

“Structure of research components in language studies”

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ABSTRACT:

The idea of this compiled paper was driven by a need for a standardised guide in research studies related to language studies in general, and applied linguistics in particular. The sequence and ordering of the paper's sections are similar to those of an empirical, typical research study in social sciences. Terminologies are defined where necessary, or when there is a need to add an emphasis to a particular notion. The main, and common, components are discussed, starting with titles, and ending with appendices. Pieces of advice are debated in order to connect theory to practice. Some sections are sub-divided since they have their own sub-decisions in actual research reports. The paper avoided to discuss the length of every section, due to the nature of the different research studies and the researcher's purposes (whether for journal articles or study requirements). The concluding remarks of this paper present some general criteria of evaluation which the researcher has to consider, especially postgraduate students. Though the authors consulted many relevant references, but he does not claim perfection. The study was limited to explaining the components of the research structure, and hopefully nothing more.

Key words: Research structure, Research components, Research methods, Language studies.

Introductory remarks

Postgraduate students receive solid training on how to conduct research, and this paper could be one of their readings. The process of acquiring the declarative and procedural knowledge, however, becomes tedious for them due to the time factor and most probably lack of experience. Though written in a user-friendly format, the majority of research text-books normally present the different components of research methods, but not in the required order, with some exceptions (cf., Dawson, 2007; Griffiee (2012; Mackey & Gass, 2015). Therefore, the idea came to existence when Jazan University launched its postgraduate programmes in social sciences, particularly language studies. The context triggered the need for a standardised guide to review the relevant literature and produce this 'guiding' research paper as a concise summary of the main elements of a typical research paper in language studies. Postgraduate students will undoubtedly find it useful in guiding them throughout the stages of the research study. The sequence of sections presented in this paper stimulates the appropriate order that should be adhered to in the final product of the printed dissertation or thesis, or even a standard research paper.

Let us first embark on defining thesis and research. In English usage, sometimes thesis and dissertation are used interchangeably. Evans, Gruba, and Zobel (2014, p. 1) define a thesis as "an extended argument" which "must demonstrate logical, structured, and defensible reasoning based on credible and verifiable evidence presented in such a way that it makes an original contribution to knowledge, as judged by experts in the field".

Research is a vague term and can be used in different contexts with different connotations. Fuller (2010, pp. 1248-1249) argues on the differences between scholarship, discovery and research and states that research is "a form of organized intellectual work closely associated with the conduct of science" which is characterised by the process of inquiry and which "is tied less to the intrinsic significance of what is investigated than to the effort invested in the activity". In other words, the process itself in research can be more important than the product.

Two major divisions are found in scientific research: qualitative and quantitative. Rasinger (2010, p. 52) provides a memorable distinction by stating that qualitative studies are inductive, where "theory is derived from the results of our research", and that quantitative studies are deductive which are "based on already known theory we develop hypotheses, which we then try to prove (or disprove) in the course of our empirical investigation".

Nevertheless, research types are not presented in this paper. To illustrate this point, the most frequent research types (and methodologies) in applied language studies are experimental (manipulating conditions and studying their effects), correlational (studying relationships among variables), and survey (describing the characteristics of a group via tests and questionnaires). Creswell (2002) discusses in depth these types and many other designs. Thus, our focus should remain on research structure and its components as presented in order of appearance in the study.

One more point in this introduction is about the plan of action that proceeds the execution of the main study; that is the research proposal, or synopsis. The structure of the proposal of a quantitative research is similar to the structure of this article, with slight modifications in terms of details and suggestions. Synopsis is a mini-summary of the researcher's anticipation of 'future' research, whereas the dissertation is a full summary of 'past' research. Creswell (2012, p. 268) explains that the proposal purpose "is to help an investigator think through all aspects of the study and anticipate problems". Its importance lies in the fact that one can shape the research in advance, avoid limitations, and ensure the internal consistency through the research project. Additionally, the importance of proposals lies in the fact that they "describe the process and procedures that will be used by the researcher and allow an opportunity to obtain feedback from colleagues before the implementation of the study" (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2006, p. 50).

1. Title

Cheng, Kuo and Kuo (2012) studied 796 titles of articles in four major journals in applied linguistics, and concluded that a title “highlights the essence of a research article” (p. 12). Titles, as a norm, should contain the key words of the research and reflect its topic, specific field, and domain. The topic summarised in the title is generally considered “the broad subject matter addressed by the study” (Creswell, 2012, p. 60). Researchers are advised not to make too long titles to avoid ambiguity and exaggeration. In other words, the title should be precise and clear. Griffiee (2012, p. 18) states that the research title “is important because it creates the first impression of a paper”. In dissertations, titles are followed by table of contents and lists, if any, of tables, figures, diagrams, appendices, symbols and abbreviations respectively.

2. Abstract

Though abstracts and what follows after them come first, they are normally to be written after the completion, prior to submission. Abstracts are summaries of the research, which will provide the required background before one reads through the main research body. They vary in length according to their purpose, whether for a degree program requirement or for publication. Whatever the purpose, an abstract should include a clear statement of the topic, the main purpose of the study, a short description of the research methodology (participants, materials, method of analysis), followed by the main findings and their implications (Brown, 1988; Mackey & Gass, 2015). In brief, it is “a summary of a research or a review article and includes critical information, including a complete reference to the work, its purpose, methods used, conclusions reached, and implications” (Salkind, 2010, p. 1). There is a variation here of what follows the abstract, but particularly in dissertations, abstracts are followed by acknowledgements to those who assisted and supported the success of the study report and research in hand.

3. Introduction

In the report body, an introduction comes after the abstract, but it is an element of style rather than a component of a research project. Its importance lies in its nature; that is, it directs the reader to the general purpose of the study and its approach. It directs the path from the general to the specific, i.e. the statement of the problem. In all cases, introductory sentences and/or paragraphs are required for every section. In the introduction, the researcher can present a general picture of the research method, and provide explanations for points which he/she wishes to clarify further, particularly issues that have no relevant sections in the research structure.

4. Statement of the problem

Riazi (2016, p. 278) defines research problems as “those issues which occupy researchers’ minds and give researchers the impetus to embark on different research projects to hopefully resolve those problems by producing new knowledge”. As a result, this research element usually poses a challenge to the researcher because the researcher needs to review relevant studies conducted in the researcher’s ‘topic’ field (the general research area), and then narrows it down and report the main issues. The statement of the problem normally presents the researcher’s stance, or rationale (as a justification of the purpose of the study).

The brief theoretical background of the problem should form, shape, and direct the literature review. A good summary is perceived as focussing on those studies that are similar or related (directly) to the researcher’s topic. This shows how the researcher is treating a similar topic from a different angle by a different method for different purposes, and most probably different objectives. These statements should be researchable, substantive (contribution to theory), ethically appropriate, tractable (adequate resources), and should lead to further investigation (Riazi, 2016). The statement of the problem should coherently indicate the aims and the significance of the study, absence of knowledge about the problem, and the targeted audience (Creswell, 2012). Generally, judgment and evaluation of the study quality—and the extent of adherence to it—starts from here since the whole research is based and built on this section.

The problem statement is the first stage of the linear research process. The statement of the problem should lead to the formulation of the research questions and/or its hypotheses, which are narrower in scope than the problem statement. The statement must be well-written, clearly defined, explicitly developed and stated, and logically organised. The rationale and justification should direct the literature review. These hypotheses and research questions have usually a direct impact on the research methodology and its instruments (of data collection), which in turn call for the appropriate method of analysis. Finally, discussing these results will bring the researcher back to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012, p. 20). Thus, a careful clarification for the research approach must certainly show, and prove, the originality of the study in question.

5. Research questions (and hypotheses)

The statement of the problem paves the way for the queries and questions, for which the researcher works hard to find answers. Even in cases where there are no satisfactory results or convincing outcomes, the research is still acceptable as long as it is well-designed and objectively executed. It may trigger further investigations and replications with different designs. The main concern in this section is to formulate well-written questions, and clearly defined hypotheses. Research questions originate from different sources (Griffiee, 2012). These sources could be students' questions, research duplications, suggestions in published articles, problems arise in discussion, and self-intuitions. The researcher is advised to write as many questions as one can, then group them into larger questions, and finally order them. Sequence is important because an answer of a certain question may lead to further questions.

Lastly, the postgraduate researcher should choose the right questions where at least three criteria have to be taken into consideration. According to Race (2010, p. 1261), these are: "an adequate knowledge of the area being considered for research, constructive support from a supervisor, and the time a researcher has to carry out the research". And in order to avoid ambiguity and to "reduce confusion, the terms and concepts included in the research question need to be clarified through the use of operational definitions" (Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger, 2005, p. 36). At times, research questions are revisited after the literature review so as to connect them to the research design and methodology.

Hypotheses, on the other hand, follow a similar approach as that of the research questions, and the research problem. Both hypotheses and research questions "examine whether variables stated in a research problem are related or have a causal relationship. The types of questions and hypotheses that are expressed are strongly linked to the purpose of the research study" (DeForge, 2010, p. 1254). The formulation of a hypothesis must allow it to be tested, whether for support or refutation. Rasinger (2010) stresses that a hypothesis must have the potential of being wrong so that it "must be proven right or wrong, and hence, it is important for it to be well defined. In particular, hypotheses must be falsifiable and not be tautological" (p. 52).

6. Significance of the study

The researcher justifies the importance of the study along with its purpose prior to its conduct. Once conducted and completed, if the study results and findings are really significant, and can contribute to knowledge, then the study can be described as successful. Contents of this section are related to what has been stated in the research problem and the research questions. The researcher is supposed to avoid exaggeration, and should be objective without self-praising. The anticipated significance (referred to here as theoretical) is not the resultant significance of the study findings (usually statistically driven). The former is what the researcher wants to accomplish, the latter is what has been resulted via statistical formulas. In their discussion of data interpretation, Marczyk, DeMatteo and Festinger (2005, p. 231) conclude that "nonsignificant findings can have some very significant (important) implications. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that researchers be as neutral and objective as possible when analyzing and interpreting their results".

7. Literature review

Card (2010) argues of five types of literature, but he views literature reviews in general as those "systematic syntheses of previous work around a particular topic" (p. 725). Pope (2008, p. 151) defines literature review as "a synthesis of the reading of theory and research relevant to your study in which you identify key themes, resonances and controversies". Both definitions stress the factor of relevance and synthesis. This component is one of the most difficult stages in conducting the research study. First the researcher should focus the review towards the research problem to develop it through illustrations and justifications. The researcher provides reviews which are representative of the topic area and relevant to it. The researcher should show transparency and skill of synthesising, and not just listing studies one after another (Card, 2010; Creswell, 2012). The researcher must document the major works concerning the main concepts, contextual factors or study variables. The researcher must demonstrate a skill in these requirements as well as in argumentation, citing and paraphrasing.

One strategy is that the researcher can shape the argument into a list of points, each of which is searched and reviewed against relevant literature. One strategy for summarising previous primary sources, according to Fraenkel Wallen and Hyun (2012, p. 50-51), is: (1) stating the problem clearly, (2) listing the objectives (or hypotheses) as they were reported in the article, (3) noting down the procedure of the study, (4) recording the findings, and (5) finally writing their conclusions. This strategy will help the researcher to report previous studies, to compare them, to integrate his/her arguments, and to easily synthesise the literature review (cf. Creswell, 2012, Chapter 3). After a detailed and lengthy discussion of how literature review can be approached in education, Mertens (2010, p. 121) concludes that the "formulation of a research topic is enabled by reading

about research that has already been conducted because the reader can figure out what is already known as well as become acquainted with the strengths and weaknesses of methods used in prior research”. Therefore, such reviews can be used to refine and improve the research topic. The researcher is supposed to observe a number of criteria including, adequacy, clarity, recency, relevance, organisation, and convincing argument (Tuckman & Harper, 2012, pp. 61-62).

8. Research design

One point to start with is that ethics in research are not discussed in this paper. A lengthy summary of good practices in applied linguistics, with guiding descriptors and challenging questions, can be those of the publication of the British Association for Applied Linguistics, (2016). Other research ethics discussions may be found in Eckert (2013), and Rallis and Rossman (2009).

Research references make a distinction between research methodology and research methods. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 47) briefly present a distinction between them by stating that “[i]f methods refer to techniques and procedures used in the process of data-gathering, the aim of methodology then is to describe approaches to, kinds and paradigms of research”. The researcher has to differentiate between methodology (the general approach of the study and its overall category) and methods (which represent the specific processes and tools). The methodology of the study refers to both the research design and the methods used to obtain, process, and analyse the information related to the study problem. The research design represents the overall logic—and the general study—to obtain such information, whereas methods include the selection of the subjects or phenomena under investigation (Dörnyei, 2007).

Thus, to avoid confusion and ambiguity, the term ‘research design’ is preferable as it is related to methods used in your study. Cheek (2008, p. 761) views a research design as “the way in which a research idea is transformed into a research project or plan that can then be carried out in practice by a researcher”. The researcher is supposed to describe and justify that methodology with adequate information and appropriate explanation.

Validity and reliability of the study is based on this section because it is designed to get answers for the research questions and to test the hypotheses, if any. It is a fundamental step that shows the researcher’s knowledge of research methods and tools. Insights from similar studies can be provided as well, which means that the researcher is well-informed of his/her research area and designs. In research methodology, there are some basic criteria that must be considered: validity, reliability (of instrument and study) appropriateness of instrument, control of variables, adequacy of sampling, feasibility, and replicability (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Mackey & Gass, 2015). Creswell (2012) details in depth eight major research designs with examples, and Jupp (2006) can be a handy reference in research terminologies.

Participants and Context

Basic information about the study participants or, ‘subjects’ in terms of number, gender, characteristics, age, relevance to the study, and method of selection. If understanding the results and their interpretation requires further clarification, the researcher provides extra information and description of the context of the study. This is important to show if the results can gain a generalisable context, and a basis for replication. It is the beginning of controlling the study variables.

Variables

Hatch and Lazaraton (1991, p. 51). define a variable as “an attribute of a person, a piece of text, or an object which "varies" from person to person, text to text, object to object, or from time to time”. Another definition is that of Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 504) who consider a variable to be “an operationalized construct or particular property in which the researcher is interested” Sometimes variables have levels as their sub-divisions. For example, if language proficiency is defined in a study as a variable, then we can sub-divide it into three levels (or more): beginner, intermediate, and advanced. The researcher needs to clearly define the variables, most frequently the dependent and the independent ones. The dependent variable is usually measured in the study due to its relation to the research problem. The independent variable is suspected to influence the dependent variable (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991). The third type is the control variables, which limit the effect of independent variables (and subsequently limit the generalisability of the study findings), but these variables allow for replicability with new control variables, and so on. Two more variables, though less frequent, are the moderator and intervening variables (Tuckman & Harper, 2012).

Data collection and its instruments

Broader classifications of research approaches (not types), particularly qualitative and quantitative, are derived by the type of data collected for treatment (Dörnyei, 2007). Types of qualitative and quantitative research in linguistics are numerous with a variety of analyses. Data are what the researcher collected so as to analyse them for confirming or disconfirming the

research questions and hypotheses. Data can be test scores, survey results, observational data or language use and production (Riazi, 2016). Data collection, on the other hand, refers to the procedures and operations used to obtain the information needed, or data required, to answer the research questions, and solve the research problem, or test the hypotheses. For gathering and eliciting the required information, the researcher normally uses the appropriate instruments such as language test, observations, interviews, questionnaires, reports, tasks, experiments, text analysis, and many more (Heigham & Croker, 2009; Johnson, 2008).

This part of the research is related to its validity and reliability. Therefore, the researcher should systematically describe the data collection method, providing reasons, or justifications of why such instruments were considered appropriate to the research matter. The researcher must detail those steps that were taken to ensure that such an instrument, or a method, was designed to produce results, which should be relevant, meaningful, reliable and valid (Dörnyei, 2007; 2010). Normally, materials used in the experiment, for instance questionnaires and tests, are included in the appendix as a concrete evidence to support the description given in this section. Notions and criteria related to these instruments can be obtained from authoritative references, including different research designs and data processing (cf., Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012; Mackey, & Gass, 2012).

Data processing and analysis

The researcher should clearly indicate how that data were processed and what methods were used, whether manual or mechanical. Again, the researcher is supposed to discuss and explain the appropriateness of such methods (of processing). Normally, the procedure of data processing depends on the nature of the research design and the type of data in hand. It is a matter of relevance (Dörnyei, 2007, Part 3). As a first step, the researcher may consult statistics references written specifically for teachers, such as Abbott (2011), Hatch & Lazaraton (1991), Soh (2016), and Van-Blerkom (2017). Two common types of statistics are frequently used: “Descriptive statistics allow the researcher to describe the data and examine relationships between variables, while inferential statistics allow the researcher to examine causal relationships” (Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger, 2005, p. 209, emphasis in original).

Method of data analysis, with a discussion of its appropriateness, is usually reported “to tell readers how the data were analyzed in order to answer the research questions” (Griffie, 2012, p. 32). The researcher justifies the selection of the method of analysis, clearly indicating its relevance to the desired results required to answer the research question, or the testing of the hypotheses.

9. Results

Once data is carefully analysed, presentation of the results should serve the research problem, questions, or hypotheses. There are many factors to be considered while reporting the results. First, the researcher tries to avoid interpretation. Goodwin (2010, p. 510-511) warns that “[n]o attempt is made to explain why some prediction succeeded or failed; such interpretation belongs in the discussion section. A good way to organize the results section is with reference to the sequence of hypotheses in the introduction”. Second, there is the factor of orderliness according to the research questions and hypotheses, or logical according to the procedure of data analysis. Third, there is the factor of comprehensibility where the researcher avoids the style of too little or too much details. Finally, there is the factor of objectivity and honesty in avoiding bias and irrelevance (cf., Mertens, 2010, chapter 13).

10. Discussion and implications

Discussions and implications can be separated in independent sections, but there is no harm if they are combined provided that discussing and interpreting the results proceed the conclusions which the researcher wishes to theorise about. This section is an important component of any research because it deals in depth with the results. The researcher connects the findings with the research problem, research questions, and research hypotheses in order to find or give a ‘solution’ in accordance with what has been investigated and presented earlier. Interpretation of the results “refers to the task of drawing inferences from the collected facts after an analytical and/or experimental study” (Kothari, 2004, p. 344). Interpretation requires a skill and an insight to explain any subtle causal relation within the findings. Wrong, or incomplete, interpretations can lead to inaccurate conclusions, even if the results are accurately presented and reported.

Moreover, its importance lies in the fact that the researcher draws inferences from his/her theorisation and interpretation, which should lead to the research implications and its future directions. Finally, the researcher can state down a number of sound recommendations and useful suggestions, equipped with knowledge gained from the literature review and the active involvement of the research process.

11. Limitations of the study

We want to comment on English usage of the term ‘limitations’ and another term wrongly perceived as near-synonym, i.e. ‘limits’. First, some interpret ‘limitations’ as limits of the research, and that is semantically incorrect because the term ‘limitations’ is polysemous, which may mean restrictions, controls, and limits, resulting in different connotational meaning. It is interpreted in research terminology as drawbacks and shortcomings, and this is its use in this paper and the references cited here. The term ‘limits’ is normally related to the scope and borders of the study. The researcher is supposed to use ‘limits’ to demarcate the boundaries of the study, so that it becomes logical to report it before the research design. Second, one wrong practice is that limitations are reported before the research design and its methods. When presented before the research design to mean drawbacks, it becomes illogical to talk about the evaluation before the reporting the problem and its appropriate methodology.

In the past, it was recommended to follow the research design section, and proceed the section of the results. Mackey and Gass (2015) argue that limitations can be part of the discussion or the conclusion or even discussed and reported in an independent section. They conclude that “acknowledgment of the limitations of the research is important, not only as a caution to the readers against overgeneralization of the findings, but also as a suggestion for how future studies could be improved” (Mackey & Gass (2015, p. 302). In other words, the section of limitations provides the opportunity for the researcher for self-evaluation, demonstrating an understanding of the research methodology and the situation in general. In addition, it is a stop for the researcher to justify those drawbacks that had a negative impact on the success of the investigation and the results so that other researchers can avoid them when replicating the research study. Examples of limitations include time allocated for the study, questionnaire turn-out, participants, method of design or a failure to conduct a (required) small scale follow-up study, and so on.

12. Conclusion

In the conclusion the researcher may provide a global summary of the research study, avoiding the presentation of any suggestions or recommendations. However, the researcher can express him-/herself in what has been achieved, and what he/she hopes to be achieved as an academic message. If the research study contributes to knowledge, then it has to be highlighted here where the researcher derives the conclusion “from the data and analysis of the reported study” (Riazi, 2016, p. 45). Interestingly, Bunton (2005) found that conclusions in science and in humanities differed substantially in length. In humanities, they are longer. In all cases, it is a matter of style and preferences.

13. References

First let us register a word of caution on plagiarism. Plagiarism and data falsification are two forms of scientific fraud. Goodwin (2010, p. 72) views plagiarism as an action of “deliberately taking the ideas of someone and claiming them as one’s own”. Therefore, it is not only the form of unadmitted direct quotes but the claim of ideas as well. Fortunately, falsification, or altering of data, is not so frequent in language studies, but this is not fully guaranteed in all cases. The researcher has to be honest, sincere, and accurate, demonstrating respect to documentation and data treatment.

The term ‘references’ is now overcoming the term 'bibliography', and is prevailing in usage; the former was assigned to small works such as articles, papers, and chapters, whereas the latter was used with books and theses. Whatever is chosen, there are conventions for citations (in text quotations or paraphrasing) and documentation (list of references). In language studies, generally, it is the APA style (American Psychological Association, 2020), with some slight differences between the sixth and seventh editions. It almost details everything you imagine, with explanatory examples. Information for a particular reference is given in a particular form and order. Entries for the references are written in an alphabetical order according to the authors' surnames. Four form conventions are more frequent in language studies: books, journal articles, articles (chapters) in collections (edited books or volumes), and online sources (retrieved from the web or have a Digital Object Identifier (DOI number)). In any form, the researcher must consider the use of commas, full-stops, parentheses, colons, italicisation, and capitalisation when documenting any entry in the reference section.

14. Appendices

The appendix, or appendices, may include detailed and specialised information, which is frequently needed and which may take a large space in the body text. Appendices may include detailed master tables of raw data, maps, research instruments (such as tests, interview forms, and questionnaires), and any over-burden technical details related to research methodology. The researcher has already described the materials, reported the procedure of analysis, and summarised the results, now additional raw data (for reasons of space and style) should be appended to this section (Griffiee, 2012, p. 33-34).

Concluding notes

Research quality is an essential criterion in evaluating your research. Quantitative and qualitative research types have a number of general guidelines related to the evaluation of quality (Creswell, 2012; Dorney, 2007; Steinke, 2004). In brief, quantitative evaluators focus on “aspects related to data collection, analysis, and the reporting of results” whereas the qualitative evaluators, though they are concerned with data collection, they are most concerned about “persuasiveness of the study and the self-awareness of the researcher” (Creswell, 2012, p. 289). In all cases, there are a number of conventions that have to be considered in the study report. The researcher must observe: his/her style of writing and language (including punctuation), and the correct documentation (both citation and referencing). Besides, the researcher is supposed to consider the following criteria (paraphrased and re-arranged from Evans, Gruba & Zobel (2014, pp. 1-3):

- Grasp and appropriacy of research design and clarity of perceived limitations.
- Demonstration of command and authority of knowledge in the research field.
- Grasp of fundamental concepts reviewed in the study report.
- Ability to demonstrate and apply knowledge and research findings to the research problem.
- Appropriacy of conclusions and perceived implications.
- Presentation (ideas development) and organisation of content (coherence), including research structure.

Finally, this paper should be considered as a practical guide, not as a reference. Further readings are required whenever one intends to conduct a particular study of any research type. A number of educational and psychological research references were cited in this paper because they contained comprehensive chapters of research components with examples, where the reader can be selective in certain areas, such as statistics, case studies, action research, survey studies, and so on.

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ملخص الدراسة:

كانت فكرة هذه الورقة المؤلفة مدفوعة بالحاجة إلى دليل موحد في الدراسات البحثية المتعلقة بدراسات اللغة بشكل عام، واللغويات التطبيقية بشكل خاص. يتشابه تسلسل وترتيب أقسام الورقة مع تلك الخاصة بدراسة بحثية تجريبية نموذجية في العلوم الاجتماعية. يتم تعريف المصطلحات عند الضرورة، أو عندما تكون هناك حاجة لإضافة تأكيد على مفهوم معين. تتم مناقشة المكونات الرئيسية والشائعة، بدءاً من العناوين، وتنتهي بالملاحق. تتم مناقشة النصائح من أجل ربط النظرية بالممارسة. يتم تقسيم بعض الأقسام الفرعية نظراً لأن لديهم قرارات فرعية خاصة بهم في تقارير البحث الفعلية. تجنبت الورقة مناقشة طول كل قسم، نظراً لطبيعة الدراسات البحثية المختلفة وأغراض الباحث (سواء لمقالات المجالات أو متطلبات الدراسة). تقدم الملاحظات الختامية لهذه الورقة بعض المعايير العامة للتقييم التي يجب على الباحث مراعاتها، وخاصة طلاب الدراسات العليا. على الرغم من أن المؤلفين استشاروا العديد من المراجع ذات الصلة، إلا أنه لا يدعي الكمال. اقتصرَت الدراسة على شرح مكونات هيكل البحث، ونأمل ألا يكون أكثر من ذلك.