Purpose of the MA Project

- To measure your knowledge of a topic from the field of TESOL (or applied linguistics) that you are interested in.
- To this end, we require an academic literature review on a topic of your choice in which you provide an in-depth review of relevant research and also a cogent critique of the research that pertains to this topic.

Project prompt

- Construct a research question that can be addressed in 20-25 pages.
- In answering your question, you should give an overview of the past and current state of your topic, the relevant research that is associated with your topic, a solid critique of this research, and suggestions for further areas of study.

Potential topics

- Flexible and open
- Look for a topic on which a decent amount of research has been produced (keep in mind guideline of 20-25 pages)

Please note...

- The topic is of your choice, but you must have it approved by an advisor who will sign off on your Program Sheet.

Procedures

- All papers are rated blind by two raters.
- 3 main criteria:
  1. Content (weighted by 3)
  2. Organization (weighted by 2)
  3. Language/Mechanics/Referencing (weighted by 1)
- Papers are rated “High Pass,” “Pass,” or “Rewrite”
- If you are asked to rewrite the paper, you will consult with one of the faculty members who rated your paper, and resubmit.
Introduction

- Orient your reader by giving some context:
  1. Much research has been conducted on learning English as an additional language both in the United States and around the world.
  2. In recent decades, large-scale English language proficiency testing and testing research have seen an increased interest in constructed-response essay-writing items (Aschbacher, 1991; Powers, Burstein, Chodorow, Fowles, & Kukich, 2001; Weigle, 2002).
  3. Unlike children learning to speak, adults come to the language-learning process with years of life experience. They may be beginners in a new language, but they are not beginners in their own lives.

Introduction

- Some primers for introducing the context of your paper:
  1. In recent years...
  2. For decades...
  3. Since the 1980s...
  4. Language learners have many different...
  5. Teachers have long used...
  6. Given the popularity of...
  7. Since language learning can be...
  8. Learning a second language is not...
  9. There has been a long tradition of...

Organization of the paper

- Introduction
  - Clearly state your rationale, question, and outline how your paper will be organized.

- Body of paper
  - Critical review of relevant research

- Conclusion
  - Summarize your main points and give suggestions for further areas of inquiry

- Introduce the conflict/controversy/inconsistency that makes research in this area interesting or necessary
  1. Much research has been conducted on learning English as an additional language both in the United States and around the world. However, there have been fewer studies focusing on heritage language learners (HLLs) who have already acquired English as their native tongue and are learning their heritage language as an L2, or second language (Joo, 2009).

- Introduce the conflict/controversy/inconsistency that makes research in this area interesting or necessary
  (non-contiguous)

  1. In recent decades, large-scale English language proficiency testing and testing research have seen an increased interest in constructed-response essay-writing items (Aschbacher, 1991; Powers, Burstein, Chodorow, Fowles, & Kukich, 2001; Weigle, 2002). While the fact that constructed-response essay items require students to generate samples of language may make such items a more proximal measure of communicative writing ability, the process of scoring essay items is quite complex. Human raters must be hired and trained to score each of the examinee essays.

- Introduce the conflict/controversy/inconsistency that makes research in this area interesting or necessary
  (contiguous and non-contiguous)

  2. Unlike children learning to speak, adults come to the language-learning process with years of life experience. They may be beginners in a new language, but they are not beginners in their own lives. Yet, some of the most common types of teacher/student exchanges, especially those that follow a teacher-initiated question, may lead to situations in which students who are speaking about familiar topics still feel, act, and are treated as novices. … However, there seems to be little recent work on frames and adult student/teacher discourse.
Introduction

Some primers for introducing conflict:

- Although the popularity of...
- Even though researchers agree that...
- In spite of the difficulties associated with...
- Given the differences in...
- Since these inconsistencies are...
- However, there is no evidence to support...
- Despite the growing interest in...
- While learning is not...
- Still, many teachers are unaware that...

Research question

- Can be explicit or implicit

1. Who exactly are HLLs, and what defines them as such? What makes HLLs different from L2 learners? This paper will take a sociolinguistic and socio-psychological perspective on HLLs, with a particular focus on Korean Americans in the United States. How do attitude, motivation, and identity play a role in heritage language acquisition among Korean American learners? Do these socio-psychological factors affect one another in the learning process? What are the pedagogical implications for teachers and students?

Research question

- Can be explicit or implicit

2. The pages that follow will provide a discussion of some of the challenges associated with the performance-based assessment of writing as well as a critical review of the automated essay scoring applications that have been developed as an alternative to or supplement for human ratings of writing performance.

Research question

- Can be explicit or implicit

3. (However, there seems to be little recent work on frames and adult-student/teacher discourse.) This paper, then, attempts to bring these two strands of research together, applying Goffman's theories to teacher/student interactions in an adult foreign language classroom.

Advance organizer

- Outlines paper's organization for the reader. Let's them know what to expect.

Papers 1 & 3– no advance organizer

Paper 2

Part one begins with a description of a group of interactive frames operating in a beginning French class for adults. Part two explores the teacher's role as expert in the classroom through these interactive frames and the concepts of keying (Goffman, 1974) and footing (Goffman, 1974, 1981). Finally, the paper concludes with the suggestion that both teachers and students are operating within a broader, cognitive frame where student speech is seen as either right or wrong, and classroom discourse is associated with testing rather than with teaching and learning.

Advance organizer

This can be done better!

Look at your (major) subheadings in the body of your paper, and use those to create your advance organizer.
First, what it means to be a heritage language learner will be defined. Issues with ethnolinguistic affiliation will then be discussed, followed by a discussion on language proficiency and HLL status. Finally…

**Introduction**
- Advance organizer
- Headings from Paper 1
  1. Heritage language learner defined
  2. Heritage language learners and ethnolinguistic affiliation
  3. Heritage language learners and language proficiency
  Etc.

*First, what it means to be a heritage language learner will be defined. Issues with ethnolinguistic affiliation will then be discussed, followed by a discussion on language proficiency and HLL status. Finally…*

**Organization of the paper**
- Introduction
  - Clearly state your rationale, question, and outline how your paper will be organized.
- Body of paper
  - Critical review of relevant research
- Conclusion
  - Summarize your main points and give suggestions for further areas of inquiry

**Body of the paper**
**Headings**
- First, think of the major themes within your topic, and create main headings (and possibly also subheadings) for the body of your paper.
- They are there to help you organize the relevant research you are presenting.
- The number of (sub)headings you have will be determined based on how broad your topic is.
- You should aim to have between 3 and 5 main headings (and any number of associated subheadings).
- You should aim to have between 3 and 10 studies presented under each (sub)heading.

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**Body of the paper**
**Presenting empirical studies (Examples from Paper 1)**

For each study you present:

1. Intro to study

*Lee’s (2005) study suggested that students’ linguistic proficiency had greater salience on determining HLL status than did their ethnolinguistic affiliation to the language.*

2. Relevant methodology (participants, measurement, analyses, etc.)

*Linguistic proficiency was assessed on five proficiency levels ranging from not proficient to native-like. The assessment was based on a Likert scale and included speaking, listening, reading, writing, and cultural knowledge.*
3. Relevant findings (qualitative/quantitative)

Students who identified themselves as HLLs professed to have the greatest proficiency in listening, speaking, and cultural knowledge, and the lowest in reading and writing. There was a high correlation between linguistic proficiency and HLL identification. Non-heritage learners classified their heritage learner classmates as those who possessed greater language proficiencies than they.

4. Your summary/evaluation

It appears that the students’ self-assessment of HLL identification was subjectively dependent on a comparison to their peers who possessed higher linguistic proficiencies than that of their own.

5. Critique**

What is a critique?

A critique is where you outline potential shortcomings of the research design (methodology) or the researcher’s interpretation of the results, or where more information on the topic would be useful.

**You must have this to pass.

The focus of this paper will now turn to Korean American HLLs and the roles in which the socio-psychological factors of attitude, motivation, and identity play in heritage language acquisition.

Discussion section: To have or not to have...

A couple of options...

1. Have separate discussions (small ‘d’) integrated within each of your heading sections. Summarize section critiques.
2. Have a separate Discussion (big ‘D’) after the main body of your paper. This will be a main critique of the research that has been done.

The approach you pick should be driven by how the information would be best organized. In other words, are your sections related enough so that you could collapse a summary and critique of all the research studies you present into one Discussion, or should they stay separate?

- E.g., Different methods for measuring pragmatic knowledge vs. the ways in which pragmatics has been defined → too different
- E.g., Factors influencing politeness features in L2 speaking (power, distance, degree of imposition, L1 norms, gender, etc.) → same vein
Organization of the paper

- Introduction
  - Clearly state your rationale, question, and outline how your paper will be organized.

- Body of paper
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- Conclusion
  - Summarize your main points and give suggestions for further areas of inquiry

Conclusion

- Summarize current state of your topic in broad terms;
- Opportunity to discuss general limitations of the research that has been done (since you've already addressed the specific limitations of the studies you've reviewed in the body of your paper);
- Make suggestions for areas of further research.

Some example language:

1. Although a clear definition of an HLL is still developing, it is suggested that having some form of relationship with the heritage language is what primarily sets them apart from L2 learners. The growing trend of HLLs in learning their heritage language has caused a substantial shift in the U.S. and has pedagogical implications on public schools and universities alike. … While there is a need for continued research in the development of more effective Korean heritage language courses in the future, raising awareness and increasing collaboration among HLLs, parents, schools, and communities today will help preserve Korean as a heritage language and recognize its value as a national resource.

2. The limitations of automatic essay scoring restrict the applications for which it is appropriate, and significant limitations exist in the areas of vulnerability to bad faith essays and inability on the part of most systems to provide rich feedback. However, the possible benefits, including high reliability, lower testing costs, faster score reporting, and the potential to lighten teacher workloads allowing for more student writing assignments, make automatic scoring an area that deserves continued research. … In this spirit, qualitative as well as quantitative studies should be undertaken to evaluate automatic scoring technology, its use in diverse testing applications, and the impact of its use on learners.

Language/mechanics

- Get an editor or go to the Writing Center

Referencing

- It matters!
- Looks less professional when there are errors.
- Look at articles on the TESOL/AL Webjournal as your reference for how to do in-text referencing and your References section at the end.
- We will notice if you don’t do this correctly.
Models

For model papers and referencing, please look at TESOL/AL Webjournal

http://journals.tcs-library.org/index.php/tesol

Volume 2s have the APPLE Award-winning papers.

FAQs

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