



Linnæus University

Sweden

Writing an academic thesis/degree project in English educational linguistics



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1 Writing a thesis in educational linguistics

1.1 The purpose of the thesis

Your thesis is an opportunity for you to carry out an in-depth study of a particular area of English educational linguistics that interests you. By writing the thesis you will learn how linguistic research methodology can be applied, and improve your English academic writing skills.

Throughout your thesis writing process, you will have to:

- define and delimit an area of research;
- make use of other written sources on the topic (especially previous research) to build up the argumentation for your topic;
- select and apply an appropriate scientific method to carry out an empirical investigation;
or
offer a systematic review of exiting research on the selected topic
- structure, describe, analyse, evaluate and discuss your findings clearly and logically;
- use language that is appropriate for an academic text;
- review and discuss other students' work.

1.2 Differences between theses written at different levels

At the Department of Languages (LNU), theses in English educational linguistics are written in different programmes and at different levels, where they are worth a different number of higher education credits: BA level (15 credits), advanced level (15 credits), and MA level (30 credits). The theses written at these different levels need to meet different standards.

Theses should be of different lengths:

- BA thesis: 7,000–9,000 words
- Advanced-level thesis: 10,000–12,000 words
- MA thesis: 12,000–15,000

The abstract, references, and appendices are excluded from the word count. In terms of quality and complexity, theses at the advanced level and MA level need to be more complex and of higher quality than the BA theses in terms of all aspects, such as independence, study design, analysis, use of secondary sources, writing, etc. For more details, consult the intended learning outcomes of the programme/course you are in, grading criteria, and your supervisor.

1.3 Organisation of thesis writing

You will be assigned a supervisor at the beginning of the writing process. Supervision will consist of seminars (lead by your supervisor) and one-on-one meetings with your supervisor. In seminars you will meet other students who are writing their thesis. There you will discuss drafts of your texts and any problems



you have encountered, exchange ideas and information, and get feedback on the content and structure of your thesis from your peers and your supervisor. You will be expected to come to all of the seminars, to contribute, to read your peers' thesis drafts and to make constructive suggestions for each text. In one-on-one meetings with your supervisor, you and your supervisor will focus on your study and thesis only.

You will be expected to submit a series of thesis drafts throughout the writing process, usually in connection with a seminar or an individual supervision meeting. Since you have a very restricted period of time for writing your thesis, it is extremely important that these deadlines are met. If you fail to submit your text on time, you cannot expect to have it discussed at the seminar, nor to receive timely feedback from your supervisor. In other words, meeting deadlines is extremely important.

1.4 Research ethics

When you are conducting your study and writing your thesis, it is important to follow the rules of good and ethical research practice. In short, good research practice can be observed by following a few simple rules:

- 1) You shall tell the truth about your research.
- 2) You shall consciously review and report the basic premises of your studies.
- 3) You shall openly account for your methods and results.
- 4) You shall openly account for your commercial interests and other associations.
- 5) You shall not make unauthorised use of the research results of others.
- 6) You shall keep your research organised, for example through documentation and filing.
- 7) You shall strive to conduct your research without doing harm to people, animals or the environment.
- 8) You shall be fair in your judgement of others' research.

From: Swedish Research Council. 2017. *Good research practice*. Stockholm: Swedish Research Council. ISBN: 978-91-7307-354-7. Quote from p. 10. (available online: <https://www.vr.se>)

If your project requires you to collect or use data about individuals, you need to address the ethical considerations presented in Appendix 1.

The issue of research ethics must always be discussed with your supervisor before you start doing your study.

2 Getting started

2.1 Finding a topic

When you get started, it is good to think about an issue or a question in English language teaching and learning that you have encountered in a course or literature, or experienced yourself. This issue or question can be related to different actors in



the learning process (learners, parents, teachers, future teachers, principals, etc.), as well as texts associated with teaching and learning (e.g. textbooks, students' texts, national tests). When deciding on the issue or question, you should think about why it is important to investigate: Does it add anything new to the knowledge? Is it something that has not been investigated yet? Is it something that needs a more in-depth analysis or perhaps an analysis from a different perspective or in a different context? etc. Be prepared to argue for your choice of topic. Formulate a preliminary aim based on the issue or question you are interested in. Keep in mind that you will have a limited amount of time to conduct and write up your study, so your aim needs to be limited as well.

2.2 Refining your aim

The next step is to operationalise your aim. What this means is that you need to determine how your aim can be achieved. By reading secondary sources, such as older student theses, research articles, etc., you will get a general idea of what has been done before and some useful hints about how you should (or should not) go about investigating your topic. After a brief survey of the existing literature, formulate several more specific research question, the answers to which can help you achieve the aim. A research question should be open, i.e. start with a question word (e.g. *how*, *what*, *why*), and not possible to answer with *yes* or *no*. Note that a research question is more comprehensive than the questions you use in an interview or a questionnaire. The final step in refining your aim is to determine how you can find the answers to these research questions (i.e. what method and material to use).

2.3 Finding secondary sources

This part of the research process means acquainting yourself with the field in question, and getting to know what has been done before and from what perspectives. You should do a general survey of relevant previous work in the field, by using the facilities at the university library and finding serious research that the Internet offers. This part of the process will help you relate your own research topic to the field at large. At this stage, you should focus on:

- finding suitable secondary sources;
- organizing the secondary sources according to importance.

Use a few well-picked key words in the databases available at the university library. Once you have a good number of articles (or books) you start by browsing their abstract. If the articles seem relevant based on the abstract, quickly skim the introduction and conclusion. Based on this you can then single out the articles that are relevant to your study. When it comes to books, you can determine their relevance by looking at the table of contents and the index. This strategy can also help you find the relevant chapters. If your search queries do not produce any relevant results, you will need to change the search string. The more you get to know your topic, the easier it will be to refine your searches with relevant key words. If you are having problems finding sources for your particular area of interest, a librarian can help you. The databases are continuously updated and librarians have expert competence regarding databases and search techniques.



Remember that a large majority of secondary sources you cite in your thesis should be academic/scientific articles found in scientific journals or books/chapters and should be written in English. Other sources, such as student essays and government reports, for example, are allowed, but they should not constitute the majority of your reference list.

Good places to look for secondary sources are:

- library catalogues and electronic databases;
- Google Scholar: <http://scholar.google.se/>;
- reference lists of articles and books/chapters you have found to be relevant.

It is important to start searching for written material on the topic as soon as possible – sometimes a book or an article has to be ordered from another library and it may take a great deal of time to get it.

If your objective is to write a systematic review of existing literature on a particular topic, make sure you consistently document all searches, including the preliminary searches you do as part of the process of defining your topic.

3 Designing your study

There are different ways to carry out a study in educational linguistics. To answer your research questions and to achieve your aim, you will have to pick an appropriate design. Before you start, assess what knowledge and access you have. For example, if you have little knowledge of statistics, doing a study that requires advanced calculations will require you to learn how to do them, which you might not have time for. If you have no contacts at a school, but you want to collect data in a school, you will have to put in more work to find willing participants.

You can start designing your study by focusing on the following questions:

Step 1: Who/what is going to be your source of data?

Possible sources are people (e.g. learners, teachers, teacher students) and texts (e.g. already available corpora, textbooks, national tests, a collection of peer-reviewed research publications on a particular topic). If your sources are people, you need to make particular ethical considerations (see Appendix 1 for details).

Step 2: How are you going to retrieve the data?

In the case of texts, you need to decide how you will select the texts you will analyse and provide a rationale for your decision. When writing a systematic review of available research on a particular topic, this step includes defining appropriate search criteria and search words which will give you as relevant hits as possible (using the library staff's expertise in this step is vital). In the case of people, you need to decide, first, how you will select the participants, and, second, how you will retrieve data from them. Here, as well, you need to have a rationale for your decisions. There are many ways of retrieving data, for example: collection of student texts (e.g. diaries, essays, oral presentations),



interviews, observations, proficiency testing, questionnaires, etc. In some cases, after retrieving the data, you will also have to decide how you will transform the data into a format that can be analysed (e.g. an interview transcript, observational notes, a spreadsheet of questionnaire answers, digitised student essays, practical coding systems facilitating observation of themes in research articles).

Step 3: How are you going to analyse the data?

Once you have selected and collected the data, you will also need to analyse it. An interview, for example, is a procedure for collecting data, and not a procedure for analysing it. A proficiency test, as well, is a way of retrieving data; the results of the test still need to be analysed after collection.

Analysis of data can be quantitative or qualitative, or a combination of the two. Quantitative analyses involve counting of some kind and tend to be used to analyse a bigger amount of data. Quantitative research aims to be generalizable and more easily replicable. Qualitative analyses, on the other hand, offer rich description of a limited data set. They can be based on single cases, and do not have to be generalizable. Instead they should provide an in-depth understanding of a topic. Many types of data can be analysed using quantitative or qualitative means. For example, classroom observations can either be quantitative or qualitative; you can visit many classes and look for one particular aspect, or you can visit just a few classes and take a more holistic approach to your study. Finally, as when deciding on how you will retrieve the data, your decisions for how you will analyse the data need to have a justification as well.

Combining two different sources and/or ways of retrieving and analysing data is a possibility. For instance, an analysis of student essays can be followed up by interviews with teachers or students. We call this a *mixed-method approach*.

It is not advisable to collect data without your supervisor's input, so make sure to discuss your plan with your supervisor before you put it into action.

In Appendix 2 there is a list of books and chapters on different methods you can use. Many other useful sources can be found at the university library.

4 Conducting your study

Although in an ideal situation you would conduct your study first before writing it up, in reality both of these things tend to be done concurrently. In other words, while you are writing the first part of your thesis, you will also have to be collecting data at the same time. Your supervisor, for example, will expect you to produce writing throughout the course and not only at the end, and will also expect you to attend seminars and individual supervision meetings throughout the course. For these reasons, keeping a good schedule is of utmost importance.

Some other useful advice on conducting your study is the following:



- Schedule enough time for different parts of data collection, analysis, and writing of your thesis. Things often take longer than expected, so a generous schedule is better than a tight one;
- Keep track of secondary sources you have read;
- Try out your method of analysis on a smaller sample of data first, before analysing the entire set;
- Keep careful notes on any decisions you make regarding the collection or analysis of data;
- Keep copies of your data, analyses and writing in at least two places, and not only on your computer (e.g. thumb drive, portable hard drive);
- Don't procrastinate! If you have writer's or "researcher's" block, find something useful and practical to do, even if it is something simple like preparing an Excel sheet, writing the reference list, formatting the essay, etc. Keep busy.

5 Writing your thesis

Doing research and writing a report on it can be described as going back and forth in your material and texts, writing and re-writing, doing and re-doing, and finally ending up with a final product. In this section, you will find information on how your thesis should be structured, as well as description of other formal requirements (academic English and source use).

The thesis should use the essay template provided by the teacher. The template can also be found at the bottom of this page:

<https://lnu.se/en/library/Publish-in-diva/publish-your-thesis-in-diva/>

5.1 Thesis structure

The structure of your essay should follow the basic Introduction—Methods and Materials—Results—Discussion (IMRD) structure of a research paper (see Figure 1).

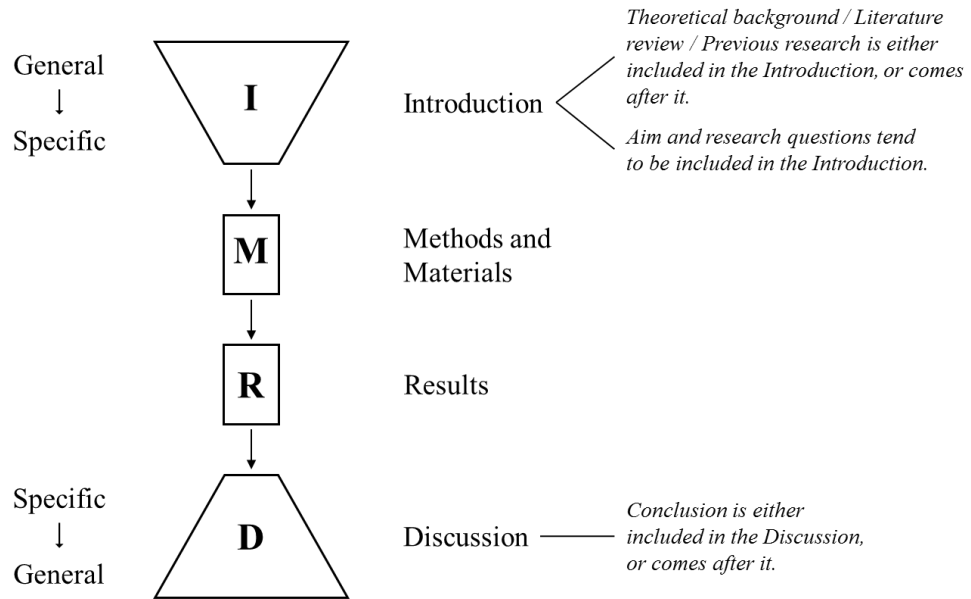


Figure 1. Overall shape of a research paper.

Adapted from: Swales, J. M. and Feak, C. B. 2004. *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills*. 2nd ed. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, p. 222.



Your essay should include the following:

- Title page
- Abstract and Key words
- Table of contents
- Introduction
- Contextual background / theoretical background / literature review / previous research / definitions of concepts
- Materials and method
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- References
- Appendices

Sections Introduction – Conclusion need to be numbered.

5.1.1 Title page

The title page should include the title which should be informative, correspond to the content of the thesis and not be too long. The details of the examiner and date can wait until the thesis is graded and ready for submission to the database (DiVA).

5.1.2 Abstract and Key words

The abstract contains a short and concise description of the background, aim, method, results and conclusion (200-250 words). The arguments and detailed results of the thesis should not be included in the abstract. The abstract is written at the end of the writing process.

Three to five keywords arranged in alphabetical order should be chosen so that they facilitate finding your thesis in databases and on the web. Key words should not be too specific (e.g. *secondary school* is better than *8th grade*). Avoid key words that are too general (e.g. *language learning*).

5.1.3 Table of contents

The table of contents lists, with page references, all the headings and subheadings, the reference list and any appendices (starting with the Introduction). The headings should be short and informative and not a question or a complete sentence. Ideally, they should not be longer than one line. The same heading cannot be used more than once.

5.1.4 Introduction

In the Introduction you introduce your topic to the reader, giving necessary background information. You can, for instance, start by explaining why the topic is interesting and worthy of studying (but avoid being unnecessarily personal). In educational linguistics, referring to some curricular documents (such as what is in the syllabus for English at the level you are investigating) is typical. References to a few secondary sources on your topic are needed as well, in order to frame your investigation. The introduction should, therefore, present a very brief overview of



previous research on the topic, what is lacking, and how the study you conduct will amend that ‘gap’ in the research or contribute to knowledge. At the end of this section, you state your aim and research questions, sometimes in a separate subsection. It is important that your aim matches the results you get, so if you change your plans during the work with your thesis, the aim has to be modified.

In short, an Introduction identifies the general problem area and discusses what exactly will be studied in the thesis. One simple way of structuring an Introduction is to follow what we call a CARS model (Create-a-Research-Space, see Table 1).

Table 1. The CARS model.

<i>Move 1</i>	<i>Establishing a research territory</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none">by showing that the general research area is important, central, interesting, problematic, or relevant in some way (optional)by introducing and reviewing items of previous research in the area (obligatory)
<i>Move 2</i>	<i>Establishing a niche</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none">by indicating a gap in the previous research, or by extending previous knowledge in some way (obligatory)
<i>Move 3</i>	<i>Occupying the niche</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none">by outlining purposes or stating the nature of the present research (obligatory)by listing research questions or hypotheses (optional)by announcing principal findings (rare)by stating the value of the present research (optional)by indicating the structure of the research paper (optional)

From: Swales, J. M. and Feak, C. B. 2004. *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills*. 2nd ed. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, p. 244.

5.1.5 Contextual background / theoretical background / literature review / previous research / definitions of terms and concepts

This section describes the topic of the study, defines terms related to the topic and discusses previous relevant studies and their conclusions. A useful approach is to start from a general perspective and gradually narrow down the discussion to the most relevant issues. Organize this section around themes and not authors/studies. Themes are ‘pieces of a puzzle’ that you need in order to be able to investigate and talk about your topic. Remember only to review/discuss works that are relevant to the aim.

5.1.6 Materials and method

In this section, you describe, in detail, the design of your study. Your description needs to give a detailed account of the material you have used in your data, i.e. give information about which material was selected (e.g. titles of textbooks, topic/genre of student texts), their length (number of words), and any other information that is necessary for the reader to know. If your study includes participants, they also need to be described. In many cases, this means describing the context of the study (e.g. size of school, environment), as well as the participants themselves (e.g. their age, sex, knowledge of languages, number of participants involved). This description of the material and participants needs to include details on how the material/participants were chosen and why. Note that some material and all



participants need to be anonymised (see Appendix 1). This can be done by assigning codes to them (e.g. Student 1, Essay 1) or by giving them fake names.

The design of any instruments (interview protocol, questionnaire, test, etc.) and other means of collecting and selecting data (observations, choice of corpora, etc.), as well as analysis, should also be described in detail. The relevant instruments used should be attached as appendices.

The description of the method must be detailed enough so that someone else can understand how it was done (the transparency principle) and possibly replicate it (the replicability principle). Finally this section should also include a discussion of ethical considerations (see Appendix 1).

A subsection should be dedicated to each of the following topics:

- Participants (if applicable)
- Materials (if applicable)
- Collection of data
- Analysis of data
- Ethical considerations

The choice of method and analysis must be based on previous research or theory and contain references to appropriate sources. You need to provide a rationale for the choices made in the design of your study. For practical reasons, most studies will be focused on specific questions or perspectives, which means leaving other interesting questions outside the scope of the study. It is always better to explain why and how this was done, instead of trying to present the study as being more comprehensive than it really is. Your discussion of your methods needs to show that you are aware of the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen methods and that you are aware of how your choice of participants/material (e.g. the people you interviewed or the teaching material you analysed) and method (e.g. using interviews rather than a questionnaire) affected the results. It is also important to bring up problems you have encountered (people not answering a questionnaire or misunderstanding questions in it) and any limitations of your investigation (such as using a small amount of material, few participants). Finally, you also need to discuss how generalizable and representative your study is.

In the case of systematic reviews of existing research on a topic, the methods and materials section needs to include a description of the procedure for searching and selecting sources, a presentation of the selected material and description of the method used to process/analyse the research included in the review.

5.1.7 Results

This is the most important and extensive section in your thesis, as it is where you present the results of your own investigation in an objective way. It is of course impossible to present all your collected data in the report, so you have a great responsibility in deciding what to present and what to leave out, and summarizing it in a way that makes it easy for the reader to get a fair picture of your investigation. However, it is crucial that all results are presented and not only the ones that support



initial expectations. Even if the results are inconclusive, they should still be presented. It is a sign of a mature and confident researcher to state openly when the findings are only tentative or when the evidence appears weak.

Divide your Results section into subsections in a clear and logical way, in order to make your text more reader-friendly. For example, a thematic structure can be a good way to present results of an interview study as well as a systematic review of the literature on a particular topic.

Your presentation of results requires evidence. Evidence can, for instance, be numerical and presented in tables and figures. Excerpts from interviews, open-ended questionnaires and texts also count as evidence. We use these pieces of evidence to illustrate results and to show the reader that we have, indeed, found what we say we found. However, it is very important we do not leave the reader to analyse our evidence on their own. The analysis needs to be done by you, which means that every table, figure, quote, etc., needs to be introduced, referred to, as well as analysed and discussed in the text. For example, when it comes to an interview quote, you need to explain to the reader what the quote shows and how it can be interpreted, whereas when it comes to a table, the reader needs to know which figures to look at, why those figures are important/stand out, and what they can tell us.

All tables, figures, quotes, etc., need to be numbered and formatted so they stand out and are easy to find and read. Examples are in Appendix 3.

In systematic reviews of the research on a particular topic, it is essential that you represent the original sources' content in a fair and unbiased way, and make sure you take note of what is there rather than of that which agrees with your assumptions.

5.1.8 Discussion

In this section you need to evaluate your results in relation to your research questions and choice of design, i.e. what do your results tell you about the questions you asked and how did the design affect the results. It is also essential that you situate your results within the field, which you do by connecting the results to the theory and other research literature you have presented in your literature review section. Do not introduce new concepts and theories in this section. Make sure that every term and theory you refer to in your discussion is introduced in the theoretical background.

Be sure to include the following components (although without subsections and not necessarily in the same order):

- Restate the research questions, answer them and highlight the most important findings;
- Discuss whether results were as expected or surprising in some way and speculate, based on your knowledge, design of your study, and the literature, what the reasons for this might be;



- Discuss the method: the weaknesses and strengths of the chosen method(s) when applied to the material in the study, and how the method(s) have affected the results;
- Relate the results to the theoretical framework you have used and discuss the relevance of your results to the studies you reviewed in the background section.
- In reviews of existing literature, discuss the findings of the sources in the light of the reviewed studies' methodological, theoretical and contextual bases

In some cases, results and discussion can be presented in the same section (“Results and discussion”), so that the results are discussed at the same time as they are being presented.

5.1.9 Conclusion

You can start your conclusion by restating your aim and discussing in what ways it has been reached. You further summarize your results and discuss what general conclusions can be drawn from them (conclusions drawn about particular details of your study should have been presented in the Results section). Because this is a thesis in educational linguistics, you need to connect your study to teaching and learning in a relevant educational context. One common way of doing this is to relate the results of relevant steering documents and discuss pedagogical implications. This is often done in the conclusion section or in a separate “Pedagogical implications” section (after Conclusion). At the end of the conclusion, discuss how the study could have been carried out differently and suggest some possible areas of further research in relation to your study. In the case of systematic reviews of existing literature, identify areas that are still in need of further studies.

5.1.10 References

The heading References is not numbered. In this section you should enumerate all of the secondary sources you have used, as well as primary sources, if they were text sources. If the latter case, you should divide this section into two subheadings: “Primary sources” and “Secondary sources”.

The reference list should be written using Harvard style. A guide can be found here:

<https://lnu.se/en/library/Writing-and-referencing/referencing/>

5.1.11 Appendices

The appendix is used for things which take too much space to include in the real text, such as a questionnaire, an interview guide, an observation guide, a comprehensive table, a detailed account of database searches or a table displaying the content categories used when systematically processing existing research on a particular topic. We include this material in order to make the study more transparent for the reader, to increase their understanding of your study, and to make replication possible. Note that if this material is in Swedish, a translation into English needs to be included. All appendices need to be referred to in the text in an appropriate place.



If you have more than one appendix, you should number them in the order they are referred to in the thesis. In the table of contents, they are called “Appendix 1: Informative title” (e.g. *Questionnaire*), “Appendix 2: ...”, etc.

5.2 Academic English

It is always important to have the intended readers in mind when writing something. In your case these are mainly the members of your programme and your teacher, but other teachers and scholars anywhere in the world might also be interested in your results. For this reason, a great deal of effort should be put into your writing, making it clear and comprehensible and at the same time suitable for an academic context. To get an idea of the characteristics of academic writing in your subfield, pay close attention to the language used in the secondary sources you read.

In other words, your thesis should be written in academic English. Written academic English is different from everyday written English. There is a preference, for example, for longer noun phrases, the passive voice, longer sentences, certain types of words, and so on. In Table 2, academic and non-academic writing are contrasted. Note that the table describes characteristics and preferences; this does not mean that features of non-academic writing never appear in academic texts – some are just less common. For example, the passive voice should not be used to make it unclear who holds a particular view, or who carried out a particular activity, such as collecting data.

Table 2. Key characteristics of academic and non-academic writing.

Academic writing	Non-academic writing
Full forms	Short forms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There is</i> • <i>The test <u>did not</u> show</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There's</i> • <i>The test <u>didn't</u> show</i>
Sentence structure	Sentence structure
Complete sentences Complex sentences Length of sentences varies	Sentence fragments Simple & compound sentences
Connectors	Connectors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The theory appears to provide an explanation for this phenomenon. <u>However</u>, this is not the case on a closer examination.</i> • <i>The experimental design was weak. <u>Moreover</u>, the methodology was faulty.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I want to go to the cinema, <u>only</u> I have to work late.</i> • <i>Because of work, I can't go to London this weekend. <u>Anyway</u>, I don't have enough money.</i>
Use of nominal groups (verbs made into nouns)	Use of pronouns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The <u>application</u> of the results needs to be carefully considered.</i> <p>rather than</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We need to carefully consider how we <u>apply</u> the results.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i><u>We</u> need to carefully consider how <u>we</u> apply the results.</i>
Use of the passive voice	Use of the active voice



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To date, few qualitative studies <u>have been published</u> on this topic.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To date, researchers <u>have published</u> few qualitative studies on this topic.</i>
<p>Vocabulary</p> <p>Concise vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...<i>the focus is on X</i> • <i>Researchers <u>assumed</u> that...</i> <p>Academic Word List</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The study <u>investigated</u>...</i> <p>Technical vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>diglossia</i> • <i>scaffolding</i> 	<p>Vocabulary</p> <p>Informal vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... <i>talks about X</i> • <i>They <u>thought</u> that...</i> <p>Non-academic vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The study <u>looked at</u>...</i> <p>Idioms, slang</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>give and take</i> • <i>iffy</i>
<p>Point of view</p> <p>Objective and impersonal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This essay attempts to ...</i> <p>Using qualifying language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>One possible reason may be ...</i> 	<p>Point of view</p> <p>Subjective and personal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In my essay I will attempt to ...</i> <p>Rhetorical questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How can this be so?</i>

Adapted from: Hamp-Lyons, L. and Heasley, B. 2006. *Study writing: A course in writing skills for academic purposes*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 20.

Check your course page on MyMoodle as it will include links to other useful sources about writing in academic English.

5.3 Source use

As a part of your thesis writing, you will be required to read and use secondary sources. You need to acknowledge these sources in your essay. You acknowledge these sources by referring to them in:

- (1) The running text, in the form of:
 - a. Direct quotations
 - b. Paraphrases
 - c. Summaries
 - d. Ideas
- (2) The reference list at the end of the text.

Note that both of these steps are obligatory.

There are some instances where you do not have to acknowledge secondary sources, for example when what you are writing is common knowledge (*Mars has two moons; Children say their first words around the age of one year*) or when you use everyday/generic phrases (*All the world's a stage; The key problem with this explanation is that ...*).

To keep track of what you are reading and to prevent forgetting what information you found in which source, it is suggested that you do the following:

- Always write down your sources;
- Keep notes on what you have read (including the page number);
- Do not copy and paste;
- Use quotation marks for direct quotations (+ reference);



- When you paraphrase, do not forget to include a reference;
- Be careful when you paraphrase – your paraphrase should not be too close to the original;
- Avoid overuse of direct quotations (no more than 10% of your text);
- Double-check your ‘original’ ideas.

Copying information (summarizing or quoting) from other articles, books, papers on the Internet, etc., without giving references to the original source is called plagiarism. Plagiarism is prohibited and will have very serious consequences (a Fail grade, disciplinary committee meeting, suspension). All assignments written by students at our department are run through a programme which detects plagiarised text. Plagiarism can jeopardize your whole degree, so make sure that whenever you write things that are not your own ideas, results of your own investigation, etc., you give a reference to the source.

Obligatory reading about plagiarism: <http://refero.lnu.se/english>

6 Finalising your thesis

During the course your thesis will be read by your peers and the supervisor, who will give you feedback. Take your peers’ and supervisor’s feedback on board and use it to improve the quality of your thesis.

After finishing your thesis and before submitting it for examination, it is also important that you yourself read through your text several times in order to spot errors, mistakes and unclear formulations. Make sure that you have checked the following before submitting your final text for examination:

- 1) Read your thesis as a new reader
 - Is the thesis a unified text? (e.g. Are the research questions answered and the aim achieved?)
 - Is the thesis structured logically?
 - Have you explained the important concepts well enough that a new reader will understand them?
 - Are your arguments convincing?
- 2) Check your use of secondary sources
 - Have you acknowledged all of your sources in-text and in the final reference list?
 - Are all your direct quotes true to the original source?
 - Have you provided all information you need to provide about the sources? (e.g. pages numbers)
- 3) Check your presentation of evidence in the Results section
 - Are all your quotes, tables, figures, etc., correctly numbered and formatted?
 - Have they all been referred to and discussed in the text?
 - Are the figures in your tables, figures and text correct?
 - If your quotes were translated, is the translation correct and true to the original?



- 4) Check your language
 - Have you avoided sentence structure issues? (e.g. run-on sentences, sentence fragments, comma splices)
 - Have you double-checked your text for the grammatical errors you typically make and that your supervisor has pointed out to you?
 - Have you used words that are suitable for the context and genre?
 - Have you looked for common spelling errors?
 - Have you looked for capitalisation, apostrophe, hyphenation, and other punctuation errors? (Swedish and English often differ in these respects)
 - If you know how, consider using a corpus linguistic tool to check your text for excessive repetition of phrases and expressions.

7 Defending your thesis

After you have submitted your thesis for examination, you will need to participate in an examination seminar where your thesis will be discussed by an opponent (one of your peers) and examined by the examiner. At the examination seminar you will also be expected to act as an opponent on another peer's thesis.

In general, an examination of a thesis at an examination seminar has the following four parts:

- 1) The opponent summarises the thesis;
- 2) The opponent and the author of the thesis have a discussion about the thesis;
- 3) The examiner asks questions;
- 4) The audience asks questions.

Theses at different levels are allotted a different amount of time for these four parts. Check with your supervisor for the specifics.

When acting as an opponent, it is very important that you are fair to the thesis you are reading. Make sure to present both the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis, and to give clear examples of what you mean. Try also to be constructive in your criticism, i.e. suggest possible changes that could improve the thesis, rather than just pointing out weaknesses. It is important also to not get bogged down into details about language mistakes. It is much more useful for the author to receive a list of any language errors you have found in written form on paper and for you to instead spend the allotted time focusing on the content of the thesis. As the opponent, you are supposed to read the text carefully and make careful notes for your presentation – do not count on being able to just leaf through the thesis and talk as you go. As the author of a thesis that is discussed in the examination seminar, you are expected to answer questions and respond to criticism, explaining why you made the choices you made.

Aspects you could consider as an opponent:

- Is the thesis well structured, i.e. does it have a logical division into sections?



- Are the aim and research questions clearly defined? Do they match the results and conclusion?
- Is the presentation of previous research (secondary sources) made in a clear way? Does it give a sufficient background to the topic?
- Is the method section clear enough for you to understand how the study was carried out? Is there something in the investigation that you think should have been done differently?
- Are the results described and discussed in a clear and logical way? Are tables, charts, etc., (if any) clear and justified?
- Are the author's conclusions justified on the basis of the material presented?
- Are there any unclear passages in the thesis? Are there any unnecessary passages or passages missing, which you think should have been there?
- Is the language correct and does it have an appropriate style and level of formality?

If you are not able to finish your thesis by the final examination deadline, there may be an extra opportunity (depending on whether it is possible for us to arrange a round-up seminar). If you do not manage to finish your thesis at all during the time allotted, we cannot assure you of extended supervision.

8 Archiving your thesis

After the examination seminar, the examiner will send you their comments and the grade you will be receiving for your thesis. However, before the grade is reported, the examiner may ask you to make minor changes to your thesis (e.g. correcting language errors). Typically, these corrections need to be done within one week. Once you have completed making these changes and your final version of the thesis has been accepted by the supervisor and examiner, you need to register and publish the thesis electronically on DiVA before your grade can be reported in Ladok. Instructions on how to report and register your thesis are here:

<https://lnu.se/en/library/Publish-in-diva/>



Appendix 1: Ethical considerations involving people

If your study involves collecting data from people, there are some ethical considerations to make:

- All participation must be voluntary. You cannot force anybody to take part in your study. Participants should be informed of their rights and give their consent to participate in the study. They must also be guaranteed the right to withdraw from the study if they no longer wish to participate.
- If your participants are under 15, you need their parents' written consent to take part in the study. If you are collecting data in a classroom, you need the permission of the teacher and perhaps even the principal.
- You must guarantee your participants' anonymity.
- You must explain exactly what data will be collected and how, as well as how it will be processed and stored.
- Your supervisor is fully responsible for your investigation, and this should be made clear to the people involved in the study. This means that material such as an interview guide or a questionnaire has to be accepted by your supervisor before you use it.

Note that you will need to ensure that you are in compliance with EU GDPR guidelines.

Make sure to speak with your supervisor about these issues before you collect any data.

The consent form used in your study needs to be added to the thesis as an appendix.



Appendix 2: Useful secondary sources

Coffin, C., Lillis, T. and O'Halloran, K. 2010. *Applied linguistics methods: A reader: Systemic functional linguistics, critical discourse analysis and ethnography*. London, New York & Milton Keynes, U.K.: Routledge & The Open University.

Dörnyei, Z. (with Taguchi, T.) 2009. *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing*. 2nd ed. Hoboken: Taylor & Francis.

Dörnyei, Z. 2007. *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Eriksson Barajas, K., Forsberg, C. & Wengström, Y. 2013. *Systematiska litteraturstudier i utbildningsvetenskap: vägledning vid examensarbeten och vetenskapliga artiklar*. 1. utg. Stockholm: Natur & Kultur

Gass, S. M. and Mackey, A. 2011. *Data elicitation for second and foreign language research*. New York & London: Routledge.

Kvale, S. and Brinkmann, S. 2009. *Interview: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Mackey, A. and Gass, S. M. 2016. *Second language research: Methodology and design*. New York: Routledge.

Mackey, A. and Gass, S. M., eds. 2012. *Research methods in second language acquisition: A practical guide*. Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Nation, I. S. P. and Webb, S. 2011. *Researching and analysing vocabulary*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Paltridge, B. and Phakiti, A. 2010. *Continuum companion to research methods in applied linguistics*. London: Continuum.

Books on assessment of different skills and language knowledge (from *The Cambridge Language Assessment Series*):

Alderson, J. C. 2000. *Assessing reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Buck, G. 2001. *Assessing listening*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cushing Weigle, S. 2002. *Assessing writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Douglas, D. 2000. *Assessing Languages for Specific Purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Luoma, S. 2004. *Assessing speaking*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Purpura, J. E. 2004. *Assessing grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



Read, J. 2000. *Assessing vocabulary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



Appendix 3: Example table, figure and quote

Example table (note that captions are placed above tables):

Table 3. Attitudes to grammar teaching.

	Female students		Male students	
	%	(n)	%	(n)
Positive	25	(14)	12%	(6)
Negative	37	(21)	64	(32)
Neutral	39	(22)	24	(12)
Total	100	(57)	100	(50)

Example figure (note that captions are placed below figures):

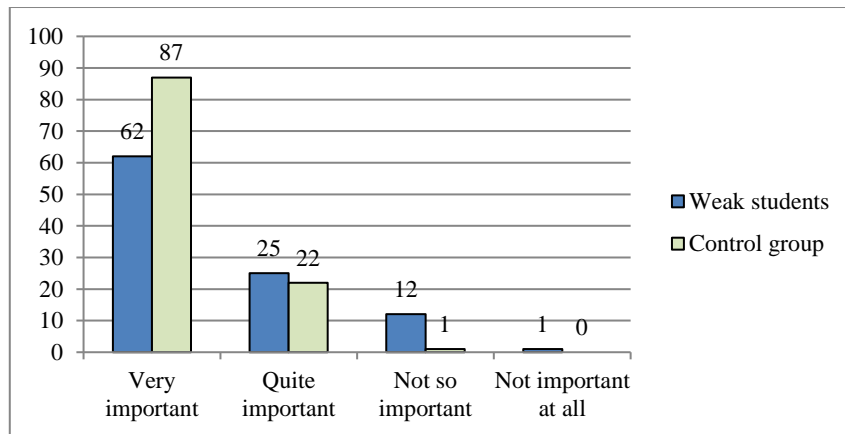


Figure 2. Students' attitudes to the importance of learning grammar.

Example quote:

- (1) Yes, you can say you become more persistent. You can manage more. If you read a lot of news, try to read whole articles you become- then you can get through it when you get to the difficult parts of the book later. You are kind of used to it [reading] being slow. (translation)¹

If your quotes are originally in Swedish or some other language other than English, they should be translated into English and this should clearly be marked after the quote (see the example above). The original Swedish quote should be put in an appendix. It should be numbered with the same number as the quote in the text.

¹ Example taken from: Mežek, Š. 2013. "Multilingual reading proficiency in an emerging parallel-language environment", in *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 12, p. 173-4, quote 11.