

Content-Related Guidelines for MA theses at the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw: English Studies – Linguistics

An MA thesis is intended to demonstrate that the student has achieved learning outcomes assigned to the MA seminar. Specifically, the student is expected to show advanced familiarity with the relevant research field in Linguistics and methodology applied in this field. They should also be able to formulate an original research problem, typically broken down into a set of research questions, and design a study in which this problem is investigated. Based on these general requirements, a thesis has a theoretical / descriptive component and an empirical / analytical component.

Depending on the field of study, an MA thesis may investigate data related to language units, language structures, language use, translation, language pedagogy, as well as theoretical accounts of linguistic phenomena and communication.

An MA thesis consists of the following parts:

1. Abstract

The abstract should be around 250 words long. It should state clearly and in specific terms what the thesis is about and focus on stating the research questions, data, methods and outcome of your research.

2. Keywords

5-7 specific terms or phrases that encapsulate the essence of the thesis content arranged alphabetically.

3. Table of Contents

A list of the major sections of the thesis, including chapters, bibliography, appendices (if applicable) alongside their page numbers.

4. Introduction

An Introduction should present the topic of your thesis and explain why it is worthy of scholarly attention. The Introduction should also state the aim of the study and specific research questions that you intend to address. Besides, it includes a general outline of the content of each chapter.

5. Main Body

Literature Review

The literature review provides a context for the study carried out in your thesis. It can be presented as a separate chapter and/or be incorporated in other parts of the thesis. It can be structured around a topic/problem, but it may also follow a chronological development of views on a topic under scrutiny. The review goes beyond summarizing extant works, and is also expected to demonstrate the student's ability to observe similarities and differences between

various frameworks and to critically assess the achievements and potential shortcomings of previous research in order to indicate what has been done in the area they are investigating, and how their own research can be situated against this background.

Students are advised to draw on the literature sources they had studied in other courses in Linguistics.

Analytical/empirical part

Theses based on empirical/practical work typically consist of *Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion*.

Other types of theses might include chapters on different theoretical issues, or theories about the same issue or different linguistic analyses of the same phenomenon.

It is recommended that each chapter should begin with a brief introduction, presenting its content and goal. It should also end with a short summing up section, and possibly a reference to what will be covered in the following chapter and how it relates to the general goal of the thesis. This is called ‘flagging’ or ‘signposting’, and is crucial for making it evident that the thesis has been written with a clear idea of how the content is organized into chapters.

6. Conclusion

The conclusion has two functions: i) it sums up the content of the thesis, reminding the reader of the goal and the research questions that have been addressed; ii) it demonstrates that the goal has been achieved and that your investigation made the intended contribution to the issue under scrutiny, and that it may have some implications (i.e. pedagogical). You may also mention the limitations of your work and how it can be developed in future research (if applicable).

7. References

The list of references at the end of the thesis has the heading References. The entries are listed alphabetically. The formatting of references should follow one of the widely accepted stylesheets as suggested by the supervisor.

Appendix (optional)

Appendix contains additional information that is relevant but is too long or too detailed to include in the main body of your work. It may contain visuals, charts, graphs, etc.

Ethical Approval and Data Collection

Q: Who should apply for Ethical Approval?

A: All students planning to undertake a research project involving human participants (e.g. a project involving tests, questionnaires, interviews, reaction time experiments, etc.) must obtain ethical approval **BEFORE STARTING** data collection. Please consult your thesis supervisor.