

Outline for Research Proposal

Psy310 | Spring 2009

Organize your final research proposal according to the following outline. Clearly indicate sections of the paper by using headings that indicate where particular kinds of information can be found. Subheading may also be used in longer sections to facilitate organization.

1. Introduction

Explain the issue you are examining and why it is significant.

- Describe the general area to be studied
- Explain why this area is important to the general area under study (*e.g., psychology of language comprehension, production, acquisition/learning*)

2. Background/Review of the Literature

A description of what is already known about this area and short discussion of why the background studies are not sufficient.

- Summarize what is already known about the field. Include a summary of the basic background information on the topic gleaned from your literature review (you can also include additional background information from the textbooks, class, and websites)
- Discuss several critical **studies** that have already been done in this area (cite according to a style with which you are familiar—APA or MLA, for example).
- Point out why these background studies are insufficient. In other words, what question(s) do they leave unresolved that you would like to study?
- Specify the one question you are pursuing in your research proposal

3. Rationale

A description of the question you are examining and an exploration of the claims.

- List the **specific** question(s) that you are exploring.
 - Explain how these research questions are related to the larger issues raised in the introduction.
 - Describe what specific claim, hypothesis, and/or model of psycholinguistics you will evaluate with these questions.
- Explain what it will show about the psychology of language if your hypothesis is confirmed.
- Explain what it will suggest about the psychology of language if your hypothesis is disconfirmed.

4. Method and Design

A description of how you would go about collecting data and testing the questions you are examining. You are not required to come up with a new or original method (though you can try!). Look at journal articles to determine what methods are standardly used to assess knowledge of language in your chosen area and adapt one of these for your needs.

- Method: How would you collect the data and why?
 - Describe the general methodology you choose for your study, in order to test your hypothesis(es).
 - Explain why this method is the best for your purposes.
 - Participants: Who would you test and why?
 - Describe the sample you would test and explain why you have chosen this sample. Include age, language background, socio-economic information, and other demographic information, but only if relevant to the design.
 - Are there any participants you would exclude? Why, why not?
- Design: What would the stimuli look like and why?
 - Describe what kinds of manipulations/variations you would make or test for in order to test your hypothesis(es).

- Describe the factors you would vary if you were presenting a person with stimulus sounds, words, sentences, etc.
- Explain how varying these factors would allow you to confirm or disconfirm your hypotheses.
- Controls: What kinds of factors would you need to control for in your study? (For example, in a study to determine whether infants can distinguish between its native language and a foreign language, both languages had to be presented by the same speaker so that voice characteristics would be the same, since infants might be able to distinguish the two samples based on voice characteristics rather than the languages themselves.)
- Procedure
 - How are you going to present the stimuli?
 - What is the participant in the experiment going to do?
 - What are you going to measure/assess?
- Expected Results
 - What kind of results would *confirm* your hypothesis?
 - What kind of results would *disconfirm* your hypothesis?
 - Explain what differences or what types of effects you would need to find to confirm or disconfirm your hypothesis. Describe what pattern of results would confirm or disconfirm your hypothesis. Clearly specify, how could your hypothesis be confirmed and disconfirmed by your data.

5. Significance and Conclusion

Discuss, in general, how your proposed research would lead to a significant improvement over the original studies, and/or how it would benefit the field. (In other words, why should someone care? If you were applying for money to do this, why would someone fund you? If you wanted to publish your results, why would they be interesting?)

6. References

Include all references in a style with which you are familiar (e.g., MLA or APA style). You should have at least 6 references, and at least 3 of these should be journal articles.