Guide to Writing your Bachelor Thesis in English

Please refer to “Hinweise zum Verfassen einer schriftlichen Arbeit. Vollständig überarbeitete Fassung Juni 2012” (Seyfried, Weinberger) for general guidelines regarding seminar papers and bachelor theses. This document only provides subject-specific information which is primarily geared towards helping you with English terminology and wording.

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1. Example of Title Page

BACHELOR THESIS
submitted as part requirement for the degree of
Bachelor of Education for New Secondary Schools

Pronunciation in the EFL Classroom:
An Analysis of Potential Problems and Suggestions for Solutions.

presented by
Mr. Benjamin Example

Tutors
Oswald Example, MA, Human Sciences
Henrietta Example, PhD, English

Matriculation number
XXX

Number of words
XXX

Linz, 24th December 2014
2. Structure of the Thesis

Abstract (heading for both the English and German versions!):
- short summary of the thesis
- main concern/interest
- research question(s)
- hypotheses
- purpose/aim/main goal
- research method
- results
- conclusions
- pedagogical relevance

Preface
- guiding cognitive interest
- main purpose and goal of the thesis
- personal information
- acknowledgments

Introduction
- introduction to the topic
- relevance/topicality of the research question
- research question: note that all parts of the thesis should actually focus on your research question(s) and serve the purpose of answering it/them
- main purpose and goals
- overview of the thesis (short summary of the chapters)

1. Literature Review
- definition of all relevant terms (cf. title, research question(s))
- theoretical framework
- different approaches to the issue
- comprehensive overview of the theory
- relevance to and comment on personal experience(s)
- reference to empirical research on the topic
- hypotheses: should be logically deduced from the theory; summarize findings and suggest new aspect(s) requiring further research/consideration
- alternative to hypotheses: specific research questions (qualitative research)

2. Method of Data Collection and Analysis
Note: the bullet points outlined below regard your thesis and are not meant to talk about research methods in general!!!
- sample/participants in the study: detailed data (e.g. gender, number); don’t give names; justification of the choice of subjects
- detailed description of the research procedure: How are the hypotheses being tested/the research questions explored?; description of research paradigm (qualitative, quantitative, action research); independent variable (e.g. teaching method), dependent variable (what is being measured, e.g. motivation); time schedule of intervention(s) and surveys; justification of choice of method
- description of method of collecting data and instruments used (e.g. questionnaire): reference to theory if approached deductively; description, operationalization (how
can the constructs be measured), - e.g. how have the items in a questionnaire been developed?
- evaluation method: e.g. qualitative content analysis (show scheme of categories);
  statistical evaluation method
- realisation (describe in detail to ensure objectivity)
- results: (reliability, descriptive findings, evidence to test hypotheses
- interpretation of the results

3. Results and Discussion
- central part: evaluation of the data
- short introduction (What was the main goal? Research question, method(s))
- the most important results and answers to the main research question
- comment on results with reference to the literature used in the theoretical part
- generalizations (and justification)
- self-criticism (suggestions of what could be improved)
- practical/ pedagogical implications (limits of the practical application, problems, risks, preconditions)
- (theoretical implications (new hypotheses))
- (suggestions for future research)

Conclusion
short (1-3 pages)

(German version: © Dr. Alfred Weinberger, Institut für Forschung und Entwicklung)
3. **Guide to Good Writing**

1. Employ tentative rather than assertive language.
   - Use *possibly* and *probably* in front of verbs and noun phrases; e.g. 'This is possibly caused by...' or 'This is probably the most important factor.'
   - Use the modal verbs *may* and *might*; e.g. 'This may be the most important factor.'
   - Use *appears to* and *seems to*; e.g. 'This appears to be the most important factor.'
   - Avoid *always* and *every*, and replace them with *often* and *many/much*

2. Use formal vocabulary, e.g. *discuss* rather than *talk about*. One way to do this is by replacing phrasal verbs with more formal ones.

3. Use 'It' as a subject; e.g. 'It is very difficult to...'

4. Avoid discourse ‘this’:
The author explains the past tense in detail. *This (kind of) explanation* helps the students.

5. Use 'One' as a subject; e.g. 'One may ask whether...' ('One' is a formal version of 'You' [plural] in general)

6. Use the passive voice; e.g. 'Many things *can be done* in order to...'

7. Use of personal pronouns:
   - Choose the simplest gender-aware option:
     - If *students* want to be sure, *he/she they* should ask the teacher to check *his/her their* homework daily.

8. Avoid short, disconnected sentences.

9. Avoid the use of rhetorical questions such as *Did you know that spoken and written language are very different?*.

10. Avoid the use of contractions such as *won’t*, *didn’t*, *we’ll*.

11. To the extent possible, use parallel structures:
    - I will look at effectiveness, clarity, and *how teachers and students benefit* from these books.
    - I will look at effectiveness, clarity, and *teacher-students benefits* from these books.

12. When using an acronym for the first time, give the full name first with the acronym in parentheses; thereafter it is all right to use the acronym alone.
    - Teachers wanting training in *English as a Second Language (ESL)* can do a master’s degree.

13. Use correct punctuation and capitalization.
    Please refer to the notes from your writing classes.
4. References and Quotations


4.1. Avoiding plagiarism:

A reference is an acknowledgement that you are making use of another writer’s idea or data in your writing:

As Donner (1997) pointed out, low inflation does not always lead to low interest rates.

There are three main reasons for giving references:

a) To avoid the charge of plagiarism, do not use another person’s ideas or research without acknowledgement.

b) The reference can give more authority to your writing as it shows you are familiar with other research on the topic.

c) The reader can find the original source by using the reference section, which will list the full publishing details of Donner’s book:


4.2. Verbs of reference

Referring verbs use both the present and the past tenses. It is probably best to use the present tense for recent sources or when you feel that the idea or data is still valid:

Rathbone (1997) demonstrates the limitations of video-conferencing.

The past tense suggests that the source is older and the ideas perhaps out of date:

Steinbeck (1965) explored a link between cancer and diet.

There are three main systems of reference in use in academic writing:

a) The system illustrated above (the Harvard) is the most common. Note the following:

Hunter (1989) states….

(date of publication in brackets when referring verb is used)

Women pose less security risks (Burke and Pollock, 1993)

(authors and date in brackets after summary)

Note that with quotations page numbers should also be given after the date. Details of the organisation of the reference section are given below.

b) Numbers in brackets are inserted in the text for each source, and at the end of the chapter or article the references are listed in number order:

A survey of Fortune 500 companies found that over 70% have problems recruiting skilled staff (1). Some analysts argue that this could be as high as 90% (2).

c) A third system uses footnotes:

More than 80% of families own or are buying their own homes.\textsuperscript{2}

In this system the references are listed at the bottom of the page:

\textsuperscript{2}Economist, 13 January 1996, pp. 27-8.

NB A full reference section is required at the end of the article or book.

4.3. Note-making

a) When reading and note-making, keep a careful record of the details of your sources.
b) Follow one of the methods below to give the reference:

1. Summary of the writer’s ideas:
Orwell (1940) pointed out that although Charles Dickens described eating large meals in many of his books, he never wrote about farming. He explains this contradiction in terms of Dickens’ upbringing in London, remote from the countryside.

2. Quotation of a writer’s words:
Orwell clearly highlighted this inconsistency in Dickens: ‘It is not merely a coincidence that Dickens never writes about agriculture and writes endlessly about food. He was a Cockney, and London is the centre of the earth in rather the same sense that the belly is the centre of the body.’ (Orwell, 1940: pp. 53-4)

3. Mixture of summary and quotation:
As Orwell (1940) noted, Dickens frequently described food but was uninterested in food production. He considered that this was because of the writer’s background: ‘he was Cockney, and London is the centre of the earth.’ (pp. 53-4)

4.4. Additional Reading

5. Bibliography/References – The Harvard Style

The object of your writing is for you to say something for yourself using the ideas of the subject, for you to present ideas you have learned in your own way. The emphasis should be on working with other people’s ideas, rather than reproducing their words. The ideas and people that you refer to need to be made explicit by a system of referencing. This consists of a list of materials that you have used at the end of the piece of writing and references to this list at various points throughout the essay. The purpose of this is to supply the information needed to allow a user to find a source. Therefore, at the end of your assignment you need a list of the materials you have used - a bibliography or a reference list.

There are many ways of writing a list of references. The most common system is called the Harvard system. There is no definitive version of the Harvard system and most universities have their own. But the one used here - the American Psychological Association style - is well known and often used (American Psychological Association, 1983, 1994, 1999, 2001, 2010).

5.1. Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

NOTES

- Use heading: **References**
- Page numbers should be included for all articles in journals and in collections.
- Use *italics* (or underlining in handwriting) for titles of books, periodicals, newspapers etc.
- Use alphabetical order.
- Alphabetise works with no author by the first significant word in the title.
All co-authors should be listed.
- Indent second etc. lines
- Use (n.d.) if no date is given.
- If the author of a document is not given, begin the reference with the title of the document.

5.2. Books
a. One author:

b. Two authors:

c. More than two authors:

d. Edited collections:


e. Book, corporate author:

f. Book, no author, or editor:


g. Book, third edition:

h. Book, revised edition:

i. Non-English book:

j. English translation of a book:

k. Books or articles, two or more by the same author in the same year:


5.3. Periodical articles
a. One author:

b. Two authors:

c. More than two authors:

d. Review of a book:
e. Review of a book, no title:
f. Magazine article:
g. Newspaper article:
h. Newspaper/Magazine article, no author:
i. Newspaper article, letter to the editor:
j. Journal article, in press:

5.4. Selections from edited collections
a. One author:
b. Two authors:

5.5. CD ROMs etc
a. Newspaper or magazine on CD-ROM:
b. Abstract on CD-ROM:
c. Article from CD-ROM Encyclopedia:
d. Dictionary on CD-ROM:

5.6. Documents obtained from the Internet
All references begin with the same information that would be provided for a printed source (or as much of that information as possible). The WWW information is then placed at the end of the reference in the same way as publishing information is given for books. It is important to give the date of retrieval if the document on the Web may change in content, move, or be removed from a site altogether.
The object of this is the same as all referencing - to supply the information needed to allow a user to find a source. If you do not know the author or the date and it does not have a clear title, think carefully before using it.

a. An article:

b. A newspaper article:

c. WWW Document:

d. WWW Document - corporate author:

e. WWW Document - corporate author:

f. WWW Document - no author:

g. WWW Document - no author, no date:

h. An abstract:

i. Entry in online reference work, no author, editor or date:

5.7. Others
a. Government report:

b. Publication with no date given:

c. Unpublished dissertation or thesis:

d. Unpublished conference paper:

e. Film or videotape: