

**A SUGGESTED MODEL ON RESEARCH
METHODOLOGY FOR LMDSTUDENTS IN LETTERS AND
FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN Algeria
Practical Steps to Successfully Start a Dissertation**

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Abstract:

الملخص:

This article is intended to support “Licence” and Master students’ researches in the field of letters and foreign languages in Algeria. It summarizes the steps and the research tools to be used before, and during the research phase for an efficient methodology that, we hope, will help gain considerable amount of time and energy. It is also meant to integrate the most up-to-date Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) while conducting a research.

يهدف هذا المقال إلى مساعدة طلبة الليسانس والماستر في مجال الآداب واللغات الأجنبية، فهو يلخص أهم الخطوات والأدوات البحثية التي سيتم الاستعانة بها قبل وأثناء مرحلة البحث، وذلك كله بفضل منهجية فعالة ستساعد، بالتأكيد، في توفير الكثير من الوقت والجهد الضروريين، كما أن من أهم مزايا هذا البحث هو الحرص على إدراج أكثر تكنولوجيات الإعلام والاتصال حداثة وذلك أثناء القيام بعملية البحث.

Introduction

In 2004, the Algerian educational system at the University level shifted from the so called “classic system” to the newly implemented “LMD¹”. Globally speaking, this new system¹ engaged students, teachers, administrators and decision makers to readjust to a new pedagogical structure that has been set to favor massive teaching, and to open up new learning opportunities², that are supposed to be in conformity with the leading foreign Universities. This change has generated new objectives, new challenges³, and above all, the necessity to redesign a syllabus that meets the needs of learners, as well as the teachers’ expectations in terms of teaching quality assurance.

A decade later, after we gained a considerable experience with the LMD, we now regard this as a system that, still, has to comply with the latest techniques, approaches⁴ and strategies favoring quality in teaching over mass instruction. Most teachers across faculties of Letters and Languages in Algeria agree that the overcrowded classrooms, the outdated pedagogical means and the reduced number of faculty staff, both at the “Licence” or Master level, are negatively affecting students and preventing them to have the same chance to learn adequately and satisfactorily.

This is why the forthcoming steps, in this present article, are designed to guide students who are preparing a degree in English Language across Faculties of Letters and Foreign Languages in Algeria, and to motivate and help them start their dissertations/Theses, taking into consideration the challenges related to the identification of the most relevant and important variables⁵ prior to a research.

PRACTICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This part of the paperwork that includes the practical and methodological framework is meant to explain the way a research should be conducted, and also to direct students who might experience difficulties during the decisive phase of choosing the title, theme or topic for a study/research. Mostly affected by a hurdle known as the blank page syndrome, they often tend to struggle with the methodology⁶ and find themselves confused and unable to prioritize some research steps such as: the identification of the problem, writing

¹**LMD** stands for the educational system Licence-Master-Doctorat

up a problem statement, formulating a hypothesis, and finally, and most importantly, drafting the dissertation or thesis.

Our approach is attempting to simplify the steps that have to be undertaken before, during and after a research. For this, we chronologically ordered a method we found useful and effective, and summarized the literature through the following numbered points:

1. IDENTIFYING A PROBLEM:

This is the most important step in any research⁷, since it helps spotting and identifying an element, issue or problem, as far as English is concerned. Hence, asking a pertinent question would smoothen the process of deciding what to research and primordially enables the student to piloting the investigation in the direction of a given goal or objective.

2. FORMULATING A PROBLEM STATEMENT:

The problem statement has to be a short, precise and concise paragraph that summarizes the variables of a research.

3. SUGGESTING A HYPOTHESIS:

It is seen as the decisive orientation in which a student is asked to provide a temporary solution, alternative and/or way out to the proposed problem statement. It is highly recommended to formulate one (01) hypothesis at a time, because every hypothesis requires a study and a demonstration of reliability to verify if it can be accepted or rejected.

4. CHOICE OF THE TITLE:

In this step the student is asked to write a title that comprises the study elements which are considered as the research's variables. After the formulation of the problem statement and the hypothesis, the variables are generated and become the core of the investigation.

5. CHOOSING A RESEARCH STYLE:

Either in qualitative or quantitative research, the student will determine which research style is to be adopted depending on the keywords of his/her title. The most known and used styles in the field of humanities, arts and foreign languages are:

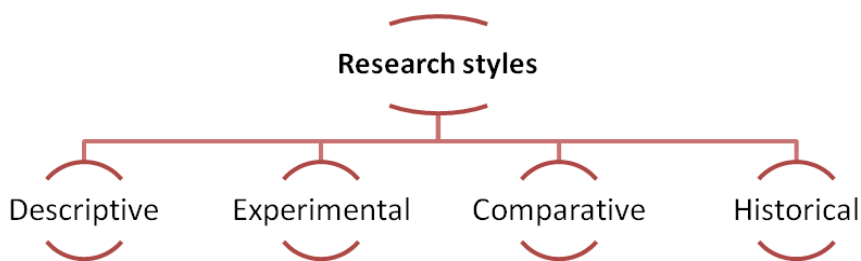


Figure 2 Research styles

A. DESCRIPTIVE STYLE:

The descriptive style refers to research that is mainly based on describing, portraying and depicting aspects and/or characteristics of individual(s), group(s), and situation(s). It is meant to describing what exists and favors exploring a different perspective in order to categorize information⁸.

B. EXPERIMENTAL STYLE:

It is a controlled investigation for the purpose of confirming the suggested hypothesis through experimentation(s). The experimental style is based on the study that includes two variables and two groups of participants.

THE TWO VARIABLES:

Independent Variable (IV) and Dependent Variables (DV)

- The IV as its name indicates is a variable that does not change and cannot be affected by other variables we try to measure. E.g. the gender or age might be independent variables. Whereas DV is the outcome variable dependent that we measure in the experiment.
- In a research we attempt to control the IV to study its influence on the DV.

THE TWO GROUPS OF PARTICIPANTS:

Control Group (CG) and Experimental Group (EG) / Testing Group (TG)

The process has to respect the rule of randomisation in the selection of the sample from the whole population. This is called "Sampling". Since the experimentation cannot be done on the whole group, the sampling has to include (20%) to (25%) of the population in order to have a more representative result. The sample represents the experimental group (EG) that has to be compared with the control group (CG) which receives no change or alteration.

C. COMPARATIVE/CORRELATIONAL STYLE:

It is a systematic study that is based on relationships among two or more variables. This style attempts to establish a correlation between two or more variables that have not been tested or exposed to experimental manipulation yet.

D. HISTORICAL STYLE:

This type of research involves the analysis of events that occurred in the past. It is a combination of the descriptive and comparative research style.

6. SETTING THE GOAL(S) OF THE RESEARCH:

In this section the student has to set and explain the objective(s) of the study, as well as its/their pertinence, so the reader might understand and have an accurate idea on the subject matter being discussed;

7. THE READING PHASE:

Thorough reading is primordial and necessary⁹. Building an understanding is required; this is why a good research always starts with the reading. However, the student has to make sure that books, articles, magazines, newspapers, and other materials are from reliable sources.

- The purpose of reading prior to a research is meant to help prepare an original work. In other terms, it helps the Licence/Master/Doctorate student avoid "reinventing the wheel".

8. DATA GATHERING TOOLS:

Questionnaires, surveys, polls, note taking, face to face interview/virtual interview, observation grid are the mostly used tools.

- Designing an online questionnaire with "Google Forms¹⁰" will help avoid all the mess with the statistical side of the study.

9. THE DRAFTING PHASE:

Before writing up the dissertation/thesis, we have to design a research plan, i.e.outline(s), titles and subtitles.A research is divided into two parts:

- Theoretical aspect (literature overview);
- Fieldwork (practical part);

10. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS:

This part includes the analysis of the obtained data as well as the research findings.It is considered as the practical part of the study in

which the hypothesis might be confirmed or rejected¹¹. The use of statistics with graphs, bars and charts will demonstrate the obtained results. A bibliography must be included at the end of the study. It comprises all the cited references in the paper. It also helps the readers to know the source of the information, and facilitate the furthering of a study. We have two types of bibliography formats:

- Modern Language Association (MLA) which is widely used in humanities and arts;
- American Psychological Association (APA) used in social sciences.

The use of the software "Mendeley¹² Desktop" is a tremendous solution that helps the researcher gain time and energy.

Figure 4 Research steps

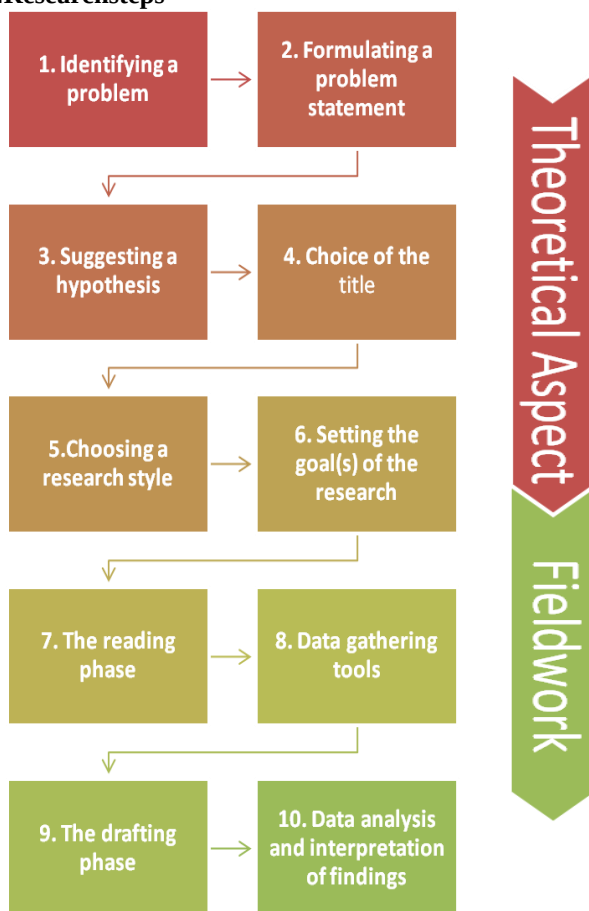


Figure 3 Front page

Figure 5 Front page

Font: Times New Roman,
Arial, Calibri or Cambria

- Titles: (14pt)
- Body: (12pt)
- Spacing: (1.5) or (2.0)
- Text: Justified
- Bibliography: MLA style

الجمهورية الجزائرية الديمقراطية الشعبية
PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
Ministry of Higher Education And Scientific research
"Name of the University here" -Algeria-
Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages
Department of English

Logo of University

Research Paper for Master degree on:

"YOUR TITLE HERE"

A Case Study of

Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages
University Algeria

Submitted by (your name)
Supervised by (Name of your supervisor)

University of academic year

Figure 6 Contents

CONTENTS

Part one: Theoretical Aspect

INTRODUCTION:
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
AIM OF THE STUDY
HYPOTHESES
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN
1. Choice of the method:
2. Subjects of the study
3. Data gathering tool:

Part Two: Fieldwork and Data Analysis

Data Analysis and Interpretation
Supposition and recommendation
CONCLUSION
BIBLIOGRAPHY

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is quite obvious that most students use Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to conduct their research, but do they really use the technology in a structured and organized way? The following recommendations will explain the needed steps to be carried out in order to use ICT in proper and efficient way.

- Create a Google account preferably using the real name. (*Your Family name plus the first letter of your first name at Gmail dot com* E.g. benboulaidC@gmail.com);
- Use Google DOCS to create and draft documents online. This platform allows online and simultaneous editing and collaboration regardless of the location. This will facilitate the students' collaboration as well as the teachers' supervision;
- To design an online questionnaire, Google Forms is the ideal tool. The statistical side of the research is completely covered by this service;
- Use the cloud technology to store your documents online. Google Drive offers up to 15 GB, Dropbox 02 GB and Onedrive 20 GB;
- Virtual Interviews can be done through Google Hangouts allowing up to ten (10) persons at the same time. Skype and Viber are good alternatives though;
- Use Mendely desktop and/or Zotero to organize, cite and share references <https://www.zotero.org>, <https://www.mendeley.com>;
- Check the originality of your piece of work or dissertation with dedicated software to prevent the plagiarism.

CONCLUSION

This paper covered the essential steps that LMD students have to follow. We suggested a model that can guide the learners during the decisive phase of choosing the topic, theme or title. One of the most recurrent errors made by students before and during a research is, indeed, the choice of the title that is always seen as a priority to begin with, which for us is completely erroneous. In this paper we concisely suggested a simplified method, based on prioritizing the identification of a problem and questioning prior to the choice of the title. We also encourage the reader to rely on the use of information and communication technologies, especially during the data collection. We think that these steps may contribute to help the novice researcher find

a way to conduct a research; however other methodologies might be more adequate and better designed to meet specific needs, as far as the research in the field of letters and foreign languages is concerned.

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