong, G. B., & Silva, J. A. (2003). Defining forensic psychiatry: Roles and responsibilities. In R. Rosner (Ed.), *Principles and practice of forensic psychiatry* (2nd ed., pp. 7-13). CRC Press.

❖ **Unpublished PhD or MA Thesis:** [the title of thesis italic; the name of university/college non-italic]

Harris, L. (2014). *Instructional leadership perceptions and practices of elementary school leaders* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Virginia.



Hutcheson, V. H. (2012). *Dealing with dual differences: Social coping strategies and queer adolescents* [Unpublished master's thesis]. The College of William and Mary.

[For more information, you need to study the APA 7th manual, chapters 9 & 10.]

## **Appendices**

**Appendix A** [open a new page for each appendix; if you have only one appendix, there is no need to number it; just write Appendix]

**Appendix B**

**Appendix C**